Engaging in Pneumatic Mission Praxis

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to craft a philosophy and methodology of mission praxis. I will begin by securing my reflections in scripture and by carefully defining terms. I will then survey mission history and explore guidelines of Christian proclamation in local situations. This praxis involves movements of reflection and action always returning to the Word of God, reliant and impregnated with the illumination of the Holy Spirit outworking with a specific messenger, motivation, message, and method (see a missional example of the process in Gallagher 2006d: 127-132).

Before engaging in the journey of pneumatic mission praxis, it is important to emphasize the intertwining role of the Holy Spirit throughout the process. First a bold impeachment: I sometimes wonder if many Western Christians really believe in the Holy Spirit. Today's church may have a theology of the Holy Spirit, yet it has little awareness of his presence and power. The Spirit, however, played a vital role in the first-century church.

Samuel Chadwick proclaimed, “Theology without experience is like faith without works: dead” (1969: 12). The signs of contemporary death abound with lack of prayer and prophesying, and a focus on investigation and not in inspiration. The creative act of the Spirit of illumination has lost its hold on intellect and heart. J. Hudson Taylor concurred, “Since the days before Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon him for ten days that [the Spirit’s] power might be manifested? We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power” (1930: 516). And again from Lesslie Newbigin,

What I have called the Pentecostal Christian has the New Testament on his side when he demands first of all of any body of so-called Christians, “Do you have the Holy Spirit?” For without that all your creedal orthodoxy and all your historic succession avails you nothing. To quote again the blunt words of St. Paul: “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (1954: 100-101).

In the Western church we need to repent of two closely related sins. We need to repent of underestimating that God’s Spirit can speak and direct through his word, history, and any other means he chooses (see Gallagher 2006a: 17-33; Gallagher 2006c: 336-341). Second, we need to repent of overestimating our own importance in helping the engagement of mission praxis to grow and strengthen his kingdom. The real issue in these assumptions is that we think we are better able to determine the action of ministry than the Holy Spirit. The end result is a sense of dependency on human wisdom rather than the wisdom of the Spirit of God—the divine helper—and unfortunately, this is all too prevalent in many churches today. François Fénelon, the seventeenth-century mystic once said,

It is certain from the Holy Scriptures (Rom. viii; John xiv) that the Spirit of God dwells within us, acts there, prays without ceasing, groans, desires, asks for us what we know not how to ask for ourselves, urges us on, animates us, speaks to us when we are silent, suggests to us all truth, and so unites us to him that we become one spirit (1 Cor. vi 17). This is the teaching of faith, and even those instructors who are farthest removed from the interior life, cannot avoid acknowledging so much (1853: 89).
The Holy Spirit is a person. He is not a power or energy. He has a will, intelligence, and knowledge. He has ability to love and see and think. The Holy Spirit is the teacher, a constant presence, which we cannot be. He is the one who leads us to God. In the words of John V. Taylor, “It is through worship that we constantly renew, by the activity of the Holy Spirit, our Abba relationship with the God of Jesus Christ,” (1980: 296). David Platt warns:

Let us not, then, be so foolish as to confine the work of the Spirit to one professional, speaking in one place, at one time of the week. Let us not be so unwise as to bank the spread of the gospel on a certain person at a certain place when all week long the Spirit of God is living in every single man and woman of God, empowering each of us to advance the kingdom of God for his glory (2011: 70).

Christ lives in people through the Spirit as a living presence. Christian faith reproduces Christ as our lives are sanctified, possessed, and transformed by the power of the Spirit through Christ living in us.

Or think of it this way. It is as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder on to Jesus who stands facing us. The Spirit’s message to us is never, “Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me,” but always, “Look at him, and see his glory; listen to him and hear his word; go to him and have life; get to know him and taste his gift of joy and peace.” The Spirit, we might say, is the matchmaker, the celestial marriage broker, whose role it is to bring us and Christ together and ensure that we stay together (Packer 2005: 57).

We must always be dependent on the Holy Spirit through prayer (Gallagher 2006b: 19-20). The Spirit is the activity of our prayer as we pray in the Holy Spirit. And daily we can be used by God in the power of his Spirit (Gallagher 2004b: 21-33). “The pattern of the people of God praying and the filling of the Spirit propelling people into mission is a Lukan motif that begins at the baptism of Jesus and continues throughout Luke-Acts” (Gallagher 2004a, 54). As Pope Francis reiterates,

In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit.
The real newness is the newness which God himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides, and accompanies in a thousand ways. God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us (2013:12).

The resources of the Church are supplied by the Spirit of God. The Spirit is more than the comforter. He reveals what Christ could not speak, and uses resources that were unavailable to the human Jesus. He is the Spirit of truth and revelation. The Church needs to be open and available to the reserves of the Holy Spirit. The abilities of the world and the Church are futile and inadequate. It is only the fullness of the Spirit who will give the Church of Jesus an abundance of wisdom and power (Gallagher 2012: 9-22).

A. Biblical Interpretation of Mission

Having established the significance of the role of the Holy Spirit in all of Christian life, and particularly in the engagement of mission praxis, the paper will now suggest an approach to growing in interpreting the Bible prayerfully and rightly; and obediently in community with the help of the Holy Spirit (see an example of the expanded methodology in Gallagher 2013: 3-22). There are different translations, strategies, and theologies in understanding the scripture, yet reading and studying should involve the contexts of responsibility, community, and mission. We will comment briefly on the first two settings before focusing on the mission context.

First, a follower of Christ needs to study the Bible in the context of a life-long commitment to Christ and his mission with a persisting method of steady and systematic study. Mariano Magrassi encourages diligence in our pursuit of understanding the scriptures, which will eventually lead to familiarity (1998: 64-69). He exhorts that the disciples of Jesus need not become expert biblical exegetes before studying the Bible. Instead, they are simply asked to feed daily on God’s word and in doing so will mature in understanding (1998: viii-ix). Without a growing relationship with Jesus and his word, there is the risk of drifting towards contemporary relativism.
Eugene H. Peterson writes that the spiritually mature need to continue in rigorous exegesis, and “this is not a task from which we graduate” (2006: 53).

Second, the Bible needs to be considered in appropriate rhythms of individual and communal responsibility. The Protestant tendency towards individualism is only one way that God speaks through the Bible (Matthew 6: 4, 6, 18); as is the Catholic belief in the magisterium, the authority that lays down what is the authentic teaching of the Church. For the Catholic Church, “the task of interpreting the word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him” (Ratzinger 1994: 100). As N.T. Wright proposes, however, if the mission of God is “to make the deep, life-changing, kingdom-advancing sense it is supposed to, it is vital that ordinary Christians read, encounter, and study scripture for themselves, in groups and individually” (2011: 133).1 Followers of Christ need to seek both individual and communal interpretation of scripture.

Protestant scholars such as David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina (2011: 57) and Lindsay Olesberg (2012: 40) emphasize the individual study of scripture in terms of process and conclusions arguing that the reader needs to be available to break from faith community conversations, which will increase private motivation and comprehension. The Catholic author, Henri J.M. Nouwen, also encourages individuals to cultivate a personal spirituality through reading the Bible. He contends that unless we protect our own “inner mystery” we will not be able to form community (1975:31). Furthermore, unless we nurture a genuine individual spirituality:

Our relationships with others easily become needy and greedy, sticky and clinging, dependent and sentimental, exploitive and parasitic, because we cannot experience the others as different from ourselves, but only as people who can be used for the fulfillment of our own, often hidden needs (Nouwen 1975:44).

On the other hand, most of the books of the Bible were written to faith communities to collectively shape the followers of God. Thus it remains essential to read the sacred texts together in community since the church is called to advance God’s kingdom and not individuals. This missional togetherness brings unity of purpose and action in addition to training and obedience, as well as enriching the interpretative process through dialogue and testing in the context of community (Arnold 1993:
19; Olesberg 2012: 41, 75-76, 80-82). Magrassi blends both dynamics as he claims, “God speaks not only to his people; he also addresses me personally” (1998: 7).

Lastly, we need to comprehend the Bible in the context of God’s mission to redeem and restore all creation. The Bible is the Spirit’s instrument to transform followers of Christ for the mission of God. In Scripture and the Authority of God, N.T. Wright commends reading the Bible within the larger context of the authority of God set by the biblical authors (2011: 26). God’s authority stems from his sovereign power accomplishing his mission of redeeming and renewing the entire cosmos. For Wright, the authority of the Bible over the Church is shorthand for the authority of God exercised through scripture, which as an extension of God’s authority over all creation, is made manifest in his mission (2011: 21, 24).

This is the central narrative of the scripture with its origin in the story of the people of God found in the Hebrew text. The climax of Israel’s story came with the death and resurrection of Jesus, which served as the inauguration of the kingdom of God, and will come to full consummation in the future redemption and renewal of the cosmos (Wright 2011: 41). Empowered by the transformative agency of the Holy Spirit, the Church is God’s vehicle for advancing his kingdom in the world. The early church believed that God accomplished his purposes “through the ‘word’; the story of Israel now transmuted into God’s call to his renewed people” (Wright 2011: 50). The Church is invited into and nurtured for this mission by the Bible. Followers of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, gather in Christian community to be transformed by the word to advance the mission of God in the world (Wright 2011: 115-116).

Kevin J. Vanhoozer modifies Wright’s approach of locating the Bible within the greater story of God by using theatrical language. He argues that theatre has occurred “when one or more persons ‘present’ themselves to others” (2009: 156). God has accomplished this dramatic task by presenting himself and his mission in the world on the stage of world history, as well as inviting people to participate in the drama, which becomes a theodrama (156-158). The audience does not merely view the divine play from the seats, but is invited to participate in the “dialogue in action.” The Bible as the story of God is a drama in which readers join the encounter. Vanhoozer believes that the Church does not submit to a perfect book filled with perfect truths, but to God and his mission of redemption as revealed in the Bible (163). The scriptures direct our attention to the
godly drama and invite our participation. People’s lives are changed by retelling the story of God’s mission, which carries genuine power and God’s authority (156).

Although Jeffrey Arnold (1993), Bauer and Traina (2011), Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart (1981), Bob Grahmann (2003), Olesberg (2012), Leland Ryken and James C. Wilhoit (2012), and Ruth Sun (1982) have all written Bible reading handbooks and agree in principle with Wright and Vanhoozer on the view of biblical authority, they appear negligent in implementing the foundational mission of God context in their interpretative methodologies. Instead they rely on a “principilizing” hermeneutic that emphasizes the identification of universal principles from a biblical passage so that readers can align their lives. Olesberg explains this principilizing message: “The word of God describes reality and shines light into our lives so that we can be aligned with what is true” (2012: 21). Further, Grahmann emphasizes, “A belief in the truth of the Bible and a desire to obey its precepts is a foundational value of evangelical Christianity” (2003: 28-29).

In other words, the disciple of Christ reads the Bible and learns the universal truths and commands found therein, which are then applied in contemporary situations bringing the authoritative truth into the world. The Bible is God’s spoken revelation disclosing all the necessary truths of life, especially regarding the death and resurrection of Christ. The truth found within the scriptures carries the authority of God into the world. The “Word” is the Son of God, Jesus, messiah made flesh, and it is through his death and resurrection that the world’s sins were paid and forgiven. An over-emphasis on principilizing, however, can separate the reader from the wider context of the Church and the kingdom of God. Accompanying this assumption is the notion that the Bible’s authority comes from its essence as a perfect book, carrying perfect truths, and given by a perfect God.

Vanhoozer claims that this interpretative approach substitutes a cognitive “logic of redemption” for the “drama of redemption.” This method “de-dramatizes” the Bible and thrusts the reader towards “the ‘point’ without the parable, the content without the form, the ‘soul’ without the body of the text” (2009: 158-159). Underlying principles and truths are only uncovered when they are extracted from a specific context in which they were initially planted. Yet, in the process of proper interpretation it is challenging to determine from these truths an application for today. The Bible’s authority is founded in the theodrama—God’s mission to the world that the Church is invited to join—and the reader should seek wisdom
from how the biblical text portrays “concrete wisdom-in-act;” and not just extract principles from the text. Biblical understanding is more than an intellectual exercise since it requires participation in the story of God.

The Bible is not primarily a set of commands and doctrines, but a call to participate in the theodrama. Peterson states:

The Bible does not present us with a moral code and tell us, “Live up to this;” nor does it set out a system of doctrine and say, “Think like this and you will live well.” The biblical way is to tell a story and in the telling invite: “Live into this—this is what it looks like to be human in this God-made and God-ruled world; this is what is involved in becoming and maturing as a human being (2006: 43-44).

Followers of Jesus do not simply study the Bible, but their lives are changed in thinking and behavior as they demonstrate concrete acts of love and mission in God’s world (Peterson 2006: 18).

Christopher J.H. Wright suggests that interpreting the Bible should find a healthy rhythm between a missional and principilizing hermeneutic since the two views are complementary. He maintains that the views of N.T. Wright and Vanhoozer need to address how obedience to the scriptures in today’s world actually takes place. Thus some method of principilizing is necessary. Likewise, the principilizing hermeneutical approach needs the contribution of knowing the fullness of the biblical metanarrative (2009: 321-322). Christopher Wright maintains that it is important for readers to understand that the mission of God provides the authoritative context of the Bible, and allow that realization to permeate their reading methodology. The church participates in the mission of God, “and the only access that we have to that mission of God is given us in the Bible. This is the grand narrative that is unlocked when we turn the hermeneutical key of reading all the scriptures in the light of the mission of God” (Wright 2006: 534). At the same time, students of the Bible should desire to follow specific commands and truths in their daily lives.
B. Defining Missional Terms

The paper will now move to the third major focus of engaging in pneumatic mission praxis—after the function of the Holy Spirit and a biblical theology of mission—by defining key terms. The consequence of definitions may be shown in considering the approach of David J. Bosch in his influential tome, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Bosch states concerning the meaning of the expression “mission:”

> [O]n the issue of mission we run into difficulties here, particularly if we adhere to the traditional understanding of mission as the sending of preachers to distant places (a definition which, in the course of this study, will be challenged in several ways). There is, in the Old Testament, no indication of the believers of the old covenant being sent by God to cross geographical, religious, and social frontiers in order to win others to faith in Yahweh (1991:19).

Bosch does not recognize any mission in the Hebrew scriptures based solely on the traditional definition of mission as “sending.” His paradigm shifts in theology of mission thus begin with the Gospels of the New Testament; simply ignoring over eighty-five percent of the sacred word.

Yet, if you have the concept of mission defined as, “leading people in their life’s journey across barriers towards repentance and faith in the one, true, living God,” then the whole of the first testament is relevant to our discussion, since there are numerous examples that fit this definition. Ivan Illich reinforces this notion in his definition of missiology. “Missiology studies the growth of the Church into new peoples, the birth of the Church beyond its social boundaries; beyond the linguistic barriers within which she feels at home; beyond the poetical images in which she taught her children” (1974: 7).

When I ask my students the question, “Name the people of God in the Old Testament who have intercultural encounters,” they respond with quite a list of names: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob and their wives in Canaan, Joseph and the patriarchal family in Egypt, Moses in Egypt,
etc. Perhaps a better question would be, “Name the people of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible who are not in any connection with the other nations.” The answer is resoundingly, “Not many.” All of us have various descriptions of the phrase “mission” that serve as a lens to view the Bible missiologically: shaped by our theological tradition, personal journey, and mission context in ongoing hermeneutical spirals over time.

The importance of this awareness of definitions is not confined to the first testament only. The definition of “the Gospel” of Jesus Christ in the second testament also bears evidence of the need of careful understanding of first-century ideas embedded in words and phrases (see Mark 1:1). The expression, “the Gospel,” was derived from the Greek word, euangelion, meaning “good message” or “glad tidings”. This noun was used 27 times in the English New Testament. The verb, euangelizo, was used 55 times and means “to bring good news” or “announce glad tidings”. The word, euangelistes, was found three times to describe the function of the office of an evangelist, especially in the letters of Paul (Ephesians 4:7-13). The content of the Good News has an apostolic and Christological formula, with the synthesis being the rule or reign of God. The Lord calls the church to communicate the Good News of God’s victory over all that is wrong in humanity and the world, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

These preliminary ideas regarding the significance of missional terms and phrases need to be further teased out. Bosch’s “Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-currents Today” (1987: 98-103) is a survey of the various ways the terms “mission” and “evangelism” were understood and practiced by contemporary missiologists and theologians. At first, the terms “mission” and “evangelism” were used as synonyms even if technical definitions were different. They ranged from the narrowly evangelical to the broadly ecumenical. It is possible to identify six positions along this continuum.

**Position 1:** Mission and evangelism (M/E) was seen as winning souls for eternity and saving people from hell so that they might go to heaven. This was the task of the church, and to be involved in anything else was a diversion from its ministry. Most theologians who took this approach were pre-millennialists.
**Position 2**: M/E conveyed a “softer” emphasis on soul winning. It was also good to be involved in some activities such as relief work and education. “Mission as soul-winning” viewed such efforts as distractions. Involvement in social reform was deemed optional.

**Position 3**: M/E was soul-winning, yet with service ministries (e.g., education, health care, and social uplift) important in bringing people to Christ. They were aids to mission, or buttresses to the Gospel.

**Position 4**: M/E focused on individuals being transformed through the proclamation of the gospel. That transformation, it was believed, led to their involvement in society. The church proclaims the Good News, and redeemed people change society.

**Position 5**: M/E were synonymous, yet the scope of activities expanded considerably beyond the proclamation of the Gospel. The people of God were to be involved in Christian ministry outside the church in ever-expanding ecumenical circles. In the 1960s and 70s the World Council of Churches used “mission,” “witness,” and “evangelism” somewhat interchangeably often with only a muted call to conversion (in the traditional evangelical sense) being present in their documents.

**Position 6**: M/E did not include a call to repentance and faith in Christ. Instead, the focus was solely to change the structures of society. M/E was understood in terms of interhuman categories with salvation involving only this world (Bosch 1987: 98).

In addition to the synonymous use of the terms “mission” and “evangelism,” it is also possible to identify four different ways that evangelism was distinguished from mission:

1. **Objects** of mission and evangelism were different. For instance, Johannes Verkuyl viewed evangelism as communicating the Christian faith in Western society; those being evangelized were no longer Christian or were only nominally so. Mission, by contrast, was
communicating the Gospel in the majority world to those who were not yet Christians. This view was held in Europe by Lutheran, Reformed churches, and Catholicism (1978: 9).

2. Some theologians omitted “mission” from their vocabulary. Evangelism became comprehensive and all-embracing. Catholics, in particular, objected to the colonial implications of the term “mission.” Evangelization became the preferred term to refer to what the church was doing in the areas of human development, liberation, justice, and peace.

3. Both “mission” and “evangelism” were used, although “evangelism” was the wider term and “mission” was the narrower. Evangelism was an umbrella term for anything to do with the Gospel: proclamation, translation, dialogue, service, and presence. Mission became a theological concept used for the origin and motivation of the above activities.

4. “Mission” was the wider term and “evangelism” the narrower. Mission equals evangelism plus social action (two separate parts of mission). Further, there were three different ways that this notion was understood: a. John Stott and the Lausanne Covenant believed that in the church’s mission, evangelism was primary. Stott stated that evangelism was more important than social involvement, and eternal salvation does not equal economic and/or political liberation. b. Both words were equally important, and we should not prioritize between the two since they were intertwined. c. Social involvement was more important than evangelism (Bosch 1987: 98-99).

In light of all of these variations of definition, what can one finally say about “evangelism?” Bosch spoke of eight unique dimensions (1987: 100-102):

1. The center, core, or heart of mission was evangelism. This involved proclaiming salvation through Jesus Christ to nonbelievers, announcing forgiveness of sins, calling people to repentance and faith in Christ, and inviting
them to join Christ’s earthly community, living in the power of the Holy Spirit. This does not limit evangelism to soul-winning. The Bible always sees the human person as a living body-soul connected to their society. Evangelism was not just concerned with the inward/spiritual side of people. The Gospel was incarnational. Persons who adhered to this view of evangelism understood that calling people to faith and a new life was an essential activity.

2. Evangelism sought to bring people into the visible community of believers. It was not recruiting people to become members of a local church. Protestants saw evangelism as involving church expansion by transference: from the world to the church. Numerical church growth equalled the fruit of successful evangelism.

3. Evangelism involved witnessing to what God had done, is doing, and will do. The focus of attention was on God and not on us. Evangelism was telling what God had already done in Christ. This does not mean that evangelism was restricted to verbal witnessing. It consists of word and deed, proclamation and presence, explanation and example. Both our verbal and our visual need to match: our lips and our life. We should embody the Gospel in the midst of our culture.

4. Evangelism was an invitation: it did not involve coaxing or threats by playing on feelings of guilt, or the terror of hell. People should turn to God because they are drawn to him by his love and not because they are pushed to God through fear.

5. Evangelism was possible when the church radiated the life of Christ. If our message is faith, hope, and love, then we should manifest our message in real life (see Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). Hans Werner Gensichen, the German missiologist, mentions five characteristics of a church involved in evangelism: a. it lets outsiders feel at home; b. it was not merely an object of pastoral care with the pastor having the monopoly; c. its members were involved
in society; d. it was structurally flexible and adaptable; e. it did not defend the interests of any select group of people (1971:170-172).

6. Evangelism involved risk. You never know what the Gospel will do in a person’s life; and evangelizing may change the messenger. Both Cornelius and Peter were converted (see Acts 10).

7. There was a concern to not view evangelism as purveying a guaranteed happiness for this life or the next. It was important to stress that evangelism not be seen as excessively individualistic, or as encouraging a consumer mentality. It was not simply to receive life that people are called to Christ, but rather to give life.

8. Evangelism was calling people to follow Christ and to continue his mission. It was not seen as a list of do’s, don’t’s, or attainments.

In this essay, mission is regarded as the wider concept and evangelism as the narrower. Yet, there are problems with defining “mission” as equaling evangelism plus social action since this leads to the question of which one is more important. This could suggest that you can have evangelism without social action and the social component without evangelism. Then what is mission? In broad terms, I accept Bosch’s wider definition of mission as being the total task that God has set the church for the salvation of the world. Mission is the church carrying God’s message of salvation across all types of barriers: geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, and ideological. Mission also involves the redemption of the universe and the glorification of God.

Additionally, evangelism may be defined as that dimension and activity of the church’s mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the Gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, with a view to embracing him as savior, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth.
C. History of Christian Mission

Thus far this essay has discussed the role of prayer and the Holy Spirit, responsible scriptural reflection in the contexts of community and mission, and the value of carefully delineating terms such as mission and evangelism. The purpose of the next section is to outline seventeen movements in the expansion of the Christian church that I teach in my mission history course. This missiological reinterpretation of church history focuses on the dynamics of the expansion, and the implications for contemporary strategies of mission. Engaging in pneumatic praxis concerns itself with understanding the processes through which the Christian movement has expanded, and not merely in the recitation of dates and names. In the course I pay specific attention to the means of Holy Spirit renewal, structure of mission, role of leadership, and the relationship between the three. The movements will now be briefly considered in approximate chronological order starting with the Church of the East followed by Orthodox mission, early monasticism, and Celtic Christianity to Moravianism and Methodism, stopping short of William Carey, the so-called “father of modern mission” (who went to southern India in 1792).

Church of the East: How did Christianity come to China? So much of missions' history focuses on Europe and the Western church. Yet the expansion of the Christian faith is not the exclusive domain of the West. With such information so easily accessible, it is effortless to slide into the old routines of victorious Eurocentricism, and miss the amazing stories of the Church of the East (so-called Nestorianism) in Persia, India, Central Asia, China, and Japan. Exploring answers to the question posed above, unfolds the fascinating account of a missions' movement that originated in the East and pushed the borders of Christendom into unexplored territory (Brock 1996: 23-35; Moffett 1998: 169-184).

Orthodox Church: From the Celts of Europe’s western tip to the east coast of Japan, God was also at work in his church during the Middle Ages. Exposure to Orthodox mission strategy involves examining case studies such as the missionaries Cyril and Methodius in what is now known as the Balkans, Stephen of Perm in Siberia, Herman of Alaska,
and Nicholas Kassatkin in Japan, as well as gaining an overview of the two main eras of Orthodox mission—the Byzantine and Russian (Stamoolis 1986; Gallagher 2011).

**Monasticism:** The rise of early monasticism is traced from Egypt to southern France and Asia Minor. Key leaders such as Antony and Benedict (Benedictines) contributed to the renewal of the declining church, followed by other mission movements such as the Cistercians, Cluniacs, and the pillar saints (Latourette 1975: 221-235; Moreau, Corwin, and McGee 2004: 93-113; Gallagher 2005a: 87-106).

**Celtic Christianity:** The Irish mission movement began with Patrick in Ireland and expanded via Columba to Scotland and Columba to Bobbio, Italy. Also, English monks were encouraged towards mission by this radical Irish vision, such as Willibrord and Boniface who proclaimed the Gospel in Holland and Germany, respectively (Blocher and Blandenier 2013: 53-79).

**Medieval Renewal:** Before the Protestant reformation, Hussites, Lollards, and Waldensians challenged the church to return to the Gospel of Jesus and the scriptures. Among the more influential of these leaders were Jan Hus of Prague, John Wycliffe of Oxford, and Peter Waldo of Lyons. The lives of these men created a legacy for the church of today (Pierson 2009: 79-128).

**Medieval Friars:** Dominic and Francis were early thirteenth century lay leaders in the Catholic Church that began renewal movements, which spread throughout Europe. Two hundred years before the first Protestant missionaries, the Dominican and Franciscan friars took their message of Christian love and service to the outposts of the Middle East, North Africa, China, and the Americas (Bevans and Schroeder 2004: 137-170; Blocher and Blandenier 2013: 103-118).

**Protestant Reformation:** The historical and contextual conditions of early sixteenth century Germany laid the foundation for a European reformation of the church. The printing press allowed the influential writings of Martin Luther to be quickly distributed into the hands of the peasants. Many German princes of the Holy Roman Empire also turned from Catholicism, and became followers of Luther’s teaching, along with the people of their provinces. Students from all over Europe joined
Luther at the University of Wittenberg, Saxony and later returned to their home country to share the Lutheran message of reformation, especially in Scandinavia (Shelley 1995: 237-310; Pierson 2009: 129-176).

Swiss Protestants, such as Huldreich Zwingli, expanded the reformation by calling for a return to biblical water baptism and church governance. This radical form of Protestantism created the Anabaptist movement, which in the midst of persecution spread to parts of Europe and the American colonies. Second generation reformers centered on Geneva, Switzerland and the ministry of the Frenchman, Jan Calvin. John Knox of Scotland, and other international students, attended Calvin's Academy in Geneva, and returned to their home countries to initiate Calvinism, another form of Protestant reformation (Gallagher 2005b: 107-127; Irvin and Sunquist 2012: 71-124).

Catholic Reformation: Only partially in response to the Protestant Reformation, Ignatius of Loyola led a reformation of his own in the Catholic Church. At the University of Paris, Loyola and six other students formed a Catholic teaching order known as the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits. This quasi-military group helped turn back the Protestant expansion, especially in Eastern Europe, and became a strong missionary force in Asia and Latin America with missionaries such as Francis Xavier and Pedro Claver, respectively (Bevans and Schroeder 2004: 171-205; Noll 2012: 189-214).

Protestant Mission: The Puritan movement in England called for a reformation of Anglicanism that would be more in line with scripture and less with the Catholic Church. The process of renewal switched back and forth from persecution to acceptance, depending on the religious affiliation of the English monarch. The Puritan, John Elliot, was one of the first missionaries to successfully minister among the Native Americans around present-day Boston (Bosch 1991: 255-261; González 2010: 193-210).

In the mid-seventeenth century, Philip Spener and August Franke became leaders of the Pietist movement in Germany. They sought for a renewal of the Lutheran church that emphasized a personal faith in Christ and small group meetings for discipleship. Halle University became the center of Pietism, and produced the first successful Protestant missionaries, sending its graduates to Greenland, Scandinavia, and India (Neill 1990: 194-204; Hartley 2007: 340-341).
The early eighteenth century saw the persecuted Bohemian Brethren seek refuge at the Herrnhut estate of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. After experiencing their own Holy Spirit Pentecost, this small group of believers formed one of the foremost missionary movements of modern history. Under Zinzendorf’s leadership, the Moravians commissioned more missionaries in their first 20 years than the previous two hundred years of Protestantism. Within two decades they had missionaries in over twenty of the most difficult regions of the world (Gallagher 2008a: 237-244; Gallagher 2008b: 185-210).

Influenced by the Moravians, John and Charles Wesley experienced a personal awakening of the Holy Spirit that launched a revival in eighteenth century Britain. Along with George Whitefield, John Wesley preached in the open fields of Bristol, traveling extensively throughout the country, and influenced thousands to commit their lives to Christ. These new converts were then formed into discipleship bands, which became the seedbed of further revival and missionary activity around the world (Neill 1990: 207-272; Gallagher 2005c: 129-142).


D. Missional Action in the Local Context

In crafting a philosophy and methodology of mission praxis, the final section of this essay will explore guidelines of Christian proclamation in the local context. In particular, the essay will explore how to share the Christian faith in a postmodern North American situation. In the first half of the twentieth century many North Americans were asking spiritual questions such as: Is Christianity rational? Is there a God? Is Christ God? Is he the only way to God? What is the evidence that Christ rose from
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the dead? Do science and scripture agree? How can miracles be possible? These questions were answered by Christian apologists such as C.S. Lewis. In 1945 Lewis reflected, “I am not sure that the ideal missionary team ought not to consist of one who argues and one who (in the fullest sense of the word) preaches. Put up your arguer first to undermine their intellectual prejudices; then let the evangelist proper launch his appeal. I have seen this done with great success” (1970: 99).

Most people today, however, are asking a different set of questions: Why are Christians imposing their beliefs and morality on others? How can Christians tell other people who they are? Why do I hurt? Why did my family break apart? Why is there so much hatred and violence in the world? Why should I trust the church, which has done so many terrible things? Does the Christian belief make any difference? Do I have to become Republican and right wing to be a Christian? The questions that contemporary seekers are asking have changed in the last fifty years.

In dealing with these hard questions, postmodern apologists often begin their response by first asking, “Why do you ask?” In developing a mission strategy in responding to questions of a postmodern generation, we should be mindful of addressing the trust issue that lies behind the tough questions. That is, identify with people as you ask them to tell their story. As you share your story, talk about how your questions received answers. Challenge them with the truth you had to face in your life. At that point you may want to generalize to truth for everyone, which speaks to the experience-centered person. Then ask them how they respond to what you have said.

We have already suggested that mission involves the people of God carrying Christ’s message of salvation across all kinds of barriers; and in doing so, incorporates evangelism in offering people an opportunity to embrace the Gospel of faith in Jesus Christ as savior. These activities of the Church are not exclusively verbal declarations, but are correspondingly intertwined with proclamations of social activism. To focus our discussion, however, I will limit the guidelines of Christian decree to the spoken word. This missional approach towards a North American postmodern context is adapted from the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. The remaining segment unfolds how to announce the Good News of Christ using the previous framework via the concepts of messenger, message, and method of mission.
Messenger: We are in the era of the messenger as an artist, and hence we must heighten our abilities. Western culture’s expectation of communicators has risen in the digital age. Leonard Sweet affirms, “Just as the printing press revolutionized the world 500 years ago, the electronic media is re-defining today’s society. The impact of visual communication is profound” (1993: 3). In our contemporary world, the messenger of the Gospel should deliver the word of God in simplicity and humor coupled with authenticity and passion.

Simplicity: Simplicity is the ability to make truth clear, concise, and organized. Our goal is simplicity on the other side of complexity. Educational research is calling for fewer ideas in greater depth. Simplicity requires presenting one idea, and demands translation of technical language in clear logical transitions.

Humor: Humor is the ability to laugh, bring laughter, and allow for emotional and mental rest. The best humor comes out of a spontaneous interjection rather than planned jokes. For those who have little skill or lack an innate sense of timing, however, good clean jokes are acceptable. Humor accomplishes several things: creates relevance and affinity; emphasizes a point with subtle power; and relaxes an audience.

Authenticity: Authenticity is the most compelling trait in communication since it creates a sense of presence. Preaching demands this capacity for it is truth through personality. Moreover, effective communication is truth through a true person. What you say must be true for who you are. Preaching is a most self-revealing activity as you expose your inner being.

Passion: Passion is the ability to communicate with a full commitment and sense of urgency. Biblical passion is fueled by a love for those separated from God (Matthew 9:35-39). People easily manifest felt needs; yet have insoluble longings for justice, relationships, beauty, spirituality, and freedom.
Finally, there are a number of cautions for the messenger to effectively communicate. For example, avoid the trap of only entertaining without explaining. Stories are not enough since there is a need of substance. There is also the danger of too little Bible with inadequate theological interpretation. Paul wrote, “Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God. . . . We do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2).

Message: The messenger delivering the word of God with simplicity, humor, authenticity, and passion likewise needs to be conscious of the substance of the message. The central point of Christianity is that sin is the breaking of God’s shalom: God’s full blessing for humanity. Any deed, word, desire, or emotion contrary to God’s will is displeasing to him and deserves blame. The scripture refers to this problem as the wrath of God—God’s holiness reacting to evil—the unavoidable progression of cause and effect in an ethical universe. The wrath of God towards sin establishes the stage for the doctrine of the atonement.

Forgiveness is a problem for God. How can God forgive and still be consistent in his revulsion of evil? The love of God must not be seen apart from the wrath of God, or the cross is no more than an emotionally excessive action. Similarly, the wrath of God must not be seen apart from the love of God, or God is a tyrant. Our relationship to God through the Holy Spirit dissolves all our imperfections. All our debts and evil ways were taken and paid for on the cross by the blood of Christ. Through faith in the work of Christ Jesus, we become children of God born of the Father’s love. This is the Good News of the atonement. Lewis confirms, “The central Christian belief is that Christ’s death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start” (1952: 57).

Method: Having established the importance of the trained communicator and the centrality of the cross in responding to a postmodern generation, this essay will now move to the last of our guiderails: mission method. More than one-third of scripture and ninety per cent of the material contained in the Gospels was narrative. Listen to Peterson’s version of how Jesus used story. “With many stories like these, he presented his message to them, fitting the stories to their experience and maturity. He was never without a story when he spoke. When he was alone with his disciples, he went over everything, sorting out the tangles, untangling the knots” (Mark 10:37).
And again in Matthew 13:34-35: “All Jesus did that day was tell stories—a long storytelling afternoon. His storytelling fulfilled the prophecy: ‘I will open my mouth and tell stories; I will bring out into the open things hidden since the world’s first day’” (*The Message*).

Why should modern speakers major in the use of story as a method of communication? Stories are compelling. People love stories. They were the dominant biblical genre of God’s messengers, and the major type of transmission in the Gospels. Stories relate truth visually to the whole person: emotions, intellect, memory, commonality, and community. Because of this, stories make the truth easier to remember. They also ignite vision and beliefs, as well as solidifying our identity and security. Since our lives become stories they have the power to redeem. Stories bridge the gap between the biblical and present-day world as a most effective tool of persuasion in an anti-authoritarian age.

In this final section of the paper, we have explored how to share the Christian faith to a postmodern generation by emphasizing the importance of the prepared communicator who has the message of the centrality of the cross interwoven with personal story as the prime method of communication.

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**Conclusion**

It is well to remember that this whole journey involves rhythms of contemplation and engagement, together with the accumulated awareness of the following practices: spiritual disciplines to hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit; proper biblical hermeneutics in the contexts of commitment, community, and mission; purposeful treatment of defining fundamental terms; and an appreciation of the historic progress of the Christian faith. After the resulting missional action (taking into account the messenger, message, and method), the reflection again returns to the scripture for further enlightenment. In this manner we are always prayerfully reliant on the revelation of the Holy Spirit, as we reexamine each step of our engagement in pneumatic mission praxis.
Notes

1. My intent is not to draw an extreme or perfect contrast between what N.T. Wright and Joseph Ratzinger have noted. The Roman Catholic magisterium also encourages faithful Catholics to read and study Holy Scripture. Ratzinger's concern is for the Catholic Church to maintain more strict oversight (at least officially) over *how* scripture is interpreted. Generally, Protestants do not have as strict of controls in this regard.
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