
Missiological Education as Missionary Theology

Dr. Donald Dean Owens

In April 2004 it was my joy to be invited to share in celebrating the 20th anniversary of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary and give the Commencement address. I was very impressed by the development of APNTS in all of the major categories that make up a successful educational institution; that is: a growing student body, exemplary faculty, strong library offerings, and pleasant facilities. Perhaps I should not have been surprised when Rev. Steve Walsh, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, announced that the administration and faculty would initiate planning for the creation of a School of World Mission at APNTS. I am honored that my name is being associated with it. People continue to think more of me than I deserve. I am deeply grateful for the pilgrimage that Mrs. Owens and I have shared together.

I applaud Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in positioning the institution at the very heart of what a Sovereign Lord is doing in the world. The urgent task of bringing the gospel to the lost of earth must be undergirded by the careful academic study of why He is doing it, where He is doing it, and how He is doing it. While God moves in mysterious ways to fulfill His love for mankind by mission, it is still incumbent upon the church to understand all we can. This requires reflection.

The geographical location of the seminary at the crossroads of east, west, north, and south provides the cross-cultural setting for a global view of theological education. APNTS is already staffed with a faculty that has had missiological training or members embedded in deep cross-cultural understandings. The seminary has a budding library of collections for mission studies. Metro Manila offers an ideal setting for challenging urban evangelism. At the same time, just a few kilometers from the heart of the city are rural areas that offer opportunities for profound cross-cultural experiences. The diverse composition of the student body makes possible immediate resources for dialogue and cultural insights.

The stage is set for some significant work here as missiology is recognized as an essential part of the curriculum. It must be admitted that this is a road less traveled. Missiology, the Science of Missions, for most theological schools is “the new kid on the block” with no secure place within the theological curriculum. Even now, when one uses the word “Missiology,” eyebrows are raised and a “Huh?” is extracted. Missiological education seems to have a relatively long history in Europe, especially among the Roman Catholic Orders. However, before 1950, missiology in the United States had not developed an academic character with regard to definition, methodology, and objectives.

In 1966 when Bethany Nazarene College (now Southern Nazarene University) asked me to teach missions courses as part of the theological curriculum, one of my colleagues indicated that “missions were history, or it was nothing.” Another informed me that it was “another form in the practice of ministry.” Following my installation address as professor of missions at Nazarene Theological Seminary in 1974, because I had sought to show how missiology was informed by all branches of theological and societal interests, one of my colleagues told me, “I think you have claimed too much for your discipline.” Actually, all that I wanted to show, in the words of a youngster who wrote a term paper entitled, “The World and All That Is In It,” was missiology is . . . the world and everything in it!

The Christian faith is intrinsically missionary. It sees all peoples, *ta ethne* as objects of God’s salvific will and plan of reconciling the world unto Himself in and through Jesus Christ. He, who was sent, now sends in his ministry of reconciliation. This dimension of the Christian faith is not an optional extra: Christianity is missionary by its very nature or it denies its very reason for existence. It is generally acknowledged that the supreme task of the Church is to make Jesus Christ known to all men. Yet, it is interesting that the Church has often shown little interest in providing any adequate courses that would prepare men and women for the task. In typical fashion, as most missionaries fifty years ago, I went out as missionary

without having a single course, other than a required language course, where missions were a professor's primary concern. Classical theological education or medicines were the two main roads to the mission fields, for men and women. The phrase was not in vogue then, but it was assumed that the missionary appointee would enter the wide world of mission and **"Just Do It!"**

It is not my intention to lessen the importance of the biblical and theological core of the theological education curriculum because these disciplines are front and center, especially if they lead to praxis in ministry. However, given the setting of APNTS, there is an important point that I must raise.

Each semester that I have taught missiology I have habitually begun with a section that I call "Biblical Foundations of Missions". The text I have used is a fine book by Gailyn Van Rhee entitled "Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies: Missions." I know that decades ago, theology was referred to as "the queen of the sciences." As many of our colleagues here have done, I studied the biblical data and theological reflections as "documents of an inner-Christian doctrinal struggle" and early Christian history as "confessional" history, as a struggle between different Christian parties and theologians. I submit to you that the missionary character of the New Testament has not always been appreciated. If the Holy Scriptures spawned theology as "queen" then I support David Bosch's assertion that missiology is the "mother of theology." The New Testament is a missionary document. Bosch writes: "The New Testament writers were not scholars who had the leisure to research the evidence before they put pen to paper." Rather, they wrote in the context of an "emergency situation" of a church which, because of its missionary encounter with the world, was forced to theologize. The gospels, in particular, are to be viewed not as writings produced by an historical impulse but as expressions of an ardent faith, written with the purpose of commending Jesus Christ to the Mediterranean world. New Testament authors were less interested in definitions of mission than in the missionary existence of their readers.

Definitions of Missiology

When one seeks to define something, that person attempts to build a fence around a mental construct, not allowing extraneous nuances to slip in to change or impact the essential nature of the subject at hand. Missiology is surrounded by a fence, but the fence apparently has large cracks in it as evidenced by the variety of names for the science of missions. The selection of a name for the discipline is very important. However, since the term is being more widely accepted, there is a need to describe and delineate the field of study.

Justice Anderson points out that the term “missiology” has had some criticism on purely linguistic grounds. Some theologians express a positive dislike of this term. These critics maintain the word—a compound of Latin and Greek—is a horrid, hybrid word, a linguistic monstrosity! However, one notes that such “monsters” appear frequently. For example, sociology, and other *ologies*.

Missiology came into the English language from a French word that had its beginning from a Latin derivation of a Greek verb *missio*, the act of sending. **Logia** is a Greek derivative from the sense of reason, inference, or study. Perhaps a tentative definition of the field of missiology should be advanced. As one would expect, the two definitions seem more descriptive rather than definitive, but they are helpful nonetheless.

Alan R. Tippett (1911-88) emerged from twenty years of missionary service with the Australian Methodist Mission in Fiji to become a significant missiologist with strong anthropological insights. He collaborated in several publications within the so-called “Church Growth” movement out of Eugene, Oregon and Fuller Theological Seminary. His writings were not only theoretical in many instances, but steeped in the practice of missions.

Following his conversion, Tippett knew that a vocation in missions was to be his calling. In obedience to the advice of his father, he pursued the full ministerial training course. His training, however, had no cross-cultural dimension. This included Missions, neither its theology,

theory or history. In later years as an active missionary, he lamented over this gap in appropriate training for the missionary calling. In time he earned an M.A. with emphasis on social anthropology.

Perhaps it could be pointed out that in the United Kingdom, anthropology is called “social anthropology,” while in the United States, it is called “cultural anthropology.” This distinction is based upon historical contingencies when Great Britain was a colonial power with interest in control within social structures.

Tippett considered anthropology as an important tool for missionaries. Most successful missionaries became applied anthropologists as they struggled to understand and communicate the culture nuances of the peoples among whom they served. Given his intense concern for church growth in several dimensions, we can understand Tippett’s points of interest in his definition or description of missiology. He writes,

The academic discipline or science which researches, records and applies data relating to the biblical origin, the history (including the use of documentary materials), the anthropological principles and techniques and the theological base of the Christian mission. The theory, methodology and data bank are particularly directed towards: the processes by which the Christian message is communicated; the encounters brought about by its proclamation to non-Christians; the planting of the Church and organization of congregations, the incorporation of converts into those congregations, and the growth and relevance of their structures and fellowship, internally to maturity, externally in outreach, as the Body of Christ in local situations and beyond, in a variety of culture patterns.

A succinct, and more “user friendly” definition, is provided by Justice Anderson who says, “Missiology is the science of missions. It includes the formal study of the theology of mission, the history of missions, the

concomitant philosophies of mission and their strategic implementation in given cultural settings.”

Most evangelical seminaries having departments of missions embrace the fourfold pattern of missiological training as articulated by Anderson’s definition, and subscribe to the practical approach of Alan Tippett. There is little substitute for hands-on missionary experience in the classroom where missiology is taught by those who have engaged in field work. The passion of the instructor is a powerful voice; and it is true, some things are caught rather than taught. Having said that however, every seminary offering such a discipline should also require solid academic credentials in the various fields of theological reflection.

Johannes Verkuyl, a Dutch missiologist, writes that the term “missiology” is of rather old vintage. Quite naturally, since the beginning of church history many derivations appeared from the Latin translation of the Greek verb *apostle: mittere, missio, missiones, etc.* The derivation *missio* only surfaces in the sixteenth century when both the Jesuit and Carmelite order of monks sent out hundreds of missionaries. Of course, this leads to the question of whose mission is it?

Out of the world missionary conference held in Willingen, West Germany in 1952, a term which stemmed from the time of the Trinitarian discussions emerged: *missio Dei*. The council concluded that “the missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the *triune God Himself*.” This concept provided one of the earliest books I read on missiology, George Vicedom’s famous book *Missio Dei (The Mission of God)*. Another emphasis of the of the Willingen Conference, and repeated often was the relationship between *missio Dei* and *missio ecclesiae*. The conclusion was, “There is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission.” This is what Emil Brunner meant when he said later, “The Church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith: (i.e. no theology).”

Men like John Taylor and Johannes Aagaard point out that to be faithful to the Scriptures, one should not refer to the *missio Dei* but to *missiones Dei* which underscores the historical data in the Bible that God involved Himself in the various activities of believers who were called upon to perform in his name the innumerable ministries of compassion and reconciliation. If theology is the study of God and divine things, then one would think that the theological enterprise would concern itself with the acts of God in His contemporary salvation orientation. A perusal of most classical and contemporary theologies reveals that this is not the case.

As a case in point, in his small book, *Karl Barth's Theology of Mission*, Waldron Scott writes, "It is somewhat disconcerting to the missions-minded reader to discover that within the more than eight thousand pages of his systematic theology, Karl Barth devotes a mere four and one-half pages to the specific topic of foreign missions." One must not conclude that Barth had no missionary theology. In fact, the theme of *missio Dei* permeates his magnum opus. However, although his personal and frequent visits to the prisons and his attacks on injustice are well known, when considered in the framework of his total theology, he has relatively few words to say about the specifics of foreign missions.

Following David Bosch and others, theological education needs both a missiological dimension, *missio Dei*, and a missiological intention, both the study of God's mission and the furthering of the study of the church's mission. He writes:

The solution lies neither in regarding missiology as a subdivision of one of the classical theological disciplines nor in its self-assertion as an autonomous subject. We need a third option.... When [missiology's] right to exist was grudgingly conceded [in theological education] . . . a solution was attempted in either assigning to missiology a completely separate sphere, making it a component of one of the 'classical' disciplines, or hoping the other

disciplines would embroider their own courses slightly by including some threads of mission. None of these attempts proved satisfactory....It seems to me that we need a combination of these three solutions.... Mission is the action of God in which the church shares and which belongs to the essential nature and character of the church....Missions are particular forms of this essential participation [by the church] in God's mission, related to specific times, places or needs. They are identifiable activities of the church—activities which flow from its missionary nature.

It is unfortunate that mission studies have not been able to break into a conjoined relationship with theology in the theological curriculum although they are, after all, mutually interdependent. The history of theology indicates that theologians long taught the holistic concept of theology, that is, they conceived the study as one, undivided discipline. Through time, however, a separation took place which produced theology as theory and practice. From this concept, theology gradually evolved into a fourfold pattern: the disciplines of Bible (text), church history (history), systematic theology (truth), and practical theology (application). This pattern became firmly established and continues to this day. Practical theology became principally "ecclesiology" and assigned missions to the practical area which existed to serve the institutional church. Bosch believes that this pattern came about due to the influence of Schleiermacher.

Schleiermacher made some changes in his system when Moravian missions and the work of William Carey pioneered the modern missionary movement. Schleiermacher's solution was to append missiology to practical theology as a peripheral field for study. This, of course, kept the fourfold division sacrosanct. While in total agreement that mission studies should end in practice, in none of the courses that I took in the fields of practice and Christian education was there anything that pointed toward cross-cultural application. Potential missionaries, of course, stud-

ied the materials; possibly it was assumed the missionary would be able to make the necessary cross-cultural application.

As a side note, on one occasion the Dean of Nazarene Theological Seminary made an interesting observation regarding his faculty. Although most of us had an earned doctorate, none of us had a single hour's credit in methods of teaching. It was assumed that we would be able to teach effectively due to our years of preparation.

In the evolution of missiology as a discipline, in the mid-nineteenth century, missiology tried another method to validate its standing within theology by declaring autonomy. That is, missiologists demanded the right to a discipline apart. This was not greeted with wide approval in theological circles, but due to such figures as Alexander Duff at Edinburgh in 1867 and Gustav Warneck at Halle in 1897, chairs of mission were established in their respective institutions. Other institutions followed. This declaration of independence on the part of missiology did not immediately gain respectability, especially since most of the chairs of mission were occupied by retired missionaries who told a lot of stories.

Reflecting on the development of missiology as a legitimate academic pursuit, David J. Bosch makes the observation that as an independent discipline in theology, missiology further distanced itself from the theoretical disciplines by falling into its own fourfold pattern. "Missionary foundations" paralleled the biblical subjects, "mission's theory" paralleled systematic theology, "missions history" found its counterpart in church history, and "missionary practice" reflected practical theology. As a result, this arrangement isolated missiology even more and made it a science of the missionary and for the missionary rather than informing academia of its global responsibility.

In seeking to place missiology solidly in academia, three models have been tried during the evolution of the discipline: incorporation, independence, or integration, none of which satisfied the theological academy. Integration is theoretically and theologically the soundest, but today the independent model prevails in most theological institutions. However,

since the 1960s, the church has gradually come to the position that mission can no longer be peripheral to its life and being. Mission has become no longer merely an *activity* of the church, but an expression of the very *being* of the church. Bosch says this calls for a movement “from a theology of mission to missionary theology.”

In the last fifty years the church has recovered its sense of mission in many quarters. This has impacted missiology and raised many issues of great importance. An amalgam of the fourfold theology with the fourfold missiology is in formation. The structure in some educational institution, keeping in step with the church’s global expansion and the maturity of the national churches, has allowed a missiological dimension to permeate all theological disciplines, while others have dedicated distinct sections of faculties to address global concerns such as world religions, indigeniety, contextualization, and others. Thus there is a twofold thrust in the study of missiology. However missiology is formed, in active reflection on the church’s activities, it must relate to theology and praxis at the same time. Missiology should not become the domain of the ivy tower, but engage theology to join hands with the Great Commission work even as missiology exercises theology in context.

Today, missiology, while maintaining its departmental identity, is seeking help from, and offering help to, the classical theological disciplines. As Scherer so beautifully states, “missiology must be the handmaiden of theology and also the handmaiden of God’s word.”

Some Reflections on Building Bridges

Dr. Donald Owens

Building bridges is not always easy, but to get “from here to there” it must be done. It was our joy to be among the first to lay the first spandrels that was to become the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary. What follows are simply some musings of only one of those chosen to be a part of the mediating ministry of the institution.

It is a given that the world has become a global community where peoples of every differing cultures are forced to live together, share the same natural and human resources, and solve the same basic human problems. In the process of becoming community, bridges must be created between culturally pluralistic communities where tensions are often quite pronounced.

By design the Church of the Nazarene has set a course to be a global community of faith. In that process, contextualized theological and praxis pursuits are considered servants of the church in the critical task of the education and formation of persons for the church’s ministry. Contextualized theology is not construed to be an epistemological break of continuity with our theological and ecclesial ancestry. The dangers of allowing context to determine the nature and content of theology are always present in the ministry of cross-cultural communication. It was our understanding that there should be a large place in the curriculum for addressing issues of cultural diversity in the field of Pastoral Theology.

As a side note, it was felt by denominational leaders that a theological school in the region would lessen the loss of bright young men and women from the region, students who elected to remain in the United States following graduation.

The Philippines was chosen to be the site of the Asia-Pacific Theological Seminary for some very practical reasons. Since the institution was to serve two distinct regions, the location seemed quite fitting. Transportation into the country was excellent and student visas were readily attainable. English was generally spoken throughout the country, making

it easier for foreign students to move about the country. Technology and excellent communications were readily available. In addition, the real cost of living was less in the Philippines than any other country in the Asia. However, another very important contributor was the fact that the country seemed ripe for rapid church growth; there were several organized districts and church planting opportunities everywhere. Students and faculty could find ministry and “hands on” experience in a responsive environment.

The seminary was to be the church at work in the task of theological education. It was for that reason that Metro Manila was chosen to be the site for APNTS. Manila is a “hinge” city. It bypasses traditional national boundaries and has become an international power center with millions of people who seem to be responsive to evangelicals. There were few Nazarene congregations in Manila. The rural areas seem to have been more inviting for a Nazarene presence.

The General Superintendents voted for a merger of the Luzon Nazarene Bible College and the budding APNTS if deemed feasible. The Board of Trustees of that college in Baguio City voted to sell and move its ministry into a joint ministry with the seminary if it was thought best. On the other hand, the Children’s Garden property that had been purchased in 1979 could move to Baguio City. In the end, the call of a burgeoning metropolis like Manila was too strong to move five hours higher into the mountains. The merger never took place. The seminary became an active partner with the Metro-Manila District in planting several churches.

In 1979 the Children’s Gardens property, formerly a Methodist Church sponsored orphanage, was purchased in Taytay, Rizal for the seminary. The General Board of the Church of the Nazarene had approved the plan for a graduate seminary as early as 1977 and I was elected to head up the project. In 1980 the first extension seminar was conducted on the Taytay property by Dr. Willard Taylor and me. Those two seminars, and several that followed, were extensions of classes approved and accredited by Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City. During this period of

time, the seminary was experimenting with recruitment of faculty, student enrollment issues, visa concerns, relationship with accrediting associations, and considering its affiliation with Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City. It was not until 1983 the seminary was formally named Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary as an autonomous graduate school of theology. The relationship of the two seminaries was fraternal rather than administrative. APNTS was to be sponsored by the World Mission Division of the Church of the Nazarene with a Board of Directors selected mainly from the Asia-Pacific Region. I believe the records indicate that I was appointed/elected Director or President on three different occasions during that period of time.

Building bridges can be fulfilling if not strenuous work. Developing a faculty, curriculum, and facilities can be a test of commitment and patience. During the period of uncertainty to which administrative entity the seminary was to be accountable, several fine administrators and faculty members were lost to the mission of the seminary. We also learned a great deal about God's ability to multiply the bread and the fish. Sometimes gold lies nearer to surface than one might think, for God gave APNTS the gift of Dr. Ronald W. Beech. A veteran missionary already in the Philippines, culturally sensitive, and gifted educator, Dr. Beech became the first Academic Dean. Since I had been appointed Director of the Asia-Pacific Region, as well as head of the budding seminary, much of the time I was traveling over the Region while Dr. Beech was designing a curriculum and catalogue for 1983-85.

While I have had the joy of planting seed, my successors have done a superb job of putting the seminary "on the world map." I am delighted that APNTS has maintained the logo that we designed at the beginning. The symbolism reflects the mission of the seminary. "Bridging Cultures for Christ" speaks to the essential mission of APNTS while I Tim 2:5 teaches us that Christ, and Christ alone, is adequate to mediate between the ancient cultures and the historical antagonisms that exist in the Asia-Pacific Region. The logo suggests the round circle represents God's

presence and prevenience overshadowing that vast area of the earth's planet. The open book is the Bible and the bridge by which the peoples may cross from darkness to light. The window represents the Church through which "Christ likeness" is to shine. The cross represents the Christ whose death and resurrection provides the only way to be reconciled to God and to each other. The dove represents the Holy Spirit who empowers his people and creates responsiveness among the nations.

On one occasion, Mrs. Neva Beech exclaimed, "I have a 'school song' for us!" It is a good song:

In Christ there is no East or West, In Him no South or North;
But one great fellowship of love thro'-out the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts every-where their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord Close binding all mankind.

Join hands the, brothers of the faith, What-e'er your race may be;
Who serves my Father as a son I surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West; In Him meet South and North.
All Christly souls are one in Him thro'-out the whole wide earth.¹

¹*Sing to the Lord*, 678.