
Introduction:

Reinterpreting Mission

We are at a critical moment for reinterpreting the movement of God's mission for the life of the world. The challenges facing church leaders in seeking to remain faithful to the mission of the Triune God are unprecedented: the rise of articulate neo-atheist voices, navigating cross-cultural realities, engaging post-colonial reinterpretations, taking seriously inter-religious dynamics, the dramatic increase in "nones" and "dones" in society, and the threats of political extremism. The authors of this issue, many of them new to the journal, draw upon the riches of the theological tradition and offer fresh perspectives for reinterpreting the meaning of mission in this moment.

Eric I. Hanson explores the significance of the *new atheism* movement for Christianity and the church. After examining some of the major convictions in the *new atheism*, these are used to consider the meaning of the *new atheism* for Christianity and the church. The article demonstrates that it is the Gospel that is the hope for both the church and all of humanity.

Joseph Schattauer Paillé examines how Lesslie Newbigin's *The Household of God* remains an indispensable contribution to the field of missional theology. Newbigin's understanding of eschatology can assist the church to live in mission and strive toward unity under its eschatological calling to be a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the kingdom of God.

Man Hei Yip examines George Lindbeck's position on premodern biblical interpretation within the cultural-linguistic framework. While highlighting the narrative may be a crucial step to understand the meaning of Scripture, he overlooks the multiplicity of voices in the story. Engaging the voice of the other opens new avenues to understanding. The voice of the other is a voice that matters equally.

Jim Harries poses the question: Is the proposal that Western theology is in no way superior to other theologies a pretentious humility? Theological education in the majority world in Western languages implies translation from known into unknown bodies of knowledge and understanding. Theology should be taught and learned primarily by example and by using the language of the people being reached.

Paul S. Chung addresses mission and diakonia from the perspective of the Global South. God's mission in Abraham and Noah is fulfilled in the reconciliation of Christ as the deacon of all flesh, upon whom the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is promised. This perspective is foundational for diaconal congregations in the Global South for participation, compassion, and solidarity in response to the signs of times.

David Thang Moe proposes the construction of a theology of mission with three interrelated themes: 1) a biblical theology of

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mission—mission theology must be grounded in the Bible—the whole Bible being a missionary document; 2) a Trinitarian theology of mission—the Triune God is primarily and ultimately involved in one mission of creation and new creation; and 3) an ecclesial theology of mission—God uses the church as an agent of mission.

In his *Currents Focus* article **Thomas F. O'Meara** reflects on two moments in time: the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's call for reformation in years after 1515, and the fiftieth anniversary of the conclusion in December 1965 of the reforming Council, Vatican II. We recall these events as we are called in our time to be the servants of God's kingdom in history. We live out our lives in the midst of the mystery of God's saving grace in Christ and we minister to the church by discovering new ways of preaching.

This issue introduces a new feature, "Listening to Immigrant Voices." These testimonies raise up the voices of people marginalized by the dynamics in contemporary American church and society. We welcome nominations of authors for this column in future issues. Maximum length: 1000-1200 words. The first author in this series is **Susan Ebertz**, who witnesses to the experiences of her Japanese grandparents in Hawaii after the attack on Pearl Harbor seventy-five years ago. We listen and remember so history does not repeat itself.

As members and leaders of the Christian movement, we are called to faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for such a time as this. May the articles in this issue provide substance for your own reflection as each of you seeks to respond faithfully at this moment in time!

Craig L. Nesson, Issue Editor