

# SPIRIT AND MISSION IN THE BIBLE: THE SPIRIT AS THE AGENT OF DIVINE LIFE-GIVING COMMUNION

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## INTRODUCTION

The occasion of this study is the centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. In 2007, missiologist David Hesselgrave remarked, “No other missionary gathering impacted twentieth century missions as did the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910. No single error was as significant as the ‘Edinburgh error’.”<sup>1</sup> He defines the “Edinburgh error” as “the sidelining of biblical truth and doctrine” and concludes that this error is “still being repeated too often and by too many”.<sup>2</sup> We therefore need a thoroughly *biblical* theology of mission.

A related issue is the diminished, even neglected, role of the Spirit in many western evangelical mission theologies, which have consequently become almost exclusively Christocentric or

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<sup>1</sup> D.J. Hesselgrave, “Will We Correct the Edinburgh Error? Future Mission in Historical Perspective”, *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 49 (2007) 121.

<sup>2</sup> Hesselgrave, “Edinburgh Error”, 138-139, 148. This “error” was unintentional: essentially, the delegates came from evangelical mission agencies, so theological, doctrinal and ecclesiastical concerns were discounted in order to focus on mission strategies and policies.

Christomonistic.<sup>3</sup> Among the finest and most recent theologies of mission are those by missiologist David Bosch (1991; surprisingly, he does not discuss John's gospel), and biblical scholars Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O'Brien (2001), Eckhard Schnabel (2004), and Chris Wright (2006).<sup>4</sup> However, none of them explain the role of the Spirit in mission. In contrast, Pentecostalism, the fastest growing missionary movement in the world, and Charismatic Movements fervently emphasize the role of the Spirit in mission, to the point of *over-emphasis* (especially in relation to "signs and wonders"). They also tend to borrow much of their theological ideas from others rather than develop a distinct Pentecostal or Charismatic mission theology, or derive their theologies mainly from mission praxis and experience.<sup>5</sup> Thus, there is a need for a sound missional theology of *the Spirit*.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to delineate a missional, biblical theology of the Spirit. I shall first sketch the Spirit's missional role in the Old Testament before I examine the writings of Luke, John and Paul for their understanding of mission and how the Spirit is related to mission.<sup>6</sup> Based on this, I shall formulate a missional, biblical theology of the Spirit. The rationale for this approach is that we should first listen to the

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<sup>3</sup> R.S. Anderson, "Mission...in the Way of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit", *International Review of Mission* 77 (1988) 487; S. Smith, "The Holy Spirit and Mission in Some Contemporary Theologies of Mission", *Mission Studies* 18 (2001) 87-114. This is not to deny Jesus' unique missional role (as we shall see in this study), but to seek a more trinitarian model for mission.

<sup>4</sup> D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991); A.J. Köstenberger and P.T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001); E.J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (2 vols.; Downers Grove: IVP, 2004); C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Pentecostal scholar V.-M. Kärkkäinen also observes and addresses some of these issues ("Mission, Spirit and Eschatology: An Outline of a Pentecostal-Charismatic Theology of Mission", *Mission Studies* 16 [1999] 73-94).

<sup>6</sup> Despite recording the "Great Commission" (28:18-20), Matthew does not develop the Spirit's role in mission.

distinctive voices before we listen to the witness of the bible as a whole. The starting point, however, is to clarify how I understand mission.

## THE *MISSIO DEI* AS LIFE-GIVING COMMUNION

The basic sense of mission is “an act of sending to perform some function”. This raises the following questions when we speak of God’s mission: Whom did God send, to do what? When did God initiate his mission – after the Fall or prior to that? Köstenberger and O’Brien assert that God’s mission is inextricably linked to human depravity: “There was no ‘mission’ in the Garden of Eden and there will be no ‘mission’ in the new heavens and the new earth...[M]ission is necessitated by humanity’s fall into sin and need for a Saviour.”<sup>7</sup> But this is too narrow an understanding, reflecting the traditional western approach to mission as Christomonistic or exclusively Christocentric, as we noted above. Salvation, rather than mission, is necessitated by humanity’s fall. Instead of a reductionist view of mission as salvation, I propose a broader definition of God’s mission as a *life-giving, communion-oriented mission*, in which God desires to have communion with his people.

Throughout the bible, God communicates his desire to dwell among his people – whether his dwelling place be Eden, the tabernacle, the temple, Jesus of Nazareth, New Testament believers or the New Jerusalem – in order to have communion with them.<sup>8</sup> Although the Fall may have complicated matters,

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<sup>7</sup> Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 251.

<sup>8</sup> The Eastern Orthodox theologian Zizioulas fervently argues for an understanding of God as “persons in communion”. He is influenced by the Cappadocian father St Basil the Great, who preferred to speak about God using the ontological category of communion (κοινωνία): “The *nature* of God is communion” (J.D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* [New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985] 134). Cf. J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 309.

God's mission has remained the same: to have intimate communion with people and provide access to "the tree of life" – an intimacy and access the first humans enjoyed in the Garden of Eden, subsequently lost through their disobedience (Gen. 2:9; 3:8, 22–24), and which will be restored in the new Garden (Rev. 21:3; 22:2, 14). Salvation, as a subset of God's mission, refers to God's redemptive and restorative actions in Christ through the Spirit to realize his original missional purposes for humanity and creation.

In sum, our working definition of mission is the *missio Dei*, which involves (i) God sending his Spirit to create and sustain life and community in this world; (ii) the Father sending the Son into this world, empowered by the Spirit, to restore divine-human and human-human community; and (iii) Jesus sending his followers and the Spirit as co-witnesses to the ends of the earth, to continue God's work till the end of time.<sup>9</sup> The church's mission is simply the participation in the mission of the triune God.<sup>10</sup>

## SPIRIT AND MISSION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

From Genesis 1–3, we glean pertinent information. First, God is communion (cf. the "us...our...our" in 1:26) and desires to create life-giving communion with his creation, with humanity as its apex. The hiding from God's presence in 3:8–10 indicates that the opposite had been the norm, highlighting the desire for divine-human communion. God's intention in creating humanity as male and female was to create complementary human-human communion (1:27; 2:18, 22–24). Second, the Spirit was involved in creation from the outset (1:2).<sup>11</sup> Although God's "breath of life" (πνοὴ ζωῆς) is mentioned as the human life-principle (2:7),

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J. Moltmann, *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life* (London: SCM, 1997) 19–20. Anderson, "Mission", 489. Hence mission cannot be restricted to evangelism or church.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Bosch, *Mission*, 10; Wright, *Mission*, 22–23.

<sup>11</sup> Many scholars prefer a reference to the divine Spirit in Genesis 1:2.

Spirit (πνεῦμα) is sometimes synonymous with breath (πνοή) in this sense of “life” (cf. 7:15 and 7:22; see also Job 27:3; 33:4; Isa. 42:5). Third, humanity’s fall or sin damaged divine-human communion and God prohibited access to the life that expressed and existed in this communion (3:19, 22–24). However, the Fall did not entirely destroy divine-human communion and its inherent life: God still cares for and desires to commune with his people (3:21); humans still bear God’s image, and the creation mandate of 1:28 remains valid (9:6–7). Nevertheless, the extent of God’s life-giving divine-human communion is now limited – both in quantity (life has become temporary rather than everlasting [3:19, 22; 6:3]) and quality (human disobedience/sin impedes the divine-human and human-human communion [3:16–24]). Despite the severity of the Fall, God already announces the protogospel in 3:15.

The remainder of the Old Testament continues to show that the Fall did not cause God to abandon his mission of having communion with his creation. God elected people (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Moses–Israel, David) through whom he wanted to achieve his missional purposes. God established covenants to affirm and regulate communion with and among his people – the Torah was seen as God’s communication to ensure divine-human and human-human communion. The Old Testament depicts the instrumentality of the Spirit as the *sine qua non* of divine-human communion between God and his people. First, the Spirit is depicted as God’s power which (i) creates and maintains the life of all creatures (Gen. 6:3, 17; 7:15; Job 7:7; 12:10; 27:3; 33:4; 34:14–15; Pss. 33:6; 104:29–30; Isa. 42:5); (ii) renews and transforms God’s people in the future (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 36:26–27; 37:14; Joel 2:28–29); and (iii) guarantees God’s continuous communion with his people (Ezek. 39:29; cf. Ps. 51:11). Since the divine Spirit is presented as the life-principle, life only occurs in communion with God. Second, the Spirit functions as the primary channel of communication for

divine-human communion – God instructed his people through Spirit-inspired prophets (cf. Neh. 9:30; Zech. 7:12), and governed his people through Spirit-inspired leaders (Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the judges, David). The Spirit thus functions as God’s agent of life-giving communion.

Israel’s mission is a subset of God’s mission in that God channels his mission to the world through Israel. Israel’s mission in the Old Testament is largely through attraction rather than outreach – she is required to be a light to the nations. Since Israel fails in her mission, God announces that he will bring about his original purposes for Israel (and the world) through his Spirit-empowered Messiah (Isa. 11:1–9; 42:1–9; 49:1–6; 61:1–11). The greatest discontinuity between mission in the Old Testament and New Testament is that the former is centripetal (the nations coming to Jerusalem) while the latter is centrifugal (from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth).<sup>12</sup>

## SPIRIT AND MISSION IN LUKE

Luke presents God’s desire for divine-human communion through Jesus’ table-fellowship with various people.<sup>13</sup> The tax collector Levi organized a great banquet for Jesus, joined by many “tax collectors and sinners” – the objects of his mission (Lk. 5:27–32). In Luke 14:15–24, Jesus tells the parable of the great banquet, denoting God’s desire to celebrate fellowship with people. In fact, the Master sends his servants on a mission – to go everywhere and invite everyone so that “my house may be filled”. In Luke 15:11–32, the waiting Father organizes a great banquet to celebrate the return of his lost son. Indeed, Jesus’ presence is “good news” and a cause for celebration (Lk.

<sup>12</sup> For the concept of mission in the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism, see further Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 25-71; Schnabel, *Mission*, 1:55-173; Wright, *Mission, passim*.

<sup>13</sup> I am indebted to my colleague, Babu Immanuel, for drawing my attention to this issue.

4:18–19; 5:33–34; 19:37–38). Thus, Luke’s gospel presents the festive aspect of the divine-human communion through the imagery of table-fellowship and banquets. In his sequel, Luke mentions the fellowship (κοινωνία) of believers (Acts 2:43–47; 4:32–35), which is arguably a Spirit-wrought communion because Luke presents the church as a Spirit-indwelted community in communion with God (e.g., Acts 2:38–39, 46–47). Therefore, Peter views the acts of Ananias and his wife as deceptive, Satan-inspired acts against the Spirit and God himself (Acts 5:1–4, 9).

An appropriate starting point for Luke’s understanding of the mission of the early church is Jesus’ mission command to his disciples in Luke 24:47–49 and Acts 1:4–5, 8.<sup>14</sup> I make three observations. First, the disciples’ mission is *the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness of sins* in Jesus’ name (Lk. 24:47a). Luke presents the mission of other key figures – John the Baptist (Lk. 3:3), Jesus (Lk. 5:20, 24, 32; Acts 5:31),<sup>15</sup> Peter (Acts 2:38; 3:19), and Paul (Acts 26:17–20) – in similar terms. Although Luke does not use the term “conversion”, the concept is dominant and includes “repentance”, “turning” and “believing”.<sup>16</sup> Babu Immanuel defines conversion as “the change in perception and lifestyle effected by repenting and renouncing of all erroneous ways and turning to God. This is actualized by believing on the Lord Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> The Lukan command to “proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins” is thus the

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<sup>14</sup> For the continuity between Jesus’ mission and that of the apostles, see P.T. O’Brien, “Mission, Witness, and the Coming of the Spirit”, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 9 (1999) 208-209.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 7:1–10; 8:26–39 hint that Jesus’ mission goes beyond Israel’s ethnic borders. For Jesus’ mission to Israel in Luke, see Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 111-123; Schnabel, *Mission*, chs. 8–13.

<sup>16</sup> “To turn”, especially in the sense of a spiritual turning to God, is partially synonymous with “to repent”.

<sup>17</sup> B. Immanuel, *Repent and Turn to God* (Perth: Him International Ministries, 2004) 42.

directive to preach conversion. Conversion is both a socio-religious relocation (the turning from past evil ways to God enables inclusion in the restored “Israel”, for Jew and Gentile alike [cf. Acts 10:34–36; 15:9, 14]) and a spatial relocation (from the realm of darkness and Satan to the realm of light and God [Acts 26:18]).<sup>18</sup>

Further, Jesus appoints the disciples as his witnesses, whose mission is expansionist in two ways (Lk. 24:47b–48; Acts 1:8b). First, the church expands geographically – from Jerusalem (Acts 2–7) to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12) to the entire then-known world (Acts 13–28).<sup>19</sup> Second, the church expands ethno-theologically – from Palestinian and Diaspora Jews (Acts 6:1–7) to Samaritans (Acts 8) to the inclusion of the Gentiles (Acts 10). Those who are specifically chosen as Jesus’ witnesses are the apostles or “sent ones” – the twelve disciples who had been with Jesus from the beginning (Lk. 24:48; Acts 1:2, 8, 21–22) and Paul (Acts 22:14–15; 26:16). However, the early church’s mission was not simply the responsibility of the apostles because the first expansion of the church occurs through *non-apostles* (Acts 8:1–4; 11:19–21). By extension, all believers are appointed to be Jesus’ witnesses in this world.<sup>20</sup>

The third observation is that the disciples will be enabled for their mission by “power from on high” – the Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4–5, 8a).<sup>21</sup> This so-called “baptism in the Holy Spirit”

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jesus depicting a relocation from people’s natural families to God’s “spiritual” family (Lk. 8:20–21).

<sup>19</sup> For the historical plausibility of the apostle Thomas’s mission to India, see Schnabel, *Mission*, 1:880–895.

<sup>20</sup> Although O’Brien insists that only the original apostles were Jesus’ witnesses, he argues that later believers are *derived* witnesses in that they bear testimony to the apostolic witness recorded in Acts and as such participate in Jesus’ ongoing mission (“Mission”, 214).

<sup>21</sup> The Spirit also empowered John (Lk. 1:15–17) and Jesus (Lk. 3:22; 4:18; Acts 1:2; 10:38) for their mission.

occurs for the disciples in Acts 2:1–4. From Acts 2:38, however, we learn that later generations of believers receive this empowering Spirit as part of their salvation experience. Peter’s declaration regarding repentance, baptism leading to the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Spirit is paradigmatic of the believers’ conversion-initiation experience. Indeed, the conversion-initiation experiences of Paul, and Cornelius and his household were also marked by the reception of the Spirit and baptism (Acts 9:17–18; 10:44–48). In fact, the Spirit has become the boundary or identity marker of the community of faith. It was when Cornelius and his household received the Spirit in an identical manner as the apostles had in Acts 2:1–4, that Peter realized that the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church was part of God’s mission (Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–18; 15:8–9).<sup>22</sup>

As the empowerment for mission, the Spirit functions specifically as *the power of proclamation*. The Spirit *empowers* the speech of Peter (Acts 2:14–36; 4:8–12), believers in general (Acts 4:31), Stephen (Acts 6:5, 10; 7:55), and Paul (Acts 13:9–12). As such, Peter identifies the Spirit as the apostles’ co-witness (Acts 5:32; cf. 1:8). The Spirit also *directs* the church in her mission – propelling people into new situations, providing guidance and

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<sup>22</sup> The difficult passages in Acts 8 and 19 are repair actions to achieve conformity to the Acts 2:38 paradigm. In Acts 8:14–17, the Jerusalem apostles sent Peter and John to the new believers in Samaria but since they had only received baptism and not the gift of the Spirit, Peter and John facilitated the latter in order to *complete* their salvation experience. In Acts 19:1–6, when Paul discovered that the Ephesian disciples had not received the Spirit *when* they became believers (they had only received John the Baptist’s baptism) they were baptized in the name of Jesus and subsequently received the Spirit – a *corrective* action in accordance with the paradigm. Perhaps each ethnic expansion of God’s people needed divine attestation through a visible reception of the Spirit – the Jewish believers in Acts 2, the Samaritan believers in Acts 8, and the Gentile believers in Acts 10. For the debate about the nature and moment of the reception of the Spirit in Luke–Acts, see M. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts – Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999) chs. 2–3.

facilitating prophecy (Acts 8:29, 39–40; 10:19–20; 11:12; 13:2–4; 15:28; 16:6–7; 19:21; 20:22–23, 28; 21:4, 11). Finally, the Spirit also *informs* the church’s kerygma and *affects* people by bringing about repentance and conversion. Let me provide a few examples. First, in Acts 2:1–41, Peter’s interpretation of the Spirit’s coming as the fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32, his subsequent sermon and the people’s response are probably the outcome of Peter’s having received the Spirit. Second, in Acts 4:8–12, Peter’s speech before the Jewish authorities is not only empowered but also provided by the Spirit. I infer this from the reaction of the authorities in Acts 4:13 – they are astonished at the boldness and eloquence of Peter, an uneducated layperson. As the believers were filled with the Spirit to speak God’s word with boldness (Acts 4:29–31), so Peter’s boldness of speech is likely the result of his being filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:8). Besides, the events in Acts 4:1–12 are the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to his disciples in Luke 12:11–12 that the Spirit will teach them what to say when facing hostility from the authorities. Thus, the Spirit also prepares Peter’s speech. Third, in a situation similar to Acts 4, Peter states in Acts 5:32 that the apostles and the Spirit are co-witnesses to the things they speak about, suggesting that the apostles’ teaching in Acts 5:28 is also a joint operation. Fourth, Stephen’s complaint that his persecutors continually resist the Spirit in their obduracy (Acts 7:51), could hint at the Spirit’s activity of enabling people to respond to God properly.

Although Luke’s understanding of mission is primarily proclamation, *attraction* is part of it. In Acts, we read that Jesus performed signs and wonders (2:22), as did the apostles (2:43; 3:1–10; 5:12), Stephen (6:8), Philip (8:6–7, 13), Paul (14:3; 15:12; 19:11), and perhaps even believers in general (4:29–30). Babu Immanuel makes an excellent case for the symbiotic relationship between the miraculous and proclamation in Luke’s concept of mission. He concludes that the functions of the

miraculous are to demonstrate God's providence and power, to catch people's attention, to set off an explanatory proclamation, and to validate the proclamation.<sup>23</sup> The Spirit may be related to the miraculous aspect of mission. First, Jesus performed his miracles through the Spirit. Luke 7:21–22, summing up the miracles Jesus performed during his ministry, harks back to Luke 4:18 where Jesus is portrayed as the Spirit-empowered Messiah. Then, “the finger of God” by which Jesus casts out demons (Lk. 11:20) probably refers to the Spirit (cf. Mt. 12:28).<sup>24</sup> Second, if the Spirit is the power of Jesus' miracles, he may also function as such in the disciples' mission. For example, when Peter is asked by what power or name he has healed the lame man (Acts 3:6–7; 4:7), this power is most likely provided by the Spirit (Acts 1:8) – although admittedly Peter's explanation concentrates on “the name” by which the lame man was healed (Acts 4:9–10; cf. 3:6). While the Spirit is not explicitly linked to miracles in Acts – “signs and wonders” are attributed to God (in the name of Jesus) (Acts 4:30; 14:3; 15:12) – the Spirit facilitates charismatic preaching, speaking in tongues, prophecy, supernatural guidance, and visions and dreams, which can be included in the supernatural. Nevertheless, for Luke the Spirit in the apostles' mission is primarily linked with supernatural proclamation rather than supernatural acts.<sup>25</sup>

To sum up, Luke's key missional terms are “proclamation”, “repentance”, “forgiveness of sins”, “witness” and “turning (to God)”. These terms define the missions of the significant people in Luke–Acts – John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter (and the other apostles), Paul – and each of them was empowered by the Spirit for their mission. For Luke, mission includes God's desire to

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<sup>23</sup> Immanuel, *Repent, passim* (esp. 208-211).

<sup>24</sup> Turner, *Spirit*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the believers ask God for two things: (i) to grant *them* boldness in speech, which occurs through the Spirit (4:29, 31), and (ii) to perform signs and wonders through Jesus (4:30).

have communion with his people and Jesus' appointment of believers as his witnesses in this world to proclaim this good news, i.e., the call to repent from sin and so to receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. The early church is thus depicted as a Spirit-filled community in communion with God. Luke envisages a Spirit-empowered mission in which the Spirit is primarily the power of proclamation, informing and enabling the kerygma, and derivatively, effecting repentance and conversion. The miraculous is also pertinent to Luke's understanding of mission, but whereas the Spirit is explicitly linked to proclamation, this is not the case with miracles. One explanation could be that while believers are commanded to proclaim the good news about Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, nowhere are they instructed to perform signs and wonders. Hence the Spirit does not need to be depicted as the power of miracles. Miracles are God's acts – they simply “happen” as God wills in conjunction with the believers' Spirit-empowered proclamation.

## SPIRIT AND MISSION IN JOHN

From the start, John's gospel presents God's desire for life-giving divine-human communion: (i) the divine Logos contains everlasting life (ζωή) (1:4); (ii) this life-giving Logos became a human being and dwelled (literally “tabernacled”) in this world as Jesus; (iii) Jesus came to reveal God and whoever accepts Jesus becomes part of God's family (1:1–18). Later we read that God sent and gave Jesus to the world because he loves the world and its people (3:16). John's gospel presents an intimate relationship between the Father and Son, characterized by life (5:21, 26), love (3:35; 5:20; 14:31; 15:9), knowledge/truth (8:55; 10:15; 14:6; 17:17) and glory (17:1–5). This relationship between the Father and Son is not exclusive; believers are drawn into and participate in this life-giving relationship (1 Jn 1:3 calls this participation “κοινωνία with the Father and Son”). This

intimate communion between the Father, Son and believer is also expressed by the oneness-language (17:11, 21–23), the indwelling-language (6:56; 14:20; 15:4–7; 17:21, 23), and in Jesus’ calling his disciples “friends” (15:13–15) and siblings (20:17; cf. 1:12–13). I have explained elsewhere that the Spirit facilitates this divine-human communion. First, the Spirit helps people grasp Jesus’ revelation about God and appropriate the life that Jesus makes available, especially at the cross (3:14–15; 6:51, 63; 16:13–15). Second, the Spirit brings believers into an intimate, life-giving communion with the Father and Son (1:12–13; 3:3–8). Third, the Father and Son indwell and have communion with the believer by means of the Spirit (14:17–23; cf. 1 Jn 3:24; 4:12–13).<sup>26</sup>

In John’s gospel, Jesus’ mission command to his disciples is terse, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (20:21; cf. 17:18), indicating that the disciples’ mission is patterned on that of Jesus. We must therefore first look at Jesus’ mission. For John, the initiative for mission lies with God: the world does not know God (1:5; 7:28; 8:55) and God, compelled by his love for the world, *sends* Jesus into this dark world to save it (3:16–17; 12:47). Jesus’ salvific mission is to accomplish “the Father’s *work*” (4:34; 5:36; 17:4; 19:30), which is primarily the revelation of God the Father to a world that has neither seen nor heard him (1:18; 5:37; 6:46). A Jesus-encounter demands a decision: those who accept or believe Jesus’ *revelation* or *teaching* will partake, through a new birth of the Spirit, in the divine life that the Father and Son share (ζωή), while those who reject it or disbelieve remain under judgement (3:3–8, 18–21, 36).<sup>27</sup> Jesus sums up his mission before Pilate as “*a testimony to*

<sup>26</sup> C. Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 2.148; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) chs. 4–5.

<sup>27</sup> For the entire array of Johannine characters that encounters Jesus, see C. Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes/Bangalore: Paternoster/Primalogue, 2009).

*the truth*”, in which “truth” denotes the divine reality (18:37). As part of his mission, Jesus communicates God’s words, which contain truth that liberates, cleanses and saves (3:34; 6:63; 8:31–32; 12:49–50; 15:3; 17:17). God remains the supervisor of Jesus’ mission: people can only come to Jesus (and hence find divine life) if the Father *draws* or grants them (6:37, 39, 44, 65; 17:2, 6, 9). The cross is the ultimate locus where Jesus draws people (12:32). Since the disciples’ mission is modelled after that of Jesus, we shall now explain their mission in these terms.

Jesus *sends* the disciples as his emissaries into this hostile world to continue his salvific mission after his departure from the world (17:11–20; 20:21; cf. 13:16).<sup>28</sup> Jesus appoints the disciples *to testify* before the hostile world because they have been eyewitnesses from the beginning (15:18–27). The disciples’ testimony to the truth is the testimony to the divine reality in terms of Jesus’ identity, mission and relationship with God. Besides, since their testimony is based on *Jesus’ teaching* (14:26; 16:13–15), it is naturally expected to evoke belief (17:20).<sup>29</sup> The disciples’ mission is also one of *drawing* people. The disciples’ miraculous catch of fish in 21:4–11 symbolizes their newly-given ability to draw people into the kingdom – “to haul” in the net in 21:6, 11 is the same verb as Jesus’ ability “to draw” people in 6:44; 12:32 (cf. Jesus’ challenge to his disciples “to harvest” people in 4:31–38).

John explains the Spirit’s role in mission in greater detail than Luke does. First, the Spirit empowers Jesus for his salvific

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<sup>28</sup> For John, the term “disciples” refers, beyond the Twelve, to Jesus’ followers in general (Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 211–214). For the kind of religious violence and persecution that Jesus’ followers will face in the world, see C. Bennema, “Religious Violence in the Gospel of John: A Response to the Hindutva Culture in Modern India” in F. Fox (ed.), *Violence and Peace* (Bangalore: ATC/CMS, 2010) 129–161.

<sup>29</sup> The testimonies of John the Baptist (1:7, 35–37; 10:41–42), the Samaritan woman (4:28–29, 39), and the Beloved Disciple (19:35; 20:31; 21:24–25) also elicit belief from its hearers and readers.

mission, especially by informing Jesus' revelatory teaching and being the mode of communication between Jesus and God (1:32; 3:34; cf. 6:63). Next, the Father and the Son send the Spirit to empower the disciples for their mission (14:26; 15:26; 16:7). John presents the Spirit in the dual role of teacher and advocate. The Spirit's role as *teacher* is explained in 14:26 and 16:12–15, where Jesus declares that the Spirit will teach the disciples "all things" and remind them of "all things" (14:26). The double phrase "all things" is qualified by "that I have said to you", implying that the Spirit's teaching and anamnesis is rooted in Jesus' historical teaching.<sup>30</sup> The Spirit will open up Jesus' revelatory teaching and help people to understand its meaning and significance (cf. 16:12–15).<sup>31</sup> We now turn to the Spirit's role as *advocate*. In 15:26–27 Jesus appoints the Spirit and the disciples as co-witnesses in a hostile world. Since the Spirit cannot testify directly to the world because it cannot receive, perceive or know him (14:17), the Spirit engages the world *through* the disciples – the Spirit's testimony is channelled through the disciples. Next, 16:8–11 spells out how the Spirit will indict the world: the Spirit will convict the world that the essence of the world's sin is its disbelief in Jesus, that Jesus' glorification is the vindication of his righteousness, and that the world has been condemned in the judgement of its ruler (cf. 12:31). In fact, the Spirit's functions coincide: *as teacher*, the Spirit explains the meaning and significance of Jesus' teaching to believers, and thus prepares and empowers their testimony, so

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<sup>30</sup> John records three examples of anamnesis (2:17, 22; 12:16), which are likely the Spirit's doing because (i) the passive constructions ("the disciples were reminded that") show that an agent causes the remembrance, and (ii) 2:22; 12:16 mention that the recalling happens after Jesus' glorification – when the Spirit has arrived.

<sup>31</sup> The phrase "the Spirit of truth" denotes that the Spirit extracts the saving truth from Jesus' teaching and mediates it to believers in order to inform their testimony to the truth (Bennema, *Power*, 225-228).

that *as advocate*, the Spirit can prosecute the world through the believers' testimony.<sup>32</sup>

Like Luke, John's notion of mission knows a twofold expansion – geographically and ethno-theologically. The geographical scope of the Johannine mission is the entire world: God sent Jesus from the world above to the world below, and in turn, Jesus sends his disciples into the world. Besides, Jesus' mission will transcend Jewish ethnic boundaries. First, the Nicodemus story reveals that a birth from the Spirit (from the world below into the world above) rather than birth as a Jew determines who belongs to the true people of God (cf. “the Jews” who are from the world below [8:23] and not part of God's people [10:26]). Second, the story of the Samaritan woman and her community shows that the spiritual betrothal of Jesus with his followers is not restricted to Jewish ethnicity. Third, in the Good Shepherd discourse, Jesus explains that he will call people out of the pen of Judaism (especially the Judaism represented by “the Jews”) and out of the Gentile pen, in order to form one flock (10:3–4, 16). Thus, Jesus leads people out of their respective communities into his new community, and the Spirit functions as the identity and boundary marker of this new community. The Spirit creates a new socio-religious identity in that believers are born into the world above, into God's family, through a birth facilitated by the Spirit (3:3–8). John thus delineates both a spatial relocation (from the world below to the world above) and a socio-religious one (being called out of one's community into God's family/flock). Although God's family no longer belongs to the world below, it still operates in this world. Indeed, Jesus

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<sup>32</sup> For a detailed explanation of the Spirit as teacher and advocate, see Bennema, *Power*, 228-242. The ultimate aim of the Spirit's prosecution of the world is soteriological. Just as Jesus' aim was to save and not to condemn (3:17), and as Jesus was the first paraclete (14:16), it is natural to assume that the mission of the Spirit-Paraclete, as a continuation of Jesus' mission, is salvific. Therefore, the Spirit brings a case against the world, mediated through the disciples' testimony, with the intention that people will repent and come to believe in Jesus.

receives his disciples out of the world and gives them his life-giving words, so that they are no longer of the world; they are then sent back into the world (17:6–19). Elsewhere, this spatial-socio-religious relocation is described as the movement from darkness to light (3:18–19; 8:12; 12:46).

To sum up, God sends Jesus into this dark, hostile world to save it, and, before his departure from this world, Jesus sends his disciples as witnesses into the world to continue his salvific mission, for which they are empowered by the Spirit. John's understanding of mission is that the Spirit and the believers are co-witnesses for Jesus, where the Spirit is primarily *the power of testimony* – informing and enabling the disciples' testimony, and effecting belief. Although testimony is the primary means of mission, *attraction* also plays a role. First, Jesus foretells his disciples that they will do “greater works” than he (14:11–12), referring most probably to miraculous signs. Second, the believers, indwelt by the Father and Son, constitute a unity that testifies to the world (14:23; 17:21, 23). Although the Spirit is not explicitly linked with miraculous signs and establishing unity, there may be a connection. If Jesus' endowment with the Spirit in 1:32 alludes to Isaiah 11:2, the Spirit will provide Jesus *inter alia* with liberating power, probably for his miracles. The Spirit may then, by extension, also be the power of the disciples' miraculous signs. In addition, if believers are indwelt by the Father and Son by means of the Spirit, the same Spirit would naturally be expected to maintain this unity. Nevertheless, like Luke, John presents the Spirit primarily as the power of testimony.

### SPIRIT AND MISSION IN PAUL<sup>33</sup>

Paul's call for mission is rooted in his Damascus Road Experience: he was appointed by God to proclaim Christ among

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<sup>33</sup> We will consider the entire Pauline corpus, i.e., both the undisputed Pauline letters (Rom., 1–2 Cor., Gal., Phi., 1 Thess., Phm.) and the disputed ones (Eph., Col., 2 Thess., 1–2 Tim., Tit.).

the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15–16; cf. Acts 9:15).<sup>34</sup> He always identifies himself as an apostle (“a sent one”) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles for the Gospel of God (see the opening verses of Rom., 1–2 Cor., Gal., Eph., Col., 1–2 Tim., Tit.). Paul frequently recalls that he was commissioned to proclaim the good news (εὐαγγελιζῶ) of Christ among the Gentiles (e.g. Rom. 1:15; 10:12–17; 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17; Gal. 1:11–16; Eph. 3:2, 8). Paul thus participates in God’s mission of having sent Jesus into the world to redeem its people (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4–5), and even has a sense of having fulfilled his calling (Rom. 15:19; Col. 1:23). Paul’s mission resulted in the founding of churches wherever he went, although the ultimate aim of mission is the universality of the proclamation that, in Christ, God has reconciled himself to the world, rather than the church.<sup>35</sup>

The Pauline corpus also reflects God’s desire for divine-human communion. In 2 Corinthians 5:11–21, Paul explains that the Christian mission is to proclaim that God reconciles people to himself in Christ, implying that to be “in Christ” is to be in communion with God. Elsewhere Paul states that believers are called into the fellowship (κοινωνία) of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). The “body of Christ” or church is the place where divine-human communion and human-human communion as God intended occur (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:1–16). The so-called “Holy Communion” (cf. the use of κοινωνία in 1 Cor. 10:16) or “Lord’s supper” (1 Cor. 11:20) is the remembrance and celebration of the believer’s fellowship with God and other believers in Christ during a shared meal. In Lukan terms, “Holy

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<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, whereas Paul defines himself exclusively as an apostle to the Gentiles, Acts 9:15 describes his mission as one to the Gentiles *and* Israel. This raises the issue of whether Paul thought a mission to the Jews is necessary or even justified. For the dialectical relation between Jews and Gentiles in Paul’s thought, see Bosch, *Mission*, 159-165, 172-174; E.P. Sanders, *Paul: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 1991) 137-149.

<sup>35</sup> Bosch, *Mission*, 178.

Communion” is the privileged table-fellowship of the church and her Lord. Paul considers this divine-human and human-human communion so sacred that he writes at length on the subject to the Corinthian church, whose factions and abusive practices threatened to destroy this holy communion (1 Cor. 11:17–34). Since the Spirit initiates believers into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–13), the Spirit probably facilitates this divine-human communion (cf. Rom. 5:6; 8:9, 11, 26–27). The phrase “the communion (κοινωνία) of the (Holy) Spirit” (2 Cor. 13:13; Phi. 2:1) can be understood as either “the communion that the Spirit provides” (subjective genitive) or “the communion with or in the realm of the Spirit” (objective genitive), or both. The unique “Abba” cry in Romans 8:15–16 and Galatians 4:6–7 indicates the intimacy that the Spirit creates between God and his people, affirming their status as God’s children. In Romans 8:35–39, Paul passionately expresses his confidence that no one and nothing can destroy this Spirit-wrought divine-human communion.

Paul perceives the Spirit as *the power of proclamation*, winning people for Christ. To the Corinthian church Paul stresses, “My speech and my proclamation did not come with persuasive wisdom but with a demonstration of Spirit and power, so that your faith may rest...on God’s power” (1 Cor. 2:4–5).<sup>36</sup> Similarly, to the Thessalonian church, Paul writes, “our message of the gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and Holy Spirit...and you became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1 Thess. 1:5–6). In Romans, Paul attributes his missionary success (“winning obedience from the Gentiles”) to what Christ has accomplished through him “by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit” (Rom. 15:18–19). In fact, the Spirit, as teacher and revealer, also

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<sup>36</sup> The phrase “Spirit and power” can be interpreted exegetically as “the Spirit that is power”, hence “the Spirit’s power” (G.D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987] 95).

informs Paul's proclamation (1 Cor. 2:6–13; cf. Eph. 3:3–5). Thus, *the Spirit informs and empowers Paul's proclamation, and effects salvation.*

For Paul, the Spirit empowers the church not simply to edify her but also to equip her for mission (1 Cor. 12:1–31; 14:22–25).<sup>37</sup> In fact, the Spirit prepares the church for mission precisely *in* building her up, that is, the Spirit builds up the church for the sake of mission.<sup>38</sup> Surely, Paul would expect his churches to reach out and reproduce themselves.<sup>39</sup> The church in Paul's thought is multi-ethnic, but in Christ, there is only one new humanity and no longer scope for discriminating differences (Rom. 10:12–13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11–16; Col. 3:11). Although Paul appears more willing to link the Spirit to miracles than Luke and John, he does so only once (1 Cor. 12:10–11).<sup>40</sup>

Just as for Luke and John, salvation involves a spatial and socio-religious relocation for Paul. He has an apocalyptic worldview, which is characterized by two realms (sin, death, flesh, law versus Christ, righteousness, life, Spirit, gospel) and two aeons (the present evil age and the age to come). “To be in Christ”, Paul's shorthand for salvation, involves a spatial relocation – the transfer from one sphere of lordship (sin, death, flesh, law, darkness) to another (Christ, righteousness, life, light, gospel,

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<sup>37</sup> Paul mainly stresses the Spirit's soteriological-ethical role. The Spirit is depicted as the power of the new life in Christ (Rom. 5:1–5; 7:6; 8:1–17; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 5:16–18; 1 Thess. 4:8; Titus 3:5–7); is received at salvation (Gal. 3:2); and, as the Spirit of sonship, is the means of relating to God as Father (Rom. 8:15–16; Gal. 4:6).

<sup>38</sup> See especially D.N. Howell's exposition of this concept in regard to the Thessalonian church (“Mission in Paul's Epistles: Genesis, Pattern, and Dynamics” in W.J. Larkin and J.F. Williams [eds.], *Mission in the New Testament* [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998] 77–84).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Sanders, *Paul*, 4–5.

<sup>40</sup> Whether the phrases “in the power of signs and wonders” and “in the power of the Spirit of God” in Romans 15:19 are in series or parallel is unclear. Galatians 3:5 may also not indicate that the Spirit works miracles.

Spirit), where people participate in Christ (e.g., Rom. 8:1–17; Eph. 2:1–6). “To be in Christ” also requires a socio-religious relocation: in Romans 9–11, Paul explains that the true “Israel” or people of God cannot be equated with national Israel but consists of those, Jew and Gentile alike, who confess that Christ is Lord (9:6; 10:9–13; cf. 2:28–29). Paul then describes the movement toward being “in Christ” for the Gentiles as an unnatural grafting into the people of God, and for a repentant Israel as a grafting back into their inheritance again (11:17–24). The Spirit functions as the identity and boundary marker of God’s people, in that the Spirit is the hallmark of being a Christian and brings people into the body of Christ (Rom. 2:29; 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13).

## TOWARD A MISSIONAL, BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE SPIRIT

Having listened in turn to Luke, John and Paul, I now seek to formulate a coherent missional, biblical theology of the Spirit. A high degree of similarity is observed among these New Testament theologians regarding their understanding of the Spirit’s role in mission:<sup>41</sup>

1. God’s mission or *missio Dei* is to create and sustain *life-giving communion* between himself and human beings by means of the Spirit. Although the Fall complicated matters, it did not abrogate God’s mission. It is crucial to recognize the continuity between creation and re-creation or salvation in terms of the provision of life and God’s desire for divine-human communion. The *Spirit* is the agent or means of this intimate, life-giving communion between God and humans.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Missing John’s contribution, Bosch wrongly concludes that “[t]he intimate linking of pneumatology and mission is Luke’s distinctive contribution to the early church’s missionary paradigm” (*Mission*, 114).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Moltmann, *Spirit*, 217–221. Moltmann is very mindful of holding together the creative, life-giving Spirit and the redemptive, salvific Spirit (*Spirit, passim*). See also Bennema, *Power*, 95–98, 252–255.

2. In the *missio Dei*, *pneumatology* and *Christology* are intrinsically connected in that God sent both the Spirit and Jesus into the world to create and sustain life-giving divine-human communion.<sup>43</sup> Yet, there are distinctions. Jesus is the source of life/salvation and the Spirit is its agent, in that the Spirit mediates this life/salvation and aids people in appropriating the unique work of Christ. The Spirit is “Christocentric” in that the Spirit is “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 2:33–34; 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phi. 1:19) and only communicates Jesus’ words (Jn 16:13–15), which are in fact God’s words (Jn 3:34; 12:49–50).<sup>44</sup> Only with a proper understanding of the Spirit’s role in the divine economy can we call mission “Christocentric”.<sup>45</sup>
3. The church’s mission is an extension or continuation of the *missio Dei/Jesu*, in which Jesus appoints his followers as *witnesses* in this world with the Spirit as their co-witness (Luke, John). Although the first-commissioned witnesses were those who had been with Jesus from the beginning (John 15:26; Acts 1:2, 8, 21–22), mission cannot be limited

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Moltmann, *Spirit*, 58-73, 233, 293-294.

<sup>44</sup> Yet, we must not define the Spirit (again) in *strictly* Christocentric terms – a “Spirit Christology” (cf. the warnings in G.D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994] 834-842; Bennema, *Power*, 162 n. 5). Zizioulas (*Being*, 126-132) and Moltmann (*Spirit*, 306-309) are also anxious to maintain the reciprocal relationship between Christ and the Spirit.

<sup>45</sup> Contra Smith, who argues for the Spirit as the *principal* agent of mission because the Spirit’s mission enjoys chronological and spatial priority over Jesus’ mission – the Spirit is present in the world since creation and its presence is universal. In fact, the Spirit is equally and universally at work in all cultures and religions (“Spirit”, 87-114). To be politically correct and promote inter-religious dialogue as a conversation between equal partners, Smith diminishes the unique role of Christ in salvation. However, although the Spirit is at work everywhere, he does so in order to direct people to the unique work of Christ. While John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 remain uneasy claims for other religions, and the “offence of the cross” is a harsh reality (1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11), the solution lies not in reducing the difficulty, lest our proclamation is no longer the Gospel (cf. Gal. 1:6–9).

to the original apostles. Both Luke and John indicate that the concept of witness applies to believers in general, and Paul expects that the church will engage in mission.

4. This mission is *expansionist* in scope (spanning the entire world) and nature (all people are invited to be part of God's people).<sup>46</sup> The church expresses *unity in diversity* – there is only one church with one Lord (Luke), one flock with one shepherd (John), one humanity in Christ/one body with one head (Paul), which at the same time is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. God's mission is to make for himself one people and therefore the good news about Jesus Christ is for everyone – Jew and Gentile alike.
5. The main missional activity is *proclamation* – whether the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness of sins (Luke), the truth (John), or the good news (Paul). The Spirit is depicted primarily as *the power of proclamation* (Luke, Paul) or *testimony* (John). As such, the Spirit informs and enables the proclamation/testimony, but also effects repentance and conversion (Luke), belief (John), or “obedience from the Gentiles” (Paul). The Spirit is thus both an empowerment for mission and a soteriological necessity. In their proclamation/testimony to the world, believers will face *persecution* but they are encouraged not to be silent (this would amount to discontinuing the proclamation/testimony and hence God's mission) but to ask for and expect the help of the Spirit for boldness of speech.
6. Although *miracles* are an integral part of the church's mission, they appear to be attributed directly to God rather than to the Spirit. We explained this as follows: while believers are explicitly commanded to proclaim or testify,

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<sup>46</sup> Like Christianity, Islam, western-driven Globalization, and Hindutva (in India) are also ideological, expansionist movements and are therefore bound to compete and clash. For the inevitable clash between Christian and Hindutva cultures, see Bennema, “Religious Violence”, 147-158.

with the Spirit empowering them, they are never commanded to perform miracles (even though they should expect them). Miracles are performed by God as he chooses, to validate or initiate the proclamation and hence there is no need for another divine agent.<sup>47</sup>

7. The Spirit is the *hermeneutical key* for mission. In teaching believers the meaning of Jesus' historical teaching and its significance for any context and time (John), the Spirit assists believers to contextualize the Gospel. Since the first-century Graeco-Roman world and its religious-cultural plurality is not dissimilar to many modern societies, we should study how the New Testament authors engaged culture and contextualized the Gospel.<sup>48</sup> In the difficult process of contextualization and engaging culture, the Spirit is the hermeneutical key to unlocking Jesus' teaching (and by extension, the bible) for an increasingly complex, pluralistic world. The Spirit unlocks cultures and makes inroads for the Gospel, and assists believers to rethink their earthly culture in the light of their new heavenly culture, in order to transform the former.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Although Pentecostals and charismatics rightly emphasize the Spirit's importance in mission and their vibrant church life attracts many people, they often *over-emphasize* the place of miracles and presume a stronger link between the Spirit and miracles than the biblical text warrants. Pentecostal scholar J.C. Thomas, for example, confidently sets out to demonstrate the relationship between Spirit, healing and mission, but ironically, is nowhere able to establish that the Spirit is the source of healing in the church's mission ("The Spirit, Healing and Mission: An Overview of the Biblical Canon", *International Review of Mission* 93 [2004] 421-442).

<sup>48</sup> D. Flemming shows how *all* New Testament authors engaged in doing contextual theology (*Contextualization in the New Testament* [Leicester: Apollos, 2005]).

<sup>49</sup> The Spirit is an excellent entry point for the Gospel in Indian culture. Johannine concepts such as "God is Spirit", "Spirit of truth", "the indwelling Spirit" and "the life-giving Spirit" resonate well with Hinduism. R.H.S. Boyd asserts that "[t]he doctrine of the Spirit has great possibilities for the transformation of Hinduism from within, and Hindu insights can deepen the Christian understanding of the power of the Spirit" (*An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* [Delhi: ISPCK, 1975<sup>2</sup>] 243).

8. Mission involves a *spatial* and *socio-religious relocation*. First, the proclamation of God's salvation in Christ aims at *transferring* people from the realm of darkness to that of light (Luke, John, Paul), from the world below to the world above (John). Second, mission aims at calling people, Jew and Gentile alike, *out* of their respective socio-religious environments *into* a new humanity in Christ – the body of Christ (Paul), the church or community of faith (Luke), the flock or family of God (John). The bible as a whole also stresses this socio-religious relocation: God first took Abraham and Israel from all the nations to be his people (Gen. 12:1–3; Deut. 7:6), then he desired to take from the nations or Gentiles a people for his name (Acts 15:14), thus creating a new multi-ethnic humanity in Christ among whom he will dwell forever (Rev. 7:9; 21:1–3).
9. Christian mission aims at *conversion* in that people are *called out* of their respective socio-religious environments, whether “nominal Christianity”, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, atheism, agnosticism or materialism, into a new humanity in Christ.<sup>50</sup> Conversion involves socio-religious relocation and is thus incompatible with “secret” or “anonymous” Christianity – one cannot stay as and where they are.<sup>51</sup> Becoming a follower of Jesus involves a socio-religious transfer into a new community (the church) with a new culture (the Kingdom of God). God's new community is both multi-cultural and mono-cultural – an Indian Christian does not stop being Indian, but adopting the values of the

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<sup>50</sup> Conversion is extremely controversial in India (cf. J. Mattam and S. Kim [eds.], *Mission and Conversion* [FOIM 4; Mumbai: St Pauls, 1996]; S.C.H. Kim, *In Search of Identity: Debates on Religious Conversion in India* [Delhi: OUP, 2003]). Hinduism claims that a Hindu can choose one's own path to salvation within Hinduism, thereby rendering the necessity to leave the Hindu fold obsolete. Christianity, however, upholds the uniqueness of Christ and the invitation to be part of God's people inherently demands socio-religious relocation.

<sup>51</sup> This “moving out” of one's former religion and culture may be a slow, ongoing process for many believers.

world above and living them out in the world below, an Indian Christian has to rethink his Indianness in the light of the Gospel and behave according to the new family norms. The church or people of God is an otherworldly society – it does not belong to this world, and yet it exists and operates (often subversively) in this world in order to transform it (cf. Jn 17:14–16; 18:36).<sup>52</sup> This will eventually lead to conflict at various levels, including an identity crisis, rejection by family, ostracism in the workplace, exclusion from local communities, and religious violence at the hands of extremists from former communities.

10. The Spirit functions as the *boundary* and *identity marker* of the community of faith. The Spirit facilitates the spatial-socio-religious relocation described above, thereby creating a new socio-religious identity. First, the Spirit is the hallmark of a Christian (“to have” the Spirit means belonging to God’s people) and as such provides the believer with a new identity “in Christ” or as part of God’s family. Second, the Spirit shapes this new identity, providing believers with direction, worth and a sense of belonging. For Luke, the community of faith is indwelt by the Spirit and shaped by the Spirit through the apostles’ teaching and fellowship (Acts 2:37–47). For John, the Spirit’s “guiding into all truth”, i.e., teaching about Jesus and the divine reality (16:12–15), mediating the presence of the Father and Son (14:17, 23), and facilitating the new worship of God as Father (4:23–24), will naturally have a transforming effect on the believer’s thought, will and motivation. For Paul, the intimacy created by the Spirit between the believer and God as Father (Rom. 8:15–16; Gal. 4:6), and the work and resulting fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16,

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<sup>52</sup> C. Bennema, “The Sword of the Messiah and the Concept of Liberation in the Fourth Gospel”, *Biblica* 86 (2005) 35–58. Cf. T.N. Madan, who says, “Conversion to Christ does not isolate the convert from his or her own community; it begins the conversion of that community” (“Secularism in Its Place”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 46 [1987] 754).

22–25), will also influence the believer’s personality and behaviour. The goal of this Spirit-wrought identity is to make believers one with the Father and Son (Jn 17:23), and to mould them like Christ (Gal. 2:20). Hence, the Spirit is the community’s ethical or moral force.<sup>53</sup>

I conclude with three directives. First, to avoid repeating the “Edinburgh error”, any debate on Christian mission must include the bible as a vital dialogue partner, in which biblical scholars must accept that the entire bible is missional, and missiologists must check whether their models and practices are biblical. Second, a proper understanding of the Spirit’s role in the divine economy, i.e., to create and sustain life-giving communion, prevents a reductionist view of mission as salvation. Third, a concept of mission that balances Christology and pneumatology will guard against the dangers of exclusive Christocentrism or Christomonism.

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<sup>53</sup> The Spirit is also a *unifier* of people in that the Spirit seeks to bring all people into a new community (“in Christ”) and transform all cultures according to the values of this new community.

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