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## **Theology and spirituality of non-European missionaries**

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A special programme for missionaries, pastors, mission leaders and those interested in missions, to understand the current situation in Europe, its identity, history and needs. There were sessions on research, challenges and special needs for mission in Europe.

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### **Introduction**

In this article I will concentrate on explaining some aspects of theology relating to missionaries from the 'two-thirds world' and the presentation will be from a Latin American perspective. I would like to point out that this subject should include the theologies of African and Asian missionaries in a more specific manner, but for reasons of time and space I will focus on explaining this theological and spiritual influence within the framework of Latin American missiology, where for Bibliographical references I have tried to use non-Western theology – from the two-thirds world - in dialogue with Western theology and not the other way around, which is what we, as non-Westerners, generally do to reinforce our theological and missiological assumptions.

On the other hand, this work will be divided in three parts: the theological history of non-European missionaries, the foundations of a non-European missionary theology, and then I will present some characteristics of non-European missionary spirituality. Finally, I will give some suggestions in my conclusions regarding this very important subject for contextual missiology.

### **Theological history of non-European missionaries**

In theological history of non-European missionaries we must consider the emphasis and evangelistic zeal of someone who has been shaped in this context. This kerygmatic zeal is so strong that at times it could be called evangelical fundamentalism, an act which stemmed from a holy theology that arose from the radical Protestantism of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This theological history can be interpreted (Gonzales 2001:94) as the multi-faceted testimony of a unique gospel, which is orthodox, universal and authoritative.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that the canon, the apostolic succession and the apostolic creed, were formed to protect themselves from sectarianism (the canon), from heresies (the apostolic succession), and to emphasise Trinitarian doctrine and the baptismal experience (the creed). These theologies of the first centuries of Christianity together with more recent Western theologies such as those of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century have succeeded in influencing non-Western theology. How has this happened? All traditional, Pentecostal or Charismatic traditions have a declaration of faith which, in my opinion,



summarises the contents of a synthetic Biblical theology. This basically interprets a trinitarian, soteriological, Christological, ecclesiological, pneumatic and eschatological theology of any denominational or independent missionary movement. In this sense, missionaries from the two-thirds world have this combination in their theological background. Obviously, many of these declarations of faith are influenced by the context of origin of each denomination or movement. This, in the majority of cases, has a Western influence.

The Argentinian historian, Pablo Deiros (1994:144), whilst talking about future change, which I wish to interpret as part of the historical theological process for the future; explains according to the World Church Council's projections for the year 2000 that more than 50% of Christians in the world would have the following characteristics:

1. They would be non-white,
2. They would live in the Southern hemisphere, and
3. They would be from the Pentecostal – Charismatic movement.

Deiros (:144-146) classified the percentage of Christians in the world on the basis of 1994 projections:

1. Traditional Pentecostals will constitute 25% of the whole, the majority being from the 'two-thirds' world, especially Latin America.
2. 25% will belong to the Charismatic movement, belonging to historic Protestantism and the Catholic Church. Deiros forecasts that these 'renewed' churches will become the historic roots of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. 25% will be made up of non Charismatic Christians belonging to churches of historic Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church.
4. The remaining 25% will be made up of nominal Christians from all churches and denominations who will not practise their faith and will only be cultural Christians. Deiros believes that the majority of these nominal members of western churches will fall into progressive apostasy. They will have a registered membership which will not meet regularly.

It appears that these projections are being fulfilled with frightening accuracy, since the theology for these changes arises from the new roots of evangelicalism in the two-thirds world.

### **The foundations of a missionary theology from the two-thirds world**

Missionary theology from the two-thirds world basically promotes a Biblical, missionary, trinitarian, Christological, ecclesiological, pneumatological, eschatological, compassionate and polycentric theology of the disciple. For reasons of space, I will explain only five of the nine themes mentioned, which are closely connected to a contextual missionary theology.



### **1. They promote a Biblical missionary theology**

According to the puertorrican missionary, Orlando Costas, there has always been confusion between mission and evangelism in denominations and local churches. Evangelism in the Biblical sense (Costas 1971:26) is the proclamation of the redemptive work of Christ and its implications for every human being that gives themselves in words and deeds with the aim that the Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner. For Costas, mission is the call of God to a redemptive task, it is a command God gave to His people. This responsibility is to proclaim God's gospel to the whole world. Costas concludes by saying that evangelism is the proclamation of God's redemptive work, and mission is the command which encourages us to put this proclamation into action. In this sense, Latin American theology is recently moving towards a theology of missionary evangelism, which means that there currently exists a practise of missionary evangelism which arises from the personal experience of each engaged Christian.

On the other hand, a missionary theology is Biblical, global and practical. It is Biblical because theological assumptions arise from the very interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. It is global because the interpretation of missionary evangelism isn't a division of mission and evangelism, but it is interpreted as a legitimate and Biblical unit for the proclamation of the gospel throughout the whole world. Participating in the sending of missionaries to other latitudes is a part of mission, which should run alongside evangelism in the life of a local church. The two activities are part of the fulfilment of the Redeemer's mandate, which are to be interpreted as a missiological unit. The missionary task is a reality which should be practised both in Jerusalem as well as Judea or Samaria to the ends of the earth all at the same time, which means in parallel. This (Cueva: 1991) is what we have referred to as missiological parallelism. Thirdly, missionary theology is a practice which entails the Church's full participation in the missionary task.

### **2. It promotes a pneumatological missionary theology**

The South African professor, Allan Anderson, specialised in Pentecostal and Charismatic theology at Birmingham University and the Argentinean historian Pablo Deiros agree that Pentecostal theology has similar characteristics throughout the world. For Anderson (2001:7), the new focus of the seriousness of Christianity is manifested by the Initiated African Churches (AICS), who express their theology through oral narrative accompanied by experience, but who, on the other hand, have rejected western ecclesiastic models. This experience refers to the acts of the Holy Spirit in all its manifestations.

In the case of Latin American Pentecostalism, Deiros (:67-73) states the following: it is popular, directed to the masses with a strong emphasis on healing, spiritual liberation, forgiveness and acceptance, corporate healing and fellowship. We must understand that Pentecostal theology relates social problems to personal sin, and therefore they have a strong evangelistic emphasis as a solution to problems. Conversely, Pentecostal theology has been a



fundamentalist, non intellectual movement, arising as a consequence a lack of education and theological reflection. Many Pentecostal leaders lack both a formal secular and theological education. However, at the centre of this theology, the emphasis is placed on a pneumatology which gives power and authority to accomplish God's Mission.

The historical analysis which Pablo Deiros presents in his book "Latin America in Flames" (:73-74) describes four kinds of Pentecostals in Latin America:

1. The traditional Pentecostals who have formed their own denominations.
2. The revolutionary Pentecostals who have become radical in their theology.
3. The renewed Pentecostals who come out of the historic churches protesting against spiritual and institutional decadence, and
4. Popular Pentecostalism, called 'ministries' and have a Charismatic leader.

The above four types of Pentecostalism develop a Pentecostal theology with an urban tendency, with a migratory movement from the countryside to the town, especially directed towards poor and popular neighbourhoods of the city. The rapid growth of churches is explained by its emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit and its different manifestations and a vibrant style of worship. There is also what we can call the emphasis on a vibrant liturgy with the members participating in giving testimonies and singing demonstratively.

As far as the Asian church's influence is concerned, Philip Jenkins (2002:70) , a professor of history, states that China has more than 50 million Christians with an influence of the Chinese Christian diaspora in neighbouring countries such as Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia. South Korea is a special phenomenon which had only 300,000 Christians in 1920, but today a quarter of the population is Christian - 12 million people. It should be noted that those countries with a Buddhist and Confucian influence have experienced this growing spiritual transformation. This theological and spiritual influence can be seen in the numerical growth of churches from the 'two-thirds world.'

For example, The Central Church of the Complete Gospel, founded by David Yonggi Cho in 1958 in Seoul, is the largest church in the world (Jenkins, 71) with more than 800,000 members. This church practises the threefold blessing of the spirit, soul and body. They also promote physical health and financial prosperity. They are affiliated to the Assemblies of God. On the other hand, the church with the most rapid growth in the United Kingdom is an African church: London's Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), founded by the Nigerian pastor, Matthew Ashimolowo. It has more than 8,000 members and many satellite churches. It is an independent Pentecostal church which has started its own missionary work.

The analysis of a previously mentioned non-Western pneumatology leads us to consider that the same could be repeated in Europe with the new theological influence and spirituality of missionaries from the 'two-thirds world.' In this sense, migration will be a missionary tool to spread a new spirituality in Europe, not only evangelical, but also Islamic. This is the new reality, for example the United Kingdom with more than a million Muslims, Germany with



more than three million, France with more than two million and Italy with 750,000 (Jenkins 2002:97). Conversely, we have the Spanish model with more than 700,000 Latins, of which at least 15% are of evangelical faith.

### **3. They promote a polycentric missionary theology**

The Cuban historian, Justo Gonzales (2001:17) explains that today the historic map is changing as the centre of history used to be in North America and Europe. Now there is talk of several centres simultaneously, since it is not valid to consider history from only one centre. Gonzales reminds us how the centre of Jerusalem moved towards Antioch, especially Asia Minor, and how later Islam moved its centre to Western Europe. These centres have experienced spiritual vitality and have had good economic resources in their time.

Today the new spiritual vitality is found in the 'two-thirds world', even though they lack the economic power which characterised the centres that preceded them. Not being able to count on a history which emphasises the North Atlantic, we must assume that the new church history and missions will be focussed on global history, where there are several centres such as Asia, Africa and Latin America. From these, new theological and missiological interpretations will be made which will have repercussions on the life of the church in the world. Analytically, we must recognise that spiritual vitality is in the 'South', whilst economic vitality is still in the 'North.' Here we need to ask ourselves if leadership of the 'two-thirds world' will have two vitalities, spiritual and economic, to influence the present economic powers globally. We need to predict here, that for example, China will become one of the economic powers of the world.

### **4. They promote a compassionate missionary theology.**

1996 was declared the 'International Year for the eradication of poverty' by the United Nations. (Bullon 200:33-34). Why? Each day there are 68,000 new poor people who live on less than one dollar a day. According to the Ecuadorian theologian Rene Padilla in his missiological thesis in the 70s, the church needs to practise an integral mission where the evangelicals preach the salvation of souls, and at the same time participate in solving society's problems. His essay 'New Testament perspectives for a simple lifestyle' (1985:1700185), promotes a theology of solidarity with the poor where compassionate mission, 'is not an option, but an essential feature in the participation of the kingdom.' (:185). Our analysis leads us to consider that the double participation of the people of God will promote a more convincing attitude which helps in solving the suffering of the most needy. As Jesus clearly said: 'you will always have the poor.' (John 12:8). Here we have the invitation to Western churches to co-operate in working with the 'two-thirds world.' This compassionate missionary theology arises from the necessity to respond to the needs of the 'two-thirds world.' Currently, there are many institutions which practise compassionate missionary theology, such as the non governmental organisations (NGOs) which have recently proliferated.



## 5. They promote a Christological missionary theology of discipleship

Discipleship in the evangelisation of churches in Latin America is centred on a personalised work, where relationships of friendship, fellowship and mutual support teach us about every believer being a practical witness. This is what we could call a missionary theology of Christological discipleship, which emphasises a personal relationship with the Christ of the Bible, and a visible commitment to the local church where one is a member. This helps to explain the numerical growth of churches from the 'two-thirds world'. Matthew's (28:19) Christological mandate has always promoted a discipleship focus on the evangelical theology of the two-thirds world.

### Practice and characteristics of non-European missionary spirituality

I remember that in Peru the phrase 'have you done your morning devotional?' was used a lot thirty years ago to refer to a practising evangelical spirituality. This concept included Bible reading and meditation, and a time of prayer which should be generally done in the morning before beginning one's daily work. This was the evangelical spirituality of those decades. Now we hear, "it doesn't matter what time you do your devotional just as long as you do it." The difference can be minimal, but it is different in its spiritual interpretation. The first points to a clear discipline, the second is directed to an effort to do it. This focus of spirituality can be seen in non-European missionaries. It is a spirituality directed by the same devotional spirit influenced by Bible reading, prayer and the call to an unconditional obedience. This is a reason why thousands of Christians from the two-thirds world make themselves live a spirituality that renews them through their devotional.

With regards to an anti-imperialist spirituality, the Catholic theologian Jon Sobrino (Koinonia Services) has defined it as the wind, the driving force, the spirit, which moves human beings to fight against the empire and transform it into the kingdom of fraternity. Conversely, the Pentecostal sociologist Eldin Villafrane (Escobar 1998), explains that Hispanic spirituality points to a form and style of worship and of obedience to faith. For Villafane, spirituality is to talk of the Hispanic way of acting and being. This focus can be equally applied to evangelic spirituality in relation to faith and the practice of the faith in the God of the Bible. In this sense Samuel Escobar (1998:66) believes that evangelic spirituality in the Hispanic world is still in the process of making a substantial contribution since the spirituality that is practised is only the result of an adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon one.

I would like to present here some aspects which characterise spirituality of missionaries from the two-thirds world, which focus on eight areas:

1. Focussed on spiritual growth. It is a mystical spirituality, immanent and with an expansive tendency, since their intention is to have an influence on society through their faith in Christ.

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2. Focused on numerical growth. Most churches are growing and this forms part of the new evangelical Cosmo vision in these sectors.
3. Focussed on missionary growth. According to COMIBAM data (David Ruiz: 6) the projection for the Latin American church is to promote the sending of 12,000 Latin missionaries in the coming years.
4. Focussed on total dependency on God. Practical faith is a common element in all work of missionaries from the two-thirds world. The majority of missionaries leave for the field without a fixed budget and if they are covered it is only for a short period of time. For example, Korean missionaries generally go with a budget for two or three years, then on the field they have to resolve the budgetary problem for the coming years. Latin America has sent formal and informal missionaries. The informal are the thousands of immigrants who have gone out during the last ten years, and this is what we refer to as the Latin missionary diaspora.
5. Focussed on a vision and passion for evangelism. Those who learn a personalised evangelism are those who leave their countries with their faith and the same methodology of evangelism. Because of this they also experience conversions to the gospel of people in Europe. It is not the key method, but the spirit of evangelistic zeal which one must consider.
6. Focussed on detachment to serve God. All missionaries from the two-thirds world have understood that the best alternative for us is to pay the price of economic, social and cultural restrictions to be part of world evangelisation. We are not worried about how much we will be paid, but how many are being lost without Christ, and what our missionary responsibility is in this social, political and economic spirituality of a world in crisis.
7. Focussed on a vibrant liturgical practice. The vibrant liturgy is related to participatory worship of the members. The Pentecostal charismatic trend adds the use of the gifts of healing, tongues, spiritual discernment and demonic liberation, accompanied by prayer against 'spiritual warfare.' Vibrant liturgy includes, at the same time, the renewal of an evangelical contextualised hymnology, or what Samuel Escobar calls (1998:68) "the renewal of a Hispanic evangelical hymnology." In this sense the Mexican Marcos Witt, and the Costa Rican Danilo Montero are Latins who have generated most influence in Latin American evangelical music. I had the opportunity to be at three concerts with them, the one with Witt in Barcelona in 1994, attended by 1,500 people in a coliseum with a capacity for 10,000 and then two by Danilo Montero, one in London in 2004 attended by 1,000 people; the other in Lima, Peru in 2005, in the National Stadium attended by more than 30,000 people. This type of concert has been a motive for missiological reflection by the Peruvian anthropologist Tito Paredes who has just published his book "With permission to Dance."



8. Focussed on the practice of a personalised faith. This growth can be seen in the practice of an individual piety, as opposed to a corporate one, even though the corporate is experienced in the brotherly relationships of church members. It is from here that candidates for missionary work come.

By way of summary, we can say that the spirituality of the two-thirds world has been shaped by the practice of a pragmatic missiology up to the 1960s. However, with the contributions of the new movements of theological reflection this is progressively changing. Here we can mention contributions of the Latin American Theological Fraternity which was inaugurated in 1969 and which is oriented towards a theological analysis and contextual missiology. We also have influences of South African theology from the University of South Africa (UNISA), with a leadership under the theology of South African David Bosch (Saayman Willen and Klippiers Krtzinger 1996:139), who has proposed a historic, inductive and pluralist paradigm which includes the unity of the church, God's mission and the missionary dimension of all theologies.

As regards the Asian influence, we have a Korean university "Hansei University" founded in 1986 (Wikipedia 2007) in Seoul which belongs to the "Central Church of the Complete Gospel."

### **Conclusion**

We could conclude by saying that the theology of missionaries from the two-thirds world is emphasised by an expansive theology in the oral, narrative and experiential sense, and that the spirituality of this theology has the characteristics of practising a personal evangelisation and discipleship. It is a spirituality with vibrant and joyous worship, accompanied by a more anthropological theology based on the experiences of the believer. It also contains a mystical faith which openly fights against Satanic hosts so that the Lordship of Christ reigns totally on earth.

This theology and spirituality of missionaries from the two-thirds world which continue to be promoted are a Trinitarian, Christological, ecclesiastical, pneumatological, eschatological, compassionate, polycentric and discipleship missionary theology.

My suggestion to this theology and spirituality of the two-thirds world is that we should further deepen our analytical reflection of developing mission. On the other hand, we should strengthen the need for a more united ecclesiology in the middle of the great diversity of approaches and theological emphasis, as well as spiritual practices. What is one of the greatest weaknesses of non-European missionaries? It is their missionary ecclesiology. What are their greatest strengths? It is their enthusiasm to accomplish God's Mission and the faith to believe that God is continuing to do the miracles that the world currently needs.

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