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From Maximum Illud to Evangelii Gaudiumto Trends in Contemporary Theology and Praxis of Mission

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In the last hundred years, we had Roman pontiffs starting from Benedict XV up to Francis, promoting with an outstanding foresight the church's mission to all humankind.

> These popes from the beginning of the 20th and from the beginning of the 21st century were faced with very different developments in world politics, culture and technology and civilization, but they agree in their far-sighted perspectives that they both give the missionary task of the church a special priority: Benedict XV in his letter *Maximum illud* (1919) and Pope Francis in his letter *Evangelii gaudium* (2013).[1]

The Nigerian mission theologian, Valentine U. Iheanacho, MSP states:

> The cornerstones of his apostolic letter on the missions (Maximum Illud, November 30, 1919) were threefold. They were: (1) recruitment and formation of a strong native clergy; (2) better foundation for the emergence of local churches (that is, transition from mission churches to full-fledged churches); and (3) the loosening of hindrances

[1] „Diese Päpste vom Anfang des 20. und vom Anfang des 21.Jahrhunderts waren mit sehr unterschiedlichen weltpolitischen, kulturellen und technischzivilisatorischen Entwicklungen konfrontiert, kommen in ihren weitsichtigen Perspektiven aber darin überein, dass sie beide der Missionsaufgabe der Kirche einen besonderen Rang einräumen: Benedikt XV.in seinem Schreiben Maximum illud (1919) und Papst Franziskus in seinem Schreiben Evangelii gaudium (2013)." In: Michael Sievernich SJ, "100 Jahre Maximum Illud (1919) Das epochale Missionsschreiben von Benedikt XV," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* [*ZMR*] 103, no. (2019): 319-328, at 319.

> to the missions whether in the form of congregationalism or nationalism. In one word, Benedict XV laid the foundation for the full 'indigenization' of the Church in mission territories, particularly in Africa and Asia.[2]

The missiological standard work from the South African Mission theologian David J. Bosch *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* is nowadays almost in all Christian churches, especially by Christians engaged in teaching and practising mission.

> Bosch attempts with the aid of the idea of paradigm shifts... to demonstrate the extent to which the understanding and practice of mission have changed over almost twenty centuries of Christian missionary history. In some instances the transformation was so profound and far-reaching that the historian has difficulty in recognizing any similarities between the different missionary models." Bosch is convinced "that this process of transformation has not yet come to an end (and will, in fact, never come to an end), and that we find ourselves, at the moment, in the midst of one of the most important shifts in the understanding and practice of the Christian mission.[3]

The Five Missionary Encyclicals of the 20th Century before Vatican II

For the "mission perspectives" of the church in the first half of the 20th century, five papal encyclicals were written between 1919 and 1959, covering a period of 40 years: *Maximum Illud* (1919), *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926), *Evangelii Praecones* (1951), *Fidei Donum* (1957)

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[2] Valentine U. Iheanacho, "Benedict XV and the Rethinking of Catholic Missionary Strategy," Tripod 36, no. 183 (Winter 2016): 78-94, at 78; cf. also his published dissertation: *Maximum Illud and Benedict XV's Missionary Thinking Prospects of a Local Church in Mission Territories* (Saarbru cken: Scholars' Press, 2015); and his recent articles on MI like: "Maximum Illud and the Church of Today," *The Catholic Ambassador* (October 2019), 24 - 25; "Maximum Illud and its Relevance in Contemporary Mission," *Tripod* XXXIX, no. 194 (Autumn 2019): 82-93.

[3] David J. Bosch, Transforming Mission: *Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), xv.

and *Princeps Pastorum* (1959) which had a significant influence on Catholic missions and the young Catholic missiological science.[4]

The missionary encyclical of Pope Benedict XV, published after the disaster of the first world war, was published at a time of great change and great disorientation of the so-called Christians of the West, which means Europe and North America. The war between the European countries had also changed the non-Western world. The western colonizers had not yet recognized the signs of the times, but their colonial system had reached its peak. After the Second World War (1939 – 1945) the colonial system began to crumble starting with India in 1947 and Indonesia in 1949, Ghana in 1957, etc.[5]

Even the missionary world connected with these colonial systems rapidly disintegrated, especially with the declarations of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the newly independent states just mentioned such as India, etc. Seen from today's point of view, Benedict XV's encyclical is recognised as "a turning point in the history of the spreading of the Gospel."[6]

> The historical significance of Maximum Illud is closely intertwined with the Great War which exposed the shortcomings of Catholic mission work. Europe was divided in two competing and potentially hostile alliances, with Germany and Austria-Hungary in one and France,

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[4] Maximum Illud di Benedetto XV, dal 30.11.1919; cf. http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/it/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xv_apl_19191130_maximum-illud.html; Rerum ecclesiae of Pius XI of 28.02.1926, cf. http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19260228_rerum-ecclesiae.html; Evangelii Praecones of Pius XII dal 2.06.1951. cf. http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_02061951_evangelii-praecones.html; Fidei donum di Pio XII dal21.04.1957: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_21041957_fidei-donum.html; Princeps Pastorum of John XXII of 28.11.1959: cf. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_28111959_princeps.html (accessed 05.04.2020).

[5] Cf. J. Kroeger, *Papal Mission Wisdom. Five Encyclicals 1919-1959*, in *A Century of Catholic Mission: Roman Catholic Missiology 1910 to the Present*, ed. S. B. Bevans (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 93-100, at 93.

[6] J. Metzler, "Encicliche missionarie," in *Dizionario di Missiologia* (Bologna: EDB, 1993), 219-226.

> Great Britain and Russia in the other. The spark for the tragic war came from the most unstable region of Europe—the Balkans. It caused a domino effect which produced the first global war, expected to finish by Christmas [1914] but eventually dragged on over four years.[7]

> The missionary encyclicals of the twentieth century prior to the Second Vatican Council — especially *Maximum Illud* (1919), *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926), *Evangelii Praecones* (1951), and *Fidei Donum* (1957)—registered the first hesitant steps toward a missionary understanding of the church.[8]

The Historical Meaning of the Encyclicals

The historical significance of the encyclicals includes four main themes which were important contributions to mission reform. The Polish mission historian Andrei Miotk in his study points out four aspects:

> The display of the historical significance of "Maximum illud" encompasses four missionary aspects: centralization; de-politicization and universalism; de-Europeanization and indigenization; and its mission theological shift. "Maximum illud" opposed colonialism and Europeanism within mission work in favor of the universality of the church.[9]

Pope Benedict XV addresses three different groups: missionary superiors, missionaries, and the entire community of Catholic faithful. The MI "is the first to directly address bishops and missionary superiors and urged them not only to be good shepherds of the flock, but also to continually promote evangelization in their territory."[10]

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[7] A. Miotk, "The Historical Significance and Prophetic Resonance of the Apostolic Letter Maximum Illud on the Centenary of Its Publication," *Verbum SVD* 60, no. 1-2 (2019): 11-41, at 14.

[8] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 371.

[9] Miotk, "The Historical Significance", 11.

[10] Metzler, "Encicliche missionarie," 220.

The missionary concept of Pope Benedict XV was still focused on the expansion of the territory of the mission to save the largest possible number of souls. The apostolic and missionary Vicars faithfully followed this method recommended to them from Rome. Despite their understanding of mission, it was gradually changing, a change brought about by the progressive knowledge of the cultures and the religiosity of the people who were the receivers of their proclamation of the Gospel. "But the deepest insight of Benedict XV concerns the formation of the indigenous clergy and their preparation to assume the leadership of the mission, and therefore the establishment of local churches."[11]

Perhaps this was the most important aspect of the MI. They had been called to change their attitude and behavior to create a welcoming environment for vocations to the priesthood among the young Christians evangelised by them. "Missionary superiors are invested with their responsibility for this task". The Pope reminds the missionary that his mission is temporary or limited and that he should never forget that the local priest must complete his task. The foreign missionary should prepare himself for this new task and then leave the job to the native missionary. Benedict XV wants to free the missionaries of all kinds of nationalism. "In the part directedly addressed to the missionaries, the Pope develops another key idea of the Encyclical which can be defined as "anti-colonial", which is of not compromising missionary activity because of Political or national interest, and above all with colonial politics: "Remember that you do not propagate the kingdom of men but that of Jesus Christ, and do not add citizens to the earthly homeland, but to the heavenly."[12] To be at the height of his missionary vocation the Pope demands a solid formation of the missionaries. "Every missionary must be scientifically up to the task. The missionary must study the language and culture of the people where he works so that he knows how to appreciate the people he wants to evangelize. Then Benedict recommends the study of missionary sciences for foreign missionaries and equally the indigenous people.

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[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*

The Senegalese philosopher and theologian Anne-Béatrice Faye has made a big contribution in her critical analysis of the historical-cultural, doctrinal, and pastoral context of MI. She focuses her reflection on four points or axes:

> The first axis will be a window open on the world situation, in particular on the socio-political level which pushed Pope Benedict XV to want to requalify in a Gospel way the mission in the world, so that it is purified of all collusion with colonization and stay away from the nationalist and expansionist aims that had caused so many disasters.[13]

Here Pope Benedict shows an outstanding capacity to name the weakness and untenability of the colonial system forty years before it collapsed.

> The second axis is linked to the first, where we see that the illusion of supremacy that European civilization harbored over itself collapsed in the great butchery of the First World War. To the distressing spectacle offered to evangelized populations by national rivalries between missionaries of the same denomination is added for the Pope the painful experience of his powerlessness to stop the war in Europe. Benedict XV drew the consequences from this by a solemn reminder of missionary duties. We will see the repercussions on the mission in the context of this letter?[14]

At this point, Pope Benedict, whose pleas for peace remained unheeded and were even cruelly rejected by warring powers during World War I, remained a caller in the desert. Nevertheless, his arguments and fears were more than justified and made him an unheard prophet of peace among the European warfaring Christian nations.

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[13] Anne-Béatrice Faye, "Contexte historique, culturel, doctrinal et pastoral de Maximum illud," *Nurt SVD* 53, no. 146 (2019): 2, 232-248, at 232.

[14] *Ibid.*

> The third axis poses the question of the 'modernist crisis' where the Church discovers that "God" is no longer an evidence or a necessity in the Western world, and those for whom the Christian heritage retains its value feel the need to reinterpret it. In the midst of this turmoil, *Maximum illud* tries to stay the course of the doctrine of the Church and does not really open up to the new.[15]

Even at this point, Pope Benedict is guided by wisdom and prudence that has helped the Catholic Church to be better protected from decay processes that left the Protestant churches unprotected in the 20th century.

> The fourth axis will allow us to see the breaks made by *Maximum illud* in its perception of the mission. In addition to the existing schools of missiology, precise pastoral directions are given to missionaries.[16]

Here especially the insistence of respecting and studying the local cultures and languages by the Pontiff had a lasting influence on Catholic missionary attitudes and their missionary and pastoral activities.

Expectations of the Missionary: His Spirituality and his Lifestyle

Pope Benedict XV explains what he expects from a missionary in his mission encyclical *Maximum Illud* in 1919:

> It would be tragic indeed if any of our missionaries forgot the dignity of their office so completely as to busy themselves with the interests of their terrestrial homeland instead of with those of their homeland in heaven. It would be a tragedy indeed if an apostolic man were to spend himself in attempts to increase and exalt the prestige of the native land he once left behind him... the true missionary is always aware that he is not

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid.*

> working as an agent of his country, but as an ambassador of Christ. And his conduct is such that it is perfectly obvious to anyone watching him that he represents a Faith that is alien to no nation on earth, since it embraces all men who worship God in spirit and in truth...[17]

The German SVD missiologist Horst Rzepkowski[18] writes something that is of great importance for this theme which is portrayed in this article:

> In addition to depicting missionary achievement and missionary activity, it is important to capture the cultural history of the native population, the addressee of missionary work, but also to unfold the tension between cultural contact and cultural conflict, the encounter of religions.[19]

The Spirit of the Second Vatican Council

As the Council of Trent had an impact on the Catholic Church for four and a half centuries, so the impact of Vatican II will be for many generations to come. The different socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts between the two reform councils are enormous and have to be taken into account. Society has changed from a feudalistic one to a secular and democratic one, at least in most societies; even if this aim is not always achieved and practiced, it is at least the aim or dream of most members in contemporary

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[17] *Maximum Illud: On the Propagation of the Faith Throughout the World* – Apostolic Letter of Benedict XV, November 30, 1919, http://www.svdcuria.org/public/mission/docs/encycl/mi-en.htm (accessed 06.03.2019).

[18] Cf. Paul B. Steffen, "RZEPKOWSKI, Horst SVD (1935-1996), Missionswissenschaftler," *Biographisch Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* [BBKL] *XXXIV* (2013): 1257-1270.

[19] "Es gilt, über die Darstellung der missionarischen Leistung und des missionarischen Wirkens hinaus auch die Kulturgeschichte der einheimischen Bevölkerung, des Adressaten der Missionsarbeit, einzufangen, aber auch das Spannungs-verhältnis des Kulturkontaktes und des Kulturkonfliktes, der Begegnung der Religionen zu entfalten," in Horst Rzepkowski, "Missionsgeschichte im Wandel der Motivationen und Perspektiven", in: K. Müller/W. Ustorf, *Einleitung in die Missionsgeschichte. Tradition, Situation und Dynamik des Christentums* (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1995), 272; cf. P. Steffen, Stand und Desiderate heutiger missionsgeschichtlicher Forschung: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte* (SZRKG) 110 (2016): 457-470.

societies. Contemporary human beings want to have access to the decision-making process in their societies, they want to actively participate in the challenges and tasks of modern society. In the ecclesial tradition, we have the tradition of Synods, which allows participation in all church discernment processes. Recently, the present Pope is promoting this approach, which the Eastern and Western parts of the church practised in the First Millennium as a common good.

Undoubtedly, the decrees of Vatican II like *Gaudium et spes, Lumen gentium, Nostra Aetate, Dei Verbum* and *Ad gentes,* and so on, have opened gates for the mission of the church in the contemporary world. It also initiated a new process of theological reflection animated and inspired by Vatican II documents. "Vatican II (1962-65) revealed a missionary orientation in the broadest sense of the term, beginning with the basic program of *aggiornamento*, that is, a self-understanding of the church appropriate to the modern situation of the world." [20]

The Nigerian Spiritan mission theologian Elochukwu Uzukwu concludes:

> Thanks to Vatican II and its impact on the Church and world, the development of resilient theological and missiological language, attentive to location and interculturality, is generating fertile and more humane conversation within the world Church.[21]

The Post-Conciliar Development in Praxis and Theology of Mission

For the renewal of theology of mission and missionary practice the Bishops' Synods of 1974 with the theme *Evangelization in the Modern World* was of greatest importance. Pope Paul VI published a year later in 1975 the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*

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[20]Fritz Kohlbrunner, SMB, "Vatican Council II," in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, ed. K. Müller, T. Sundermeier, S. B. Bevans, and R. H. Bliese, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 471-475, at 471.

[21]Elochukwu Uzukwu, "Proclaiming the Gospel Today – Dynamics and Challenges of Location," in *Mission in Diversity. Exploring Christian Mission in the Contemporary World*, ed. E. Uzukwu, (Wien - Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2015), 11.

(EN) on the *Evangelization in the Modern World*.[22]

> EN of Pope Paul VI not only introduces the term evangelization as its new term into the Catholic mission theological discussion but also tries to classify the different activities of mission and preaching in a unified system. The theological approach in its strict Christological orientation justifies the comprehensive salvation of the Church in one approach. All areas of work and proclamation are integrated into God's saving action. The relationship between salvation and world history becomes clear and the responsibility of the Christian in the world more believable. So, the proclamation and the work for a decent existence in freedom are partial aspects of the evangelization. The starting point for determining the goal, content and scope of evangelization is for EN Jesus Christ.[23]

Horst Rzepkowski published in 1976 a commentary on EN. He refers to Jürgen Moltmann that "when discussing the eschatological orientation of the mission..., the mission in this context is always about the 'salvation of the whole and all salvation'."[24] That is why Rzepkowski demands "Evangelization should not be limited to

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[22]"Evangelii nuntiandi," in Horst Rzepkowski, *Lexikon der Mission. Geschichte, Theologie, Ethnologie* (Graz – Wien – Köln: Verlag Styria, 1992), 146-147. This dictionary had also a Spanish (*Diccionario de Misionologia. Historia, Teología, Etnología* (Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1997) and Italian edition (*Lessico di missiologia: Storia - Teologia - Etnologia*, a cura di E. Coccia e P. Giglioni, (Città del Vaticano: LEV, 2000).

[23] "wird nicht nur der Ausdruck Evangelisierung al seiner neuer Begriff in die katholische missionstheologische Diskussion eingeführt, sondern auch gleichzeitig versucht, die unterschiedlichen Tätigkeiten der Mission und der Verkündigung in ein einheitliches System einzuordnen. Der theologische Ansatz in seiner strengen christologischen Ausrichtung begründet das umfassende Heilshandeln der Kirche in einem einzigen Ansatz. Es warden alle Bereiche der Arbeit und der Verkündigung im Heilshandeln Gottes integriert. Die Bezogenheit von Heils- nd Weltgeschichte wird deutlich und die Verantwortlichkeit des Christen in der Welt glaubhafter. So sind die Verkündigung und das Wirken für ein menschenwürdiges Dasein in Freiheit Teilaspekte der Evangelisierung. Der Ansatzpunkt zur Bestimmung von Ziel, Inhalt umd Umfang der Evangelisierung ist für EN Jesus Christus." In "Evangelii nuntiandi", in: Horst Rzepkowski, *Lexikon der Mission*, 146.

[24] "bei der Diskusion der eschatologischen Ausrichtung der Mission darauf, dass es in diesem Rahmen in der Mission immer um das ‚Heil des Ganzen und das ganze Heil' geht", in: Horst Rzepkowski, *Der Welt verpflichtet. Text und Kommentar des Apostolischen Schreibens Evangelli nuntiandi. Über die Evangelisierung in der Welt von heute*, Steyler Verlag, Sankt Augustin 1976, 13. – Rzepkowski refers to Jürgen Moltmann, „Das Ziel der Mission", *Evangelische Missionszeitschrift* [*EZM*] 22 (1965) 11; Id., *Kirche in der Kraft des Geistes. Ein Beitrag zur messianischen Ekklesiologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1975), 147f.

testimony, preaching. Mission must embrace the whole person in all of their life contexts. It must not only speak of it but must act. In a reformulation of the eschatologically determined mission theology, J. Moltmann writes, "Mission with a view to the end...must also mean: *Mission in view of the whole*.'" [25]

Moltmann declares in his book *The Theology of Hope*:

> The Christian Church which follows Christ's mission to the world is engaged also in following Christ's service of the world. It has its nature as the body of the crucified and risen Christ only wherein specific acts of service it is obedient to its mission to the world. Its existence is completely bound to the fulfilling of its service. For this reason, it is nothing in itself, but all that it is, it is existing for others... The Church lays claim to the whole of humanity in mission. This mission is not carried out within the horizon of expectation provided by the social roles which society concedes to the Church, but it takes place within its own peculiar horizon of the eschatological expectation of the coming of the kingdom of God, of the coming righteousness and coming peace, of the coming freedom and dignity of man.[26]

For Dutch Missiologist J. C. Hoekendijk "Missions perform their service today only when they infect men with hope."[27] Moltmann concludes, therefore, that "This kindling of live hopes that are braced for action and prepared to suffer, hopes of the kingdom of God that is coming to earth in order to transform it, is the purpose of mission."[28] Finally, Rzepkowski concludes: "The papal exhortation circular deliberately wanted to speak into the crisis situation of today's mission and to dispel prejudices and short-circuits in thinking ... In addition to the uniformity and straightforwardness of the theological statements, this circular also shows its conscious

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[25] „Mission im Bick aufs Ende, das muss auch heissen: Mission im Blick aufs Ganze", *ibid*.

[26] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967), 327.

[27] Quoted in J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 328.

[28] *Ibid*.

and clear focus on evangelization. All activities are asked about their location in evangelization. This is where they find their meaning."[29]

Rzepkowski, Bosch, Schreiter, Burrows, Bevans, and many more represent such a holistic mission theology in today's mission theological debate. Mission happens, therefore, wherever the church is; it is how the church exists. Mission is the church preaching Christ for the first time; it is the act of Christians struggling against injustice and oppression; it is the binding of wounds in reconciliation; it is the church learning from other religious ways and being challenged by the world's cultures. Bosch notes that it was high time "that a "fourth self" was added to the classic "three self's"- "self-managing", "self-entertaining," and "self-propagating" – the "self-theologizing" task of a local church.[30]

Missiology or Intercultural studies?

Robert Schreiter, argues in his reflection on "The Role of Intercultural Hermeneutics in the Understanding of Mission Studies as Intercultural Studies" that in recent years "Missiology has been re-branding itself as "intercultural studies", "Intercultural relations," or "World Christianity."[31] He discovers three reasons for this change from "Missiology" to "intercultural studies" in the Christian missionary movement worldwide including Conservative Protestants and Roman Catholics.

> The first is to escape the colonial connotations of the term 'mission' ... The second reason... is related to the first. In European universities, missiology as an academic discipline was becoming increasingly marginalized in

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[29] "Das Rundschreiben wollte bewusst in die Krisen Situation der heutigen Mission sprechen und Vorurteile und Kurzschlüsse des Denkens ausräumen... Neben der Einheitlichkeit und Gradlinigkeit der theologischen Aussagen ist an diesem Rundschreiben sein ebewusste und klare Ausrichtung auf die Evangelisierung anzumerken. Alle Tätigkeiten werden nach ihrem Standort in der Evangelisierung befragt. Hier finden sie ihre Sinnhaftigkeit," in: Horst Rzepkowski, *Der Welt verpflichtet. Text und Kommentar des Apostolischen Schreibens Evangelli nuntiandi. Über die Evangelisierung in der Welt von heute* (Sankt Augustin: Steyler Verlag, 1976), 176.

[30] Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 451-452.

[31] Robert Schreiter, "The Role of Intercultural Hermeneutics in the Understanding of Mission Studies as Intercultural Studies," in *Mission in Diversity. Exploring Christian Mission in the Contemporary World*, ed. E. Uzukwu, (Wien - Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2015), 29-43, at 29.

> faculties of theology... The third reason came from ecclesiological considerations. 'Mission' connotes Global North and the 'receiving' churches of the Global 'South'. The submission of the term 'intercultural' would put the churches on a more equal footing.[32]

Schreiter remains critical of this change of terms, "because the matter has not been fully reflected upon by those who advocate this change."[33] Nevertheless, he believes that such a change is needed. In particular, "it should elaborate how Christian faith shapes local and regional contexts in light of the changing field of international relations... The second place where missiology as intercultural studies could make a significant contribution would be in the area of intercultural hermeneutics."[34] Therefore Schreiter asks for "A critical Re-appropriation of Missiology's Past"; "A Re-Mapping of the 'Exotic' and the 'Other'"; the study of "The Intercultural as Critical Cultural Reflection"; and "A Reflexive Praxis for the Church".[35] The second major area where missiology might contribute to intercultural studies "lies," for Schreiter, "in the area of intercultural hermeneutics"; as it has been explored by different disciplines, like in social sciences, philosophy and theology. Therefore, Schreiter sees the need to elaborate more deeply "A Hermeneutics of Commonality"; "A Hermeneutics of Difference"; and "A Hermeneutics of Globality".[36]Schreiter concludes: "In sum, a renewed missiology as intercultural studies and the three kinds of intercultural hermeneutics... can contribute immensely to the life of the Church in its mission of cooperating with the *missio Dei* in the world."[37]

Mission, Globalisation and Theological Education

The North American theologian William Burrows discusses the interrelatedness of Mission, Globalisation, and Theological

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[32] *Ibid.*, 29-30.
[33] *Ibid.*, 30.
[34] *Ibid.*, 30-31.
[35] *Ibid.*, 31-35.
[36] *Ibid.*, 35-42.
[37] *Ibid.*, 42.

Education from his North American Perspective. "We need especially to consider who are to be the 'subjects' or 'agents' of the Christian mission to minister to the world's ills and realize the reconciliation that St Paul portrays as key to our mission (2 Cor 5:5-19)."[38] Burrows is convinced that lay Christians are the agents of evangelisation in our globalised societies. Therefore, they need to receive a sound holistic theological training for their task to evangelise modern society, which the church has up to now failed to do adequately. As a result, Christian churches remained without any impact in transforming their own societies into societies of justice and reconciliation.

Schreiter finally writes:

> I remain convinced that, until the churches convince their membership fully to support the leadership's position on economic, ecological, and war-peace issues, all the statements in the world will have little real effect.[39]

The conclusion Schreiter draws is:

> I believe it is the laity and that they need to be formed in a kind of theological-spiritual formation that embraces a mystical-aesthetic view of the Christian project. The role of church leaders is to serve that laity.[40]

Mission as Prophetic Dialogue

In the outstanding Catholic Publication, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today,* by Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, one section treats the issue of *Mission as Prophetic Dialogue*.[41] For the North-American authors, "Christian mission... is participation in the dialogical life and mission of the Trinity."[42] Bevans and Schroeder are presenting six elements of *Mission as*

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[38] William Burrows, "Mission, Globalisation and Theological Education. A North American Perspective," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 3 (August 2004), 1-20, at 2.

[39] *Ibid.*, 18.

[40] *Ibid.*, 19.

[41] "Mission as Prophetic Dialogue," in *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, ed. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 348-395, at 348.

[42] *Ibid.*, 349.

Prophetic dialogue: Witness and Proclamation; Liturgy, Prayer and Contemplation; Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation; Interreligious dialogue; Inculturation, and Reconciliation as prophetic dialogue. The authors claim that: "committing oneself to justice, peace and ecological integrity demands prophetic living, prophetic speech and prophetic action individually, communally and institutionally... But true prophets are inspired not by anger but by love, and so prophetic witness, word and action need to be founded on the love of the Trinitarian God... They need to establish authentic relationships with people who are often unwilling pawns in the hands of global corporations and greedy politicians. Evil needs to be confronted, but Christians need to listen, to study and to reflect in order to know where evil truly lurks."[43]

The final statement of Bevans and Schroeder in their outstanding contribution to Catholic and Ecumenical mission studies is: "Only by preaching, serving and witnessing to the reign of God in bold and humble prophetic dialogue will the missionary church be constant in today's context."[44]

Church: Community for the Kingdom

For John Fuellenbach SVD, the presence of the Reign of God serves as the best theological foundation for the development of a theology of creation.[45] In 2002 he published *Church: Community for the Kingdom*.[46] He developed an authentically contextual global ecclesiology which is including the non-Western perspectives. For him "the kingdom demands the transformation of all human reality, and the church must be the "agent" of this transformation". Consequently, mission has the same task to fulfil.

> The kingdom aims at the transformation of the whole of creation into its eternal glory, and the church must be seen

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[43] *Ibid.*, 377.

[44] *Ibid.*, 398.

[45] Cf. Johannes Füllenbach, "Bewahrung der Schöpfung: Das gegenwärtige Reich Gottes als theologische Grundlage für eine Theologie der Bewahrung der Schöpfung," *Verbum SVD* 34, no. 2 (1993): 119-132.

[46] John Fuellenbach, *Church: Community for the Kingdom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002 & revised and expanded edition, Manila: Logos Publications, 2004).

> and understood in the context of this divine intentionality. Its essence and mission make sense only in this setting. Her mission is to reveal through the ages the hidden plan of God to lead all humankind toward final destiny. The church must see itself entirely in the service of this divine plan meant for the salvation of all creation. The church has no monopoly of the kingdom of God. Citizenship in the kingdom never means a privilege but rather an ongoing summons to solidarity with people, particularly with the excluded and discriminated against.[47]

Fuellenbach describes the megatrends he recognises, affecting the church today: Resurgence of cultural traditions; Globalisation; Revival of religious experiences, Basic Ecclesial Communities, Problems in Ministerial Structures, the Crisis of the Western church; the poor as the New Evangelisers, the new presence, and significance of women, new frontiers for mission and the co-partnership with the Earth. In other words, the challenge from and response to the ecological crisis in our world as part of the Church's mission.

> The church is inseparable from the person of Jesus and his mission of salvation for the world. As the sacrament of the kingdom, it is God's choice, not ours, and is called to accomplish with the Holy Spirit God's plan of creation: the salvation of all the world... The church is in the service of the kingdom, which embraces all of reality, not only the graced reality called church."[48]

Christology, African Women, and Ministry

The East African Theologian Laurenti Magesa reflected profoundly on the inter-relatedness and mutual interdependence of *Christology, African Women, and Ministry*. He indicates the need to overcome sexist and racist Christologies. "Jesus Christ's invitation is that humanity follows him. In his ministry of salvation, men and women of all times and places are called to be his disciples

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[47] Ibid., 75-76.

[48] Fuellenbach, *Church: Community,* 221.

(Mt. 28: 16-20; Mk. 16: 14-18; Lk. 24: 19-23; Acts 1: 6-8)... Without anyone's personal choice, for instance, God made each person a member of a given sex, race and culture."[49] For Magesa, "The only acceptable Christology that authentic Christian Tradition offers is one that is founded on the liberating/redemptive action of Jesus."[50] Furthermore, the threefold ministry vocation and mission of all God's people is foundational for the mission of the Church.

> The power to call people of different races, nationalities and both genders to one fold in God comes from the meaning of the mission and ministry of Jesus, which is royal, priestly and prophetic... We risk doing violence to these attributes of Christ if we fail to see and treat them in the context of the salvific ministry of Jesus. Which is why Christology must situate them in the context of the historical experience of Jesus' mission and ministry. Otherwise his kingly, prophetic and priestly attributes are liable to be misinterpreted and misused to buttress structures of oppression and to sanctify alienating forms of authority in the Church. The very essence of the salvation work of Christ is for humanity to be relational. This is what the three attributes of his ministry call for. They derive from the Trinitarian character of the Christian God.[51]

Magesa attributes the *tres munera* ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* rightfully also for women.

> Despite the marginalization and humiliation they have suffered from society and from the church throughout history, African women have represented in their life the meaning and significance of the royal, prophetic and priestly qualities of Christ by being the main food suppliers, the organizers and the bonds of unity for the African family and society.[52]

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[49] Laurenti Magesa, "Christology, African Women and Ministry," *African Ecclesial Review* [*AFER*] 38, no. 2 (1996): 66-88, at 66: cf. Id., "Africa's Struggle for Self-Definition during a Time of Globalization," *AFER* 40, no. 5-6 (1998): 320-332.

[50] Magesa, "Christology, African Women and Ministry," 73.

[51] Ibid., 75.

[52] Ibid., 79.

Therefore, Magesa can logically come to the conclusion.

> Let us underline the point: the only way to love God is to love humanity, and the only way to realize concretely the realm of God is through love. To anyone who reads the signs of the time in faith, as Vatican II following the Gospels insisted that Christians do, African women have manifested the realm of the God of Jesus through their practice of love as service and self-expenditure on behalf of the entire African society. Like Jesus, they have cherished the life of all at their own expense and throughout the ages have poured themselves out for the sake of the rest of society. If the royal, priestly and prophetic qualities of Jesus find their raison d'etre and completion in the outpouring of himself for the sake of the world, the analogical (I would say almost 'literal') affinity between his life and ministry and that of the African women cannot be mistaken.[53]

Between Ecclesiology and Ethics: Promoting a Culture of Protection

The Nigerian Jesuit Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator published recently an important reflection called "Between Ecclesiology and Ethics: Promoting a Culture of Protection".[54] His reflection focuses on the imperative of child protection in human society and how significant this is in the cultures of his home continent Africa. For Orobator, there is a wide consensus among African theologians "that constitutes the core of ethical reflection and foundation of the principles of morality."[55] Very essential for him is: "The morality of human actions is evaluated on the basis of whether or not they enhance the quality of human life as a communal experience." Orobator's conclusion in his article is:

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[53] Ibid., 80.

[54] Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "Between Ecclesiology and Ethics: Promoting a Culture of Protection," *Theological Studies* 80, no. 4 (2019): 897-914.

[55] Ibid., 910

> Listening to and honoring the child bears ethical implications for the community of the disciples of Christ... This focus on the child corrects the illusion that ethics and ecclesiology run on parallel tracks. In the present and future, the identity and mission of the church will rest on the practice of a radical inclusivity, a celebration of the dignity and equality of all, and placing children foremost, as the Gospel proclaims.[56]

Andrew Walls states the case of African Christianity succinctly when he says:

> Modern African Christianity is not only the result of movements among Africans, but it has been principally sustained by Africans and is to a surprising extent the result of African initiatives. Even the missionary factor must be put into perspective.[57]

A New Way of Being Church

There is an urgent need for building Christian and Human communities of mutual trust.

> The difference between civil or other types of social and cultural communities and Christian communities lies in the fact that the latter are built on their common faith in Jesus as the Lord of new life. Building intercultural Christian and interreligious human communities is not mutually exclusive, rather they complement each other since the aim is to spread the gospel and actualize kingdom values like peace, healing and reconciliation among human beings. In fact, humankind and the churches need both basic human and basic Christian communities because both together guarantee a more just and humane society for all people.[58]

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[56]Ibid., 915.

[57]Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 86. See pp. 85-93 for Walls' analysis of the African dimension in African conversion; – quoted in W. Burrows, "Mission, Globalisation and Theological Education...", 7

[58]P. B. Steffen, "Nurturing Human and Christian Communities", in *SVD Missionary Discipleship in Glocal Contexts*, ed. Lazar, Thanuzraj Stanislaus, SVD/vanThanh Nguyen, Studia Instituti Missiologici SVD - 112, (Siegburg: Franz Schmitt Verlag, 2018), 317-329, at 318.

The new image of the church expressed clearly in Vatican II documents as communion and the recognition of the local church favoured the emergence of a community movement worldwide. Parishes should become a communion of communities; this is an ecclesiological concept developed by Latin American, African, and Asian bishops' conferences, pastors, and theologians. Now, this is found in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) by Pope Francis in 2014. He writes:

> The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community... In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers... It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach (EG 28).

James D. G. Dunn explains, "If 'discipleship of Jesus' still has any meaning for today (and it certainly has), then the character of that discipleship, particularly of celebration and mission, of openness and service, should be a constant challenge to any ecclesiastical structure which does not positively promote such discipleship. The church exists to enable the same quality of discipleship as that to which Jesus called his first followers."[59]

The new paradigm of building communities is a way of living missionary discipleship as the last plenary assembly of the Latin American Bishops' Conferences (CELAM) in 2007 in Aparecida has asked for. The Christian outlook and ministry is based on the teaching and actions of Jesus of Nazareth. That is best demonstrated with Jesus' healing ministry in the gospel. We

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[59]James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit*, vol. 2: *Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids, MN: Eerdmans, 1998), 247.

should have a look at what the Brazilian Jesuit theologian Marcello Azevedo has to say on Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs): "The fact is that BECs are a new way of living as Church, of being Church and acting as Church, in Brazil."[60] Azevedo is convinced that: "BECs and the larger Church of which they are a part face the challenge and mission of realizing and fashioning that unity-in-diversity of the human vocation. This effort must be grounded on the realism of a faith that is Christian only if it is linked up with the whole of life, and of a life that is Christian only if it is nurtured and sustained by faith."[61]

The best example according to me is that of the meeting between Jesus and the leper and the healing process (see Mt 8:1-4). In the encounter between Jesus and the leper, the latter overcomes the mortal limitations in terms of welcoming, freedom, and a new integration into society. Jesus' healing activity allows the leper to be reintegrated fully into society. The leper undergoes not only a physical healing experience but a liberation experience.[62] "Our 'imitation' of Jesus must be evident in the church's pastoral work," writes the African theologian Laurenti Magesa, since "effective pastoral ministry to the outcasts, aiming to include them into the church-as-family, cannot but revolve around the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and, particularly, socialization."[63]

Concluding Reflection

In this reflection, I attempted to look at five missionary encyclicals from *Maximum illud* from Pope Benedict XV to *Evangelii nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI up to *Evangelii gaudium* of our present Pope Francis. Based on the evolution of the

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[60]Marcello de Azevedo, SJ, *Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil. The Challenge of a New Way of Being Church* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 5.

[61] *Ibid*., 248.

[62]Cf. Paul M. Zulehner, *Teologia Pastorale. 1. Pastorale Fondamentale. La Chiesa fra compito e attesa* (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 1992), 13-18.

[63] Laurenti Magesa, "Christ's Spirit as Empowerment of the Church as Family," in *The Model of "Church as Family": Meeting the African Challenge*, ed. Patrick Ryan (Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 1999), 33.

magisterial teaching of the church the contemporary mission theologians helped to construct new mission approaches in the worldwide church. Local churches and their theologians could develop contextual theologies that respond to the challenges and needs of the specific socio-cultural situation of the Christians in their respective societies. They made it possible to build contemporary approaches of witnessing and practicing the Gospel and Kingdom values in their societies.

The Popes of Vatican II, John XXIII and Paul VI with their programmatic encyclicals *Pacem in terris* and *Ecclesiam suam* and the Second Vatican Council with its decrees Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, *Dei Verbum, Unitatis redintegratio, Nostrae Aetate* and *Ad gentes* opened new ways in the mission of the Church that allowed the development of a richer missionary theology and pastoral care in local churches throughout the world. But without the pre-Council missionary work, this new missionary era would not have been possible. New mission theological reflection and the praxis of lay, religious and ordained ministers in the service of the church's mission to evangelize have mutually influenced and enriched each other so that a variety of new missionary praxis approaches could be developed by reading the signs of the times. An increasingly globalized and complex human society is in new ways interconnected and mobile. Therefore at the forefront of missionary praxis nowadays in witnessing the joy of the Gospel; the care for the poor and marginalised people; the mission for migrants and refugees;[64] the advocacy for the downtrodden and excluded in human society, especially for women, children, and the elderly people. The engagement for a more just and human society; the prophetic dialogue with people of other cultural and religious backgrounds, the ecological conversion, and eco-

[64]Cf. P. B. Steffen, "The Evangelizing Power of Migrant Ministry: Towards a Theology of Migration," *Misja Kościoła i migracje człowieka – Mission of the Church and Human Migration*, ed. Damien Cichy (Warszawa: Verbinum, 2014), 341-351; Id., "Migrant Ministry: The Kairos for a Pastoral-Missionary Work," *Verbum SVD* 51, no. 3 (2010): 313-340; Mario I. Aguilar, "Genuine Concern for the Poor: Basis for Evangelization in Africa," AFER 41, no. 1 (1999): 2-16; cf. Id., *Ministry To Social & Religious Outcasts In Africa*, Spearhead Monographs Series 138-139 (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1995).

spirituality are as well important fields of the church's mission today.[65] The credibility of the universal church depends on her ability to practice credibly her vision of empowering the marginalised through evangelisation.[66]

Missionary and pastoral ministry, therefore, nowadays is a praxis of bridge-building to the "other" by overcoming fear and suspicion and creating trustful new human interaction and even friendship. Pope Francis encourages and enlightens us by telling us: "The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him "to go forth" (EG 20).

[65] Cf. P. B. Steffen, "Ecological Conversion and Eco-Spirituality: New Insights for Mission of the Church in Today's World," *Nurt SVD* 1 (2019): 267-284.

[66] "Empowering the marginalized through evangelization" was the title of African Ecclesial review edition in February 1999, Volume 41, number 1 with two outstanding contributions by Mario I. Aguilar, "Genuine Concern for the Poor: Basis for Evangelization in Africa" and George Ukken, SJ, "Poverty, weakness & humility: Signs of God's kingdom on earth," AFER 41, no. 1 (1999): 51-59.