**Biblical and Theological Foundations: The Triune God and the Missional Church**

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**Introduction**

Some may like me have memories from childhood of a rather fragile church. Rambling sermons, little fellowship and dull liturgy. Was this really the sort of church Jesus prayed for in his high priestly prayer in John 17? The pastor in my teen-age period could easily have quoted Karl Barth to me: “If we say with the creed, *credo ecclesiam* (I believe in the church), we do not proudly overlook its concrete form”.[[1]](#footnote-1) In this chapter I shall try to walk back and forth between the biblical images of church and mission and the real church and mission. What counts is the real church viewed through the biblical lens. Fortunately I carry with me other experiences of church and mission than the childhood memory – experiences of being part of God’s people in Ethiopia, East Africa, the United States and China. My aim in this chapter is to outline a framework for a dialogue and interaction between ecclesiology and mission.

One of the nine study themes of Edinburgh 2010 was ‘Mission and unity – ecclesiology and mission’. The deliberations on the theme resulted in a report from the group which had worked with this for more than a year.[[2]](#footnote-2) In this report *missio Dei* is a focal point: God’s mission is directly related to the world and the church is the privileged instrument of God’s mission. The title for this volume (*Called to Unity – for the Sake of Mission*) grows out of this report. In the report’s reflections on biblical and theological foundations of mission in unity the focus is particularly on two interlinked streams: *the triune God’s mission and the church as missionary by its very nature (missional church)*. I shall therefore explore further these two streams and how they relate to one another.

**The Triune God’s Mission**

The missiological paradigm which shaped the planning and execution of Edinburgh 2010 was the *missio Dei* paradigm. The Edinburgh 2010 Common Call therefore opens by affirming that “…we believe the church, as a sign and symbol of the reign of God, is called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God’s mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit”.[[3]](#footnote-3) And if mission is God’s mission, then mission is one: “*Missio Dei* stresses unity in mission not only for pragmatic reasons but as an integral part of witness to God.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The ecumenical concern since Edinburgh 1910 has been expressed in a variety of statements reflecting that unity is bound up with the sending of the church into the world, and that the unity of the church is anchored in the unity of the triune God:

The love of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit is the source and goal of the unity which the triune God wills for all men and creation. We believe that we share in this unity in the Church of Jesus Christ…[[5]](#footnote-5)

There is a growing awareness among the churches today of the inextricable relationship between Christian unity and missionary calling, between ecumenism and evangelization. “Evangelization is the test of our ecumenical vocation”. The churches of the WCC are on a pilgrimage towards unity under the missionary vision of John 17:21 “that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God’s people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The Faith and Order paper on ‘The Church towards a Common Vision’ affirms the same: The church of the triune God is essentially missionary, and unity is essentially related to this mission.[[8]](#footnote-8) The mission of the church grows out of the nature of the church. This is implied when we affirm the apostolicity of the church; and apostolicity cannot be separated from the the other key attributes of the church – unity, holiness and catholicity. Together they describe the nature of God’s own being and the practical demands of authentic mission.

Similar tones are found in Lausanne documents from 1974, 1989 and 2010. The Lausanne Covenant states that ‘the church’s visible unity in truth is God’s purpose’. Evangelism is a call to unity because our oneness strengthens our witness.[[9]](#footnote-9) The 1989 Manila Manifesto takes this a step further and affirms the ‘urgent need for churches to cooperate in evangelism and social action, repudiating competition and avoiding duplication’.[[10]](#footnote-10) In the 2010 Cape Town Commitment the strong focus is on ‘love’ – love of the triune God and love of God’s people. This love is the first evidence of obedience to the Gospel, and ‘a potent engine of world mission.’

Love calls for unity. Jesus’ command that his disciples should love one another is linked to his prayer that they should be one. Both the command and the prayer are missional – ‘that the world may know you are my disciples’, and that ‘the world may know that you (the Father) sent me’. A most powerfully convincing mark of the truth of the gospel is when Christian believers are united in love across the world’s inveterate divisions – barriers of race, colour, gender, social class, economic privilege or political alignment. Few things so destroy our testimony as when Christians mirror and amplify the very same divisions among themselves.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Against this background the Cape Town Commitment calls for a new global partnership within the body of Christ, not only as a demonstration of our unity in the gospel, but for the sake of the name of Christ and the mission of God. In the Commitment’s ‘call to action’ it is stated that ‘a divided Church has no message for a divided world. Our failure to live in reconciled unity is a major obstacle to authenticity and effectiveness in mission.’ We need ‘a spirit of grace’, and we ‘long for greater recognition of the missional power of visible, earthly unity’. So do not split the body of Christ![[12]](#footnote-12)

*Lumen Gentium* introduces a new ecclesiology built around the dynamic ‘people of God’ concept and notes the reflection of the inner life of the triune God within the church itself. The church is a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[[13]](#footnote-13) So the unity of the church is not based in the unity of the members, but rather on the unity of God: ‘It is one and the same God who gathers the scattered from all places and all ages and makes them into one people of God’.[[14]](#footnote-14)

A slightly similar Trinitarian view may be found in Eastern Orthodoxy: The Father does all things by the Word in the Holy Spirit, and the unity of the church follows from the unity of God.[[15]](#footnote-15) And it is the visible church, the church of God on earth, that we are talking about as mirroring the triune oneness. At the heart of this ecclesiology stands the Eucharist where we bear witness to salvation in Christ by ‘telling’ and by ‘doing’. The Eucharist is thus the foundational act of the church – the act that makes the church. So in a sense one could say that the church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the church. In the one broken bread, we who are many are one body. ‘One in many’ and ‘many in one’[[16]](#footnote-16). If this is so, then church life and mission become ‘liturgy after the liturgy’. And the local Eucharistic gathering is the church of God.

The foundation of mission in unity is to be found in the *koinonia* of the triune God. ‘The inner communion of the Holy Trinity is the ultimate source of the unity of the church and the aim of God’s mission: to invite every human being to experience fellowship with God and with one another according to the inner unity of the One God in three persons (John 17:21) in the eschatological hope of the restoration of the whole created world.’[[17]](#footnote-17) The mission of the triune God is *marturia*, a witness expressed through *kerygma, koinonia, diakonia and leitourgia*. ‘Word’ and ‘sacrament’ have in a Lutheran/Protestant context become the primary marks of the church in its witness, but these marks belong within – and must not be separated from - a gathering of believers (*communio sanctorum*) on the way to the world – a gathering who also knows what it is to be a community of sinners (*communio peccatorum*) under the cross. In other words, the church in mission lives as *simul justus et peccator* (just and sinful simultaneously) – a mixed body who needs to hear the gospel of repentance daily and who therefore prays for the triune God to bring reconciliation between his people and himself (vertical) and among his people (horizontal). But the unity is not primarily a unity among sinners, but a unity that may be expressed in the following manner (in a document on the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal churches):

…the *koinonia* between Christians is rooted in the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit….this trinitarian life is the highest expression of the unity to which we together aspire: ‘That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’ (1 Jn 1:3).[[18]](#footnote-18)

Unity in mission grows out of what we have seen and heard, and calls others into the fellowship with the triune God.

The way one understands the Trinity carries over to one’s ecclesiology. If our view of the Trinity is hierarchical, we shall also have a hierarchical view of the church, according to Jürgen Moltmann. An open view of the Trinity leads to an open church with egalitarian relationships. As the Trinity is open, so was Jesus’ friendship – inclusive, revolutionary, going out to meet the other. Such friendship prepares the ground for a friendlier world, Moltmann says.[[19]](#footnote-19) For Moltmann the logical consequence is a ‘free church’ model, quite different from his own ‘state church’ model. A ‘relational ecclesiology’ built on an open Trinity also leads to *a church for others* – a church which understands its mission and its meaning, its roles and its functions in relation to others. A church which is open for God, open for men and open for the future of both God and men. Such a church will exist for the world and will live for and out of mission, a mission which in the same manner is ‘open’ and ready to join in with the Spirit. Trinitarian mission is to participate in the mission of the Spirit.

Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do, and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions…This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God’s grace.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The Spirit of mission is also the Spirit of unity whom we pray and hope will heal, reconcile and renew the whole creation.

The mission of the church grows out of the nature of the church, and this nature reflects the nature of the triune God. Miroslav Volf’s trinitarian ecclesiology attempts to show and view the church as the image of the Trinity.[[21]](#footnote-21) This leads him to ‘define’ the church as the presence of Christ amidst the gathered community, as described in Matthew 18:20. Volf is here also leaning on Ignatius, Tertullian and Cyprian: ‘I will join this long tradition by taking Matt. 18:20 as the foundation not only for determining what the church is, but also for how it manifests itself externally as a church.’[[22]](#footnote-22) In Volf’s answer to the question ‘what is the church?’ the same tone is heard:

Whenever the Spirit of Christ…is present in its *ecclesially constitutive activity*, there is the church. The Spirit unites the gathered congregation with the triune God and integrates it into a history extending from Christ….to the eschatological new creation. This Spirit-mediated relationship with the triune God…constitutes an assembly into a church.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**The Spirit of Unity and the Spirit of Truth**

When Jesus prays for the unity of his followers, he prays that they in this way will emulate and reflect the triune God (‘…that they may be one, as we are one’ (John 17:11)). As they do so, they will be engines in God’s mission. Finding unity in the church and in a congregation requires that the church is moving out in mission. Equally important is to keep in mind that the high priestly prayer is also a prayer that the disciples may become holy and that they may realize the truth. *So unity, holiness and truth go together with and in mission*. We must not concentrate on one in such a way that we isolate it from the others. John Stott warned against a search for structural unity without a comparable quest for the truth and life of authentic unity. And he added:

Others have been preoccupied with truth (doctrinal orthodoxy), sometimes becoming dry, harsh and unloving in the process, forgetting that truth is to be adorned with the beauty of holiness. Holiness seems of paramount importance to others, that is, the state of the church’s interior life. But such people sometimes withdraw into a self-centred piety, forgetting that we have been called out of the world in order to be sent back into it, which is ‘mission’. So mission becomes the obsession of a fourth group, who, however, sometimes forget that the world will come to believe in Jesus only when His people are one in truth, holiness and love. Truth, holiness, mission and unity belonged together in the prayer of Jesus, and they need to be kept together in our quest for the church’s renewal today.[[24]](#footnote-24)

In his high priestly prayer Jesus is not praying for the world, but ‘on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours’ (John 17:9). He wants the world to believe and to join his people. This may happen through the witness of his people, and ‘that witness will be most effective when it comes from people who have truly come to know Christ through repentance and faith, conversion and new birth, and who know they have become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s own people.”’[[25]](#footnote-25)

In that perspective one may claim that all true and genuine believers are already one in Christ. In Christ we have all been brought near in the blood of Christ (Eph 2: 12-14). The challenge is then whether we can and will grasp this and whether we can and will manifest it. To this should be added that Jesus seems to be praying for a unity in truth of his people *today* with his people *then*: “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one” (John 17:20-21). John Stott puts it this way:

Jesus’s prayer was first and foremost that there might be a historical continuity between the apostles and the post apostolic church, that the church’s faith might not change with the changing years but remain recognizably the same, and that the church of every generation might merit the epithet apostolic because of its loyalty to the message and mission of the apostles.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The unity in mission begins as a unity with the apostles and the apostolic gospel. This is what ‘apostolic succession’ means in my ecclesial context. And this unity is not a rigid doctrinal matter, but something that may grow, for Jesus prays: “May they be brought to complete unity/become completely one” (17:23). Our unity is real, but not perfect. The reasons are many, also deep and genuine theological divergence on central issues; but equally important are the reasons found at the level of praxis, of attitude, at the level of love. The hard fact in many contexts is that lack of Christian unity in the church destroys our credibility in the world. Michael Cassidy quotes a prayer in the Anglican Prayer Book: “Give your church power to preach the Gospel of Christ, and grant that we and all Christian people may be united in truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Today this is often termed ‘doing mission in Christ’s way’: “Evangelism is closely related to unity: The love for one another is a demonstration of the gospel we proclaim (John 13:34-35) while disunity is an embarrassment to the gospel (1 Corinthians 1).”[[28]](#footnote-28) ‘Doing mission in Christ’s way’ may sound simplistic, but implies the whole range of *kenotic* love, humility, co-suffering, offering healing, respecting cultural, ethnic and social diversities and the dignity of each human being. Our lives are in actual mission in Christ’s way. This has to do with the sacramental life of the church and it has to do with a spirit which abolishes egoism, arrogance and self-contentment. Here is, I believe, the core of visible unity – in our deeds and attitudes, our common work for peace, justice and reconciliation in a broken world. One may call this ‘the missionary opening-up’ of the church to the world.[[29]](#footnote-29) It is here, as we actually do mission in Christ’s way, that the so-called invisible unity[[30]](#footnote-30) becomes visible – in being able to cooperate and witness together, in accepting diversity as a gift from God and at the same time avoiding divisions, discrimination and intolerance. *Unity in mission is unity in diversity*. As we pursue structural unity, diversity must continue to be counted as an enrichment.

**The Missional Church**

Both ‘unity’ and ‘mission’ begin with ‘being’ rather than ‘doing’. They are so to speak ‘nature’ or the DNA of the church. Emil Brunner is often quoted in this connection: ‘The church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning.’[[31]](#footnote-31) The Spirit of Christ who empowers the church in mission is also the life of the church. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into the church at the same time as he sent the church (John 20:19ff). Ergo: *the church is missionary by its very nature.*[[32]](#footnote-32) The church exists in being sent and in building up itself for the sake of mission. Missionary activity is not so much the work of the church as simply the church at work.

The American missiologist Van Gelder writes:

…the church, as the people of God in the world, is inherently a missionary church. It is to participate fully in the Son’s redemptive work as the Spirit creates, leads, and teaches the church to live as the distinctive people of God … *The church is. The church does what it is. The church organizes what it does.* The nature of the Church is based on God’s presence through the Spirit. The ministry of the church flows out of the church’s nature. The organization of the church is designed to support the ministry of the church.[[33]](#footnote-33)

The word ‘missionary’ refers to the specific mission activities of the church, whereas the word ‘missional’ is related to the nature of the church, as being sent by God to the world. It began with Leslie Newbigin who differentiated between the church’s missionary *dimension* and its missionary *intention.[[34]](#footnote-34)* It was the same Newbigin who after having served as a missionary in South India for several decades before returning to Birmingham in the seventies, commenced writing books about the church in the West. Not only did he castigate the rationalistic modernism of the West, he also claimed that the Western, modern culture was the least receptive to the Gospel:

There is a cold contempt for the Gospel which is harder to face than opposition… England is a very pagan society and the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the Church.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Reading Newbigin helped me realize that my own experiences as a young missionary in Ethiopia and with the East African revival – and later from the growing church in China – were experiences of how the church was meant to be. Not only were these churches following in the footsteps of the Acts of the Apostles with regard to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, they also represented a living people of God, in praise and weeping, people who gave priority to walking in the light, and who in their lives demonstrated God’s renewing and healing power in their contexts.

The term ‘missional church’ is based on different streams from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Ecumenical and Evangelical theology and practice and represents in that way a joint Ecumenical concern which often has been running parallel and been intertwined with the concern for unity and common witness. The term itself came out of The Gospel and Our Culture network, which was initially established in England in 1989, and soon exported to North America and elsewhere. The network was inspired by Leslie Newbigin and his early books The Open Secret (1978), Foolishness to the Greeks (1986) and The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (1991).[[36]](#footnote-36)

It was the American Gospel and Our Culture Network that created the term *missional church*[[37]](#footnote-37). Darrell L. Guder who was a key figure in the network, raises the issue of the *conversion of the church* in his book, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). This c*o*nversion is related to re-thinking theology, evangelization, worship, leadership and structures. Most importantly, it demands undertaking measures against the gospel reductionism within the church: The early church went from movement to becoming an institution, Constantine’s church replaced the understanding of the gospel as an event with the formulation of a defined faith system consisting of truths; the Kingdom of God was conceived as the eternity that awaits a Christian after death; salvation was handed out to the individual by the church, in particular through the sacraments. On the basis of these gospel reductions, the organizational structure of the church was transformed into state religion and the administrator of religious meaning in society. Likewise the reformation and pietism have reduced the gospel to a matter of salvation for the individual: “The benefits of salvation are separated from the reason for which we receive God’s grace in Christ: to empower us as God’s people to become Christ’s witnesses. This fundamental dichotomy between the benefits of the gospel and the mission of the gospel constitutes the most profound reductionism of the gospel”.[[38]](#footnote-38)

David Bosch described how we experience a shift from the modern Enlightenment paradigm in the history of Christendom, towards a post-modern, ecumenical paradigm.[[39]](#footnote-39) *Corpus Christianum* – the idea of a unity made up of state, religion and culture as the canopy for the church’s work – no longer functions. According to missional church thinking, the West is witnessing the end of the era that has lasted from the Constantine state church and church tradition in the 4th century. This calls for a dramatic readjustment process. The idea of Corpus Christianum symbolized wedlock between the church and the holders of power, which, in different ways, turned a missionary church into a pastoral institution. As the state religion of Rome, the Christian faith became the civil religion and the society’s administrator of religious meaning. The church’s structure adopted the shape of the society’s structure, with parochial churches, and a clear division between *clerici* (priests) and *idiotes* (lay people). Faith was practiced by taking part in the arrangements of the church, and evangelization was replaced with “Christianization”. Breaking with the Constantine tradition and its access to power and influence is not easy. In other parts of the world a break with the Constantine church has already taken place, or it has never been present in the first place. To Westerners in Northern Europe it has in some cases become an obstacle to mission because it conceals the fact that we are situated in a mission context.

The vision to be a missional church is born out of a critique of the Western concept of church. The response to a mission situation is not to initiate efforts to “communicate with modern man”, rather it is to ask what is wrong with today’s church since the gospel appears so irrelevant to so many. The features of the Constantine church are similar to a Lutheran/Protestant conception of the church as the place for preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. A missional church is where the people of God participate in God’s mission through being, word and deed, in their daily lives. The symbols of the Constantine church are the place, the temple, the Word, the sacred, whereas the symbols of the missional church are the way, discipleship, wholeness, common witness and everyday life. Likewise, one can distinguish between the custodians of the Constantine church: a clerical hierarchy of static institutions, and the custodians of the missional church: lay people, who dynamically live out their faith in everyday situations. This does not rule out the ordained ministry, but sees its role in equipping God’s people for service (Eph 4:11ff).

In the midst of this paradigm shift the question is: How to be God’s church in our time? This question in turn leads to a number of new questions – about everything we are and do as Christians and as church. This is not a matter of new methods or models. When encountering the challenges of a changing society, Westerners tend to think in terms of analyses, solutions, projects – new church models, electronic church, reshaped worship, and evangelization efforts – whereas the shift that we experience today raises questions about the theology, missiology and spirituality. We are forced to reread the Scriptures about what it means to be God’s people in the world, and about being signs of the Kingdom of God through who we are, what we do, and what we say. In this light, one can but wonder how many of our churches in the West for decades have made the traditional church structure such an integral part of the gospel, and how we have carried out a determined reduction of the gospel (from making disciples to a preoccupation with the personal salvation of the individual), and a reduction of what it means to be church – from the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church to a church that defines itself only by what it does – the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of baptism and communion.[[40]](#footnote-40) In this way, the reformers shifted the attention away from what the church is to what the church does. Through this focus on sermon and sacraments the church service became the primary task of the church. Wilbert Shenk is preoccupied with the same issue:

The confessional statements…all emphasize the function rather than the being of the church. Ecclesiologically the church is turned inward. The thrust of these statements, which were the very basis for catechising and guiding the faithful, rather than equipping and mobilizing the church to engage the world, was to guard and preserve.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The missional church concept tries to capture the old truth that mission is part of the church’s *esse.* Without mission there is no church. It lies in the genes of the church to be missional, and any ecclesiological discussion without this point of departure will necessarily derail and end up speaking of something else than the church. Therefore, mission should not be reduced to a task or a program, it is primarily the nature of the church – a nature that grows out of God’s nature. In the midst of the crisis that the established church of the West experiences, what will remain is a missional fellowship of people who live by, and demonstrates the gospel of the Kingdom of God through being, word and deed. Such was the ecclesiological paradigm of the early church and such should a new paradigm be. This is a matter of finding the right balance between the nature of the church (what the church is), its tasks (ministry; what the church does) and its structure (how the church organizes itself).

The task is not to invent a number of mission programs to attract new churchgoers. Instead we are challenged to be what the church has always been: people of flesh and blood carrying the reality of the gospel within them, communicating it through missional being and action. For that reason, it is likely, that the famous, but seldom realized, priesthood of all believers will become the basic church and mission structure. Together with this structure one could hope for a rediscovery of the gifts of the Spirit, in a broad biblical perspective, as that which equips the missionary congregation in a post-modern reality. Our ability to be magnets attracting people to Christ becomes important, as it is in our sister churches in the Global South. A missional church will therefore often emphasize meditation, spirituality, presence, genuineness and lifestyle. Modelled on our brothers and sisters in the South and East, we may in a new way become personal carriers of the spiritual reality the world longs for. Before becoming centrifugal we need to return to the centre – to live centripetally.

And when going out, our primary task is *to be witnesses*. The church’s missional call, according to the NT, is to be witnesses. Mission is witness. *Marturia is the sum of kerygma, koinonia, leitourgia and diakonia* – all four of which constitute important dimensions of the witness for which the church is called and sent: “We are using a missiological hermeneutic when we read the New Testament as the testimony (witness) of witnesses, equipping other witnesses for the common mission of the church”.[[42]](#footnote-42) Thus, testimony becomes a demonstration through the lives and actions of God’s people to the fact that the Kingdom of God becomes present in the disciples of Jesus Christ. In this way the testimony of the gospel defines the identity, activities and communication that the church has been called to since Pentecost.

**Conclusion**

I have in this chapter reflected on biblical and theological foundations for mission and unity from two major perspectives: ‘the triune God’s mission’ and ‘missional church’. In my treatment I have particularly highlighted the ontological dimensions of unity and mission. My point of departure has been the ancient trinitarian concept of the *missio Dei*. It was, I believe, this concept which opened up new landscapes for mission in the 1950s (The Willingen Conference in 1952) after World War II, the Holocaust and the Maoist takeover in China. *The missio Dei paradigm makes impossible the separation of mission and church. If the church is defined by mission, then the unity of the church and mission are deeply interrelated.*

How may we on the way into the future keep these two interrelated? No doubt, there will be theological and practical hurdles and issues to tackle and the major actors (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Ecumenical and Evangelical) will continue to explore avenues of convergence, undoubtedly with church and mission leaders from the Global South expanding and refocusing the global conversation.

Could ‘spirituality’ be one of the avenues? In several of the documents and statements from 2010 spirituality is highlighted, a spirituality that encompasses prayer, worship, Scripture, and the call to live as witnesses in our daily life. Could it be that ‘transforming mission’ today is about spirituality? It is the Holy Spirit who makes the dead bones live again. The life of church and mission is the life of God’s Spirit in the world. The sources for this life are to be found in Word and Sacrament. The means of grace transform us into new human beings. This spirituality finds many expressions: Adoration, prayer, meditation, contemplation, spiritual guidance, and equipping God’s people with spiritual gifts. And let us pay attention to the spiritual yearning among many. Note such signs as the retreat movement, the interest in pilgrimage, the Taize movement, the Sant’Egidio movement, *lectio divina* – and do not forget to monitor what happens on the borders of Christian communities in the form of new religious movements and a secular spirituality. We need in new ways to live within the triangle of ‘word’, ‘prayer’, and ‘everyday life’? Many among us live a superficial spiritual life. God’s people need to wake up to God’s power. When He acts, the renewal comes, as Christians in the Global South experience. Learn from them how to live out spirituality in everyday life outside the walls of the church, in a life of incarnation. ‘If the Word does not become flesh (*sarx)* the church becomes the *sarcophagus* (the coffin) of the gospel’.[[43]](#footnote-43)

1. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), Volume IV/1, 653-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Daryl Balia & Kirsteen Kim (eds.), *Edinburgh 2010. Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum Books international, 2010), 199-221. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kirsteen Kim & Andrew Anderson (eds.), *Edinburgh 2010. Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2011), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Kirsteen Kim, “Mission in the Twenty-first Century”, in Kirsteen Kim & Andrew Anderson (eds.), *Edinburgh 2010. Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum Books International), 353f. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “New Delhi Section on Unity”, in L. Vischer (ed.), *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1963), 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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7. Jooseop Keum (ed.), *Together towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *The Church towards a Common Vision* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), Faith and Order Paper No. 214, 2 & 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. John Stott, *For the Lord We Love* (Glasgow: Lausanne Movement, 2009), 33ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. J. D. Douglas (ed.), *Proclaim Christ until He Comes: Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1990), Manila Ma. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *The Cape Town Commitment. A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (Massachusetts: The Lausanne Movement, 2011), 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *The Cape Town Commitment,* 65f. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 28f. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Hans Kung, *The Church* (New York: Image Books, 1976), 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology,* 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology,* 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Daryl Balia & Kirsteen Kim (eds.), *Edinburgh 2010. Witnessing to Christ Today*, 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Quoted from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jooseop Keum (ed.), *Together towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 268f. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Michael Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed For* (Oxford & Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2012), 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Cassidy, *The Church Jesus Prayed For,* 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Jooseop Keum (ed.), *Together towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Daryl Balia & Kirsteen Kim (eds.), *Edinburgh 2010. Witnessing to Christ Today,* 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. I do not subscribe to the concept of an ‘invisible church’. The church may be hidden. Just as the glory of Christ was hidden, and not invisible, in his incarnation and humiliation, so the real nature of the church/koinonia as *sanctorum communio* is hidden or concealed, but not invisible. God did not reveal his glory (himself) in Christ *in spite of* his humanity, but in the complete humanity (profanity) of the incarnate *logos* (i.e. in his life, death and cross). In the same way the hiddenness of the *koinonia* lies in its visibility: in its incarnational character, in its provisional character, in its becoming *communio sanctorum et peccatorum.* Hidden under its contradiction (*sub contrarie specie*), i.e. its brokenness and sinfulness, but not invisible. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: Student Mission Movement Press, 1931), 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1991), 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Books, 2000), 31 and 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Leslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World* (London & New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 21, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Leslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The influence of Newbigin’s theology of cultural plurality on these missiological streams has been well documented by George R. Hunsberger in *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1998). The American version of the network also pays tribute to Newbigin; at the same time it is very preoccupied with its own North American context. This is illustrated by the fact that all the books on the topic mentions North America in the titles, for example *The Church between Gospel and Culture. The Emerging Mission in North America* (Hunsberger & Van Gelder 1996), *Missional Church. A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Guder 1998) and *Confident Witness – Changing World. Rediscovering the Gospel in North America* (Van Gelder 1999). The focus on context is a common feature within the missional church thinking: What does our mission context require in terms of calling, tasks and witness? And what kind of leadership does this context call for? [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Darrell Guder (ed.), *Missional Church. A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). This book was the result of a three-year study project aiming at analyzing the situation of the American church and at defining its challenges within a mission context. Here, missional is defined to underline “the essential nature and vocation of the church as God’s called and sent people”. Further, it is emphasised that missional ecclesiology should be biblical, historical, contextual, eschatological and be practicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission,* 349ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 53ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Wilbert Shenk, *Write the Vision. The Church Renewed* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church,*:53-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See Knud Jørgensen, “Edinburgh, Tokyo and Cape Town – comparing and contrasting on the way to 2110”, in Margunn Serigstad Dahle, Lars Dahle & Knud Jørgensen (eds.), *The Lausanne Movement. A Range of Perspectives* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-43)