

Hope as Missional Impulse – *Beyond* the legacy of David Livingstone

Locating our Conversation

Members of Council for World Mission, guests and friends: I am honoured to be asked to give this lecture, which will be more of musings from a member of the Caribbean diaspora and a moderator of the GA of the United Reformed Church. I bring you greetings from the whole of the United Reformed Church – a small church in Wales, Scotland and England with a large and generous heart.

The working title of my presentation is “Hope as Missional Impulse – *Beyond* the legacy of David Livingstone”. I am not a historian nor am I a Livingstone scholar, and hagiography is not my inclination. This presentation will explore connections and impressions from the life and work of Livingstone that I would locate in the context of the shape of a missional vocation for today, grounded on the expansive generosity of God in Christ. *To what extent have we adequately assessed and responded to the tragic collusion of Christian mission and empire as we experience and practice mission today? Has the content of our ‘missional score’ really changed or are we simply offering catchy tunes with fancy lyrics, masking the shifting (not displacing) of power and the re-inscribing of habits we are critical of?*

Beyond (in sub-title) used here is ripe with possibilities, especially when used in the context of postcolonialism. Homi Bhabha reads *beyond* as that which “signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future,” mindful that “the very act of going *beyond*” takes us into the “unknowable, un-representable, without a return to the ‘present’, which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced.” [Bhabha 1994:4] *Beyond* underscores “its hope to transcend its shortcomings.” [Riveria 2007:10] The insight that *beyond* opens up both an “intervening space,” and a “revisionary time” ripe with transforming and empowering possibilities for the present appeals to me.

Locating our Meeting and Self

We are meeting in Glasgow, not far from where Livingstone grew up, was a student of medicine and experienced a strong sense of call. None of us are disembodied spirits. We are flesh and blood, bound by culture and time. My self-understanding as a minister and theologian is shaped by a multiplicity of realities/markers in my journey of faith. It is impossible to jump over one’s shadow. I am not Jamaican but I am from the Caribbean. I am not Brazilian but I am South American. I am not British or European, but I pay UK, Dutch and French taxes. I look Indian but I am not a Hindu or Muslim, though my parents and siblings are. My accent is as deceptive as the Caribbean. I am a complex Diasporan Caribbean - an unintentional missionary called to serve as a minister and a moderator of the GA of the United Reformed Church. I understand my calling to be that of one who attempts to walk the way of God in Christ – a vocation of dislocation, of moving out of zones of comfort, and delighting in the “positive vibrations” of displacement for the sake of the gospel. I would think that this is something that David Livingstone and many others would recognize.

Locating David Livingstone – Missional Implications for Today

“You cannot imagine with what a light heart I visit these foreign shores. Everything is different from the idea I had formed of them when reading. The actual sight and the imagination are two very different things...” [Letter to T.L. Prentice March 5, 1841]

Every generation will have its legacy scrutinised by future generations. In evaluating the legacy of David Livingstone we should remember that the missional practices of our generation would be judged by generations to come through their optics, time and location. What we may consider timely, appropriate, adventurous, and cutting edge will be sharply questioned, and probably dismissed as reflecting a “loss of nerve” or “selling out of the gospel” to the dominant and prevailing script of our time. Justified criticism will not, however, diminish our contributions.

My reading of the life and work Livingstone re-discovers an adventurous, persistent and gifted follower of Christ - so driven, that for some he was self-righteous, secretive, moody and more interested in exploring than evangelising. As an intrepid, determined and courageous explorer, Livingstone was interested in pushing back the boundaries of science, in campaigning against the slave trade, and in taking the Christian faith forward in a range of ways. These personal characteristics and the combination of his range of interests ought to still inspire the church today and have something to say about the mix of involvement which Christian mission can fruitfully engage with and the shape of our calling on the public square.

While he started out as a missionary with the LMS, his scientific, geological and exploring interests resulted in the LMS eventually ceasing to support him, as they felt his interests had taken him too far from the core task of spreading the gospel. Andrew Walls writing on the “Legacy of Livingstone” noted:

“Of his thirty years in Africa not much over a third was spent in the service of a missionary society, and even then his independence of action was *untypical*, his relations with missionary colleagues and directors often brittle. His fame as an explorer, his zeal in scientific investigation, his widely canvassed views on European commerce and settlement in Africa, his service in government appointments, his activity against Arab slave trade – all have raised in many minds the doubt whether or not missionary vocation was the primary factor in his career” [1987:125]

Livingstone, however, was clear about a missionary vocation, perceiving all of his work as integral to a calling from God. For him, “the end of the geographical feat is but the beginning of the Missionary enterprise.” Then there was the matter of ‘commerce and civilization’ as part of his understanding of the missionary agenda, that is, seeing mission as helping in opening up a path for commerce, civilizing of Africa and sharing of the Christian faith. But, most will agree that Livingstone was a significant explorer of the 19th century. As Walls observed:

“he is representative of others of his generation of missionaries who opened new frontiers of knowledge for the West, pioneered new disciplines in linguistics, comparative literature, oriental-history studies, ethnography, the history of religions.” [Walls 1987:27]

Can it be argued that his contributions as doctor, evangelist, explorer, translator, builder, and teacher may be considered wholistic – mission to the whole person whatever his motivation? As Steve de Gruchy observed, “whatever their fault, their vision of mission was shaped by a deep concern for the total well-being of the people of Africa.” [1994:214]. Is it not our calling to remain faithful to such a missional heritage – living out a wholistic vision of mission? Can mission be less?

Like many of the missionaries of the time, Livingstone embodied “a sturdy, confident evangelicalism, secure in its place in national life, sure of its right and duty to influence public and government opinion, and for all its emphasis on personal regeneration and personal religion, looking to the transformation of society as a normal fruit of Christian activity.” [Walls 1987: 125]. Livingstone was a child of the Evangelical revival. As he wrote:

“In the glow of love which Christianity inspires, I soon resolved to devote my life to the alleviation of human misery. Turning this idea over in my mind, I felt that to be a pioneer of Christianity in China might lead to the material benefit of some portions of the immense empire and therefore set myself to obtain a medical education, in order to qualify for that enterprise” [Livingstone 1857:4]

John Kirk (the medical officer on Livingstone’s crew) implied this ‘evangelical’ influence when he noted: “If ever a man carried out the scriptural injunction to take no thought for the morrow, it was David Livingstone.”

Whether Livingstone was a traditional colonialist or a herald of imperialism bent on expanding British hegemony, remains a point of contention. Opinions vary, with apologists contending that he was more concerned about the transferring of skills and technical resources and in a way of Christian living that will benefit and sustain the natives. The logic of Livingstone’s ideas of combining Christianity, commerce and civilising education was that Africans should produce raw materials which they could trade with Europe for manufactured goods. Was this an unwitting form of exploitation of Africa by Europe or was it a more sophisticated way of exploiting people than destroying or taking its strong men and women across the seas to slavery?

It is naïve to think that as part of the colonial mind-set Livingstone would have had a high opinion of ‘dark Africa’ and African people having anything to offer to Western civilization. Brantlinger quotes Livingstone representing Africans as “inured to bloodshed and murder, and care[d] for no god except being bewitched” and so “without ‘commerce and Christianity’, the prospects for these dark regions are not bright.” [1985:178] Europe, on the other hand, though it still shed some blood in national, denominational battles and conquest expeditions, remains proudly Christian – its whole ethos soaking in Christianity. George Seaver noted that on coming to Africa, Livingstone believed in European supremacy over Africans. In a letter on his Zambezi expedition, Seaver quotes Livingstone as having written: "We come among them (the Africans) as members of a superior race and as servants of a Government that desires to elevate the more degraded portions of the human family. We are adherents of a benign holy religion and may by consistent conduct and wise patient efforts become the harbingers of peace to a hitherto distracted and down-trodden race." [Seaver 1957] The cultural motivation for colonisation was deeply rooted in the ethnocentrism and cultural arrogance of the Europeans, who regarded all those beyond

Europe's borders as inferior hence the duty to civilise and uplift. The relationship between the mission, colonial governance, civilising, and commerce was a symbiotic one.

Notwithstanding, I agree with Steve de Gruchy that the legacy of Livingstone, as of the missionary story as a whole, is an ambiguous one [1999: 324] He wrote:

“The missionaries were not always conscious of this ambiguity themselves! They had a definite and clear sense of being God’s apostles, and were single-minded about it. Their letters and journals seldom give a sense that they were self-critical of what they were doing. We have the benefit of hind-sight. We are able to evaluate their legacy in a far more detailed way than they were ever able to do. We have the benefit of scholarly critique. We have an African voice which helps us understand the work of the missionaries from the receiving side. As much as we can see the connections between the missionaries and education, prophetic vision and humanitarian work, we can also see the connections between the missionaries and colonialism, racism and paternalism.” [De Gruchy 1999:324]

There are, of course, many African voices on the legacy of missions. Musa Dube, for instance, writes of the numerous powers after Africa with Africa given no option to “choose a suitor or refuse one” and likened mission and colonisation to “gang rape” - the taking of Africa by force. She writes:

“In [this] extremely gendered colonial language, the African continent was being *penetrated* by the West, its male subjugator, and inseminated with Western seed to give birth to the Westernized African. David Livingstone died in the African continent in a relentless pursuit of this agenda. He was buried with the kings of England— in Westminster Abbey—in recognition of his service to the mother of all empires—the British Empire. But African people supposedly insisted that David Livingstone’s heart should be buried in the continent. One cannot help but wonder if the heart of Livingstone, buried in the African soil, is the little leaven that leavens the whole flour, or is it an incurable virus that wreaks havoc in our bodies? Was this wrench bloody heart, disembodied and buried in African soil, perhaps, an attempt to arrest Livingstone’s reckless agenda of the three Cs?” [Dube 2012: 2]

The challenge before us as we move *beyond* the legacy of Livingstone is this: given the ambiguity in terms of the “mixed bag of blessings of the past’, what are the key impulses we can glean from this heritage as we give account of the hope for our missional vocation for today? [cf. De Gruchy 1999:324]

Beyond the Legacy: Alphabet for Mission Today

"Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Sever any ties but the tie that binds me to Thy service and to Thy heart." [Prayer by Livingstone]

Allow me to reflect on the alphabet of a missional vocation – playing with three C’s (not the overused three) - integral to the life and work of David Livingstone as a way of moving “beyond” the legacy.

There was Livingstone’s **commitment** – a very strong sense of calling. Speaking to students at the University of Glasgow he rhetorically asked: “Shall I tell you what sustained me in the midst of

all those toil, hardships and incredible loneliness? It was the promise of a Gentleman of the most sacred honour – ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’” A belief in that promise was at the heart of Livingstone's commitment. It was the presence of Jesus Christ with him everywhere, all of the time, especially through terrifying ordeals. That promise grabbed the heart and mind of Livingstone and transformed his life. At least, one cannot level the charge of “functional atheism”¹ in the direction of Livingstone. Whatever conclusions we may arrive at as to his motivation - (mis)guided zeal and lack of self-interrogation - an unwavering commitment and a strong sense of call were not lacking! Livingstone was touched by the power of God's love in Christ and a deep desire to share it to the ‘ends of the earth’! In our context in the UK, where there is an evident lack of confidence in our ability to share the story of this amazing love, an apparent loss of nerve and paralysis in our ability to share the good news of salvation for the whole of creation in the name of God in Christ, there is much to learn from both the fervour and shortcomings of Livingstone in our calling to live out God's mission in Christ!

This commitment to the way of God in Christ propelled Livingstone (and others like him) towards **crossing frontiers and borders** and experiencing costly displacement in different cultural contexts for the sake of the gospel. In obedience to God, this man moved out beyond his own fears and cultural comfort zones into an adventure of the unknown. Indeed, the missional vocation (the Jesus way of abundant life for all) is one of crossing borders and frontiers – of **experiencing displacement**. And *crossing frontiers* happen between and within nations: it is not only about moving between distant geographical locations – it is also about *crossing theological locations*! In the journey of crossing it is critical that we understand the complexity and resilience of entanglement between mission and hegemonic tendencies, given the many avatars of the latter today across a variety of landscapes. We also need to be aware of the consequences that boundary crossing will bring and whose interest it will serve.

This year we are marking in Britain 65 years since the landing of ‘Windrush’ at Tilbury Dock on June 22, when those eager Caribbean members of the British Empire arrived here to be rudely surprised by the welcome they received! Much has changed, but much more needs to change. The presence of the growing number of newer and vibrant migrant Christian communities (from former colonies) in our midst today, many of whom share our buildings (often in a tenant and landlord relationship) put to the test our neatly crafted missiological statements and theologies. The question for our context is whether or not our witness is one of mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence with the strangers in our midst. [WCC, TTL 2012: 7] And, whether we are able “move beyond binary notions of culturally dominant groups as hosts, and migrant and minority peoples as guests” to embrace God's generosity where God is host and “all are invited by the Spirit to participate with humility and mutuality in God's mission.” [WCC 2012:11]

It is not insignificant that whether it was Livingstone/Western missionaries to Africa or Africans/migrant missionaries to Europe-West, Black people remain ‘Other’ and a stranger, largely kept at a distance. There are clearly prejudicial perceptions, including a sense of superiority, a dismissal of giftings, and totalising representations of migrant Christians. This is how Musa Dube locates the challenge for all of us:

¹ The near complete forgetting that God has something to do with the mission of the church and us and is there in the midst of our struggles

“The throbbing and boisterous pulse of contemporary African Christianity/ies is seemingly causing discomfort in the Western world, which finds African Christianity conservative, perhaps mirroring the missionary teachings that sought to uproot African people completely from their religious beliefs by teaching the strictest biblical adherence, or reflecting the contemporary charismatic/Pentecostal movements, or both.....But the perceived conservative character of African Christianity depends on reducing diversity into sameness, as depicted by Western scholars and researchers, mirroring the colonial habit of refusing others their own voices as well as the tendency to characterize the Other as an uncivilized savage.” [Dube 2012:3]

It is ironical that while we in Britain and Europe are conscious of the interweaving process of economic globalisation we still find it difficult to also see the border crossing-transgressing transnationalism of migrant Christian communities as a dimension of our so-called ecclesial postmodernity that must challenge our national and territorial identities. [cf.Maluleke 2010] Here is an opening to our future together that we are unable to grasp, because we have grabbed the way of God in Christ with clenched and possessive fists and little humility to recognise that we are all in need! The fact that my ecclesial tradition has elected me (a minority) as a moderator of its General Assembly is not necessarily indicative that more space around the table has been created or is being re-negotiated to include the difference and culturally shaped giftings I bring. In fact, to be accepted and to be listened to, I have to largely fit into a white-male-extrovert-hetero-sexual-abled-bodied framework. The habit of all around the table being *mutually inconvenienced* for the sake of economy of the host (God in Christ), and in the specific context of finding a new identity, is proving to be far too uncomfortable and demanding! A real opening-up towards migrant Christians must mean a process of radical re-definition of our own heritages and identities. If a church starts to welcome migrants as equal partners, it cannot just assimilate them into the existing structure and operate “business as usual”. Belonging together must be renegotiated! Learning how to generously do our God-talk together, without reducing the practices of the “newcomer” as underdeveloped or conservative, or those of the “host” churches as impoverished spiritually, is an urgent task. We are all in need here!

There was a particular **conscience** – a prophetic and justice oriented one - at the heart of Livingstone’s *commitment* and *crossing* of frontiers. This is evident from his strategy to work against the curse of slavery. He saw the introduction of legitimate commerce as a way to counter the dehumanising Slave trade. Christian faith must offer the good news of liberation and salvation to the peoples of Africa as well as the slavers. He told the Glasgow students (1858):

“It cannot be the design of providence that the horrid system of slavery should exist for ever, or that we should be supporters of that system. And yet we are, though unwillingly, the chief supporters of slavery. Now let mercantile men, ministers and all work together, so as eventually to eradicate that foul blot from the European name.”

In retrospect, we are able to see that while this (Commerce) may have contributed to the demise of the Slave Trade, it also resulted in another sort of enslavement of Africa. This brings us back to Musa Dube’s point about the many suitors for Africa and Africa not given a choice/chance to determine who to go (or not to) into bed with. A lesson here is that the sort of prophetic

criticism we need is that which “unveils, negates and problematizes the complex dynamics of institutional and other related power structures in order to disclose options and alternatives for transformative praxis.” [Namsoon Kang 2011:113-114]

This is especially the case given the reach of our current economic/financial system and the ways this leave many victims into perpetual penury (both within and between nations). And this system is not about the West versus the rest: it is about a heartless powerhouse, where power is dispersed and faceless, operating with impunity across the world (transnational) and with a global elite in charge.

Is it a co-incidence that the G8 are currently meeting across in Northern Ireland? The idea of helping or saving the people of Africa from starvation (one of the stated purpose of the conference) “looks suspiciously like grabbing their resources” [[George Monbiot 2013](#)], as the 1884 Conference of Berlin to save Africans from the Slave Trade ended up doing. For in order to discharge “this grave responsibility, the global powers have discovered, to their undoubted distress, that their corporations must extend their control and ownership of large parts of Africa. As a result, they will find themselves in astonished possession of Africa's land, seed and markets.” An alliance for ‘food security and nutrition’, intended to lift the millions of poor people out of Africa brings together corporate partners such as Monsanto, Cargill, Dupont, Syngenta, Nestlé, Unilever, Itochu, among others. Africa’s lands and seeds are once again been taken over in the name of the well-being of Africans. And, there are no shortage of African leaders and elite who have more in common with the global elite than with their own people, making the alliance of vampires powerfully trans-national!

A missional conscience has to deploy a different set of economic value – an economics of enough premised on the extravagant generosity of God. Here, life is not dictated by profitability or an economics of personal, autonomous determinist consumption, but by a fullness of life (abundance) agenda in Christ for all! God’s mission demands that we keep bearing hopeful witness to God’s justice, as we participate with others in ending hunger, violence and the economic disparities that eat away at our life together. We are called to live and act in hope! And while it is impossible to live without hope, it is also not possible to hope without giving substance to our hope by working together for it.

Missional Vocation: A postcolonial Take

If committed Christians and missionaries like Livingstone were not motivated by greed or personal gain but by a calling to make a difference what, then, “were the underlying problems of colonial missions?” Why and how “did Christian mission end up as part of the colonial enterprise?” [Rieger 2004: 201-226] Is it what happens when we fail to question the systems and ideologies that we are part of, when we operate under an implicit assumption that these correspond with the Christian enterprise? Perhaps “[t]he missional question is not “what can we do?” The critical question may be “what is going on here and how might we be part of the problem?” Unless these questions are raised in our encounters and missiological reflections “nothing will change.” [Rieger 2004: 201] Moving beyond mission hagiography to live out the implications of commitment, crossing of frontiers and deepening the habit of a prophetic conscience demand that we do some

serious interrogation of what we have inherited and the ways we may be interpreting our missional calling. What needs to be challenged and transformed is the 'colonial mentality' – we need a transformation of the mind (Garvey, Marley and Romans) Namsoon Kang puts it this way:

“As long as people try to *patronize, dominate, and control* others, whether based on gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality, religion, nationality and citizenship, age or social class, the colonial mentality permeates and operates in the very act of mission.” [Kang 2011: 111]

The CWM theology statement *Mission in the Context of Empire* [2010] recognises: 'empire' does not disappear - it mutates and reappears in various guises. Hence, as Rieger notes:

Without understanding how we are shaped by empire all the way into our deeper desires, we cannot properly identify the theological surplus, those intuitions and insights that point us beyond the horizons of empire...Without the analytical exploration of theology and empire we will not be able to identify what is really path-breaking in theology, what it is that has the potential to shape truly fresh and constructive thinking about God and the world. [2007:13]

How can our moving 'beyond the legacy' become a dynamic process open to the expansive generosity of God in Christ and trusting that God has the final say? It must mean interrogating and re-constructing some of the theological notions under-girding mission. *Are we in danger of re-inscribing oppressive practices - be they doctrines or interpretations of texts related to mission?* Both the deposit and its presentation need continuing critical scrutiny. There is still the need to 'lay bare' and expose the so-called 'deposit of faith'. Here, the postcolonial optic offers helpful possibilities as it is primarily concerned with detecting, questioning, challenging and exposing how the dominated are represented by the dominant, the link between power and knowledge, and the locating of ideologies in plots and characterisation in texts and their interpretations. [cf. Sugritharajah 2007, Kwok Pui-Lan 2007, Maluleke 2007 & Kang 2011]

I briefly note two areas², among many others, in need of further critical interrogating.

1. *Mission as Missio Dei*: Namsoon Kang rightly notes that “how one perceives God provides a ground for how one understands mission” [2011:116]. She goes on to note: “When the dominant 'knowledge' about God takes a form of superiority of one group over the other, whether it is based on gender, culture, race, sexuality or religion, 'power' a dominating and controlling force emerges and operates in every aspect of Christian mission.” [Kang 2011:12]
 - a. On diverse and hybrid landscapes mission as the *missio Dei* remains a significant and timely position to develop, rethink and articulate. But critical questions must be asked of and by all of us. What is the nature of this God and the people God has called that we still hold to? When we re-define Christian mission as *missio Dei* how

² See my essay “Living Missional Lives in a Multi-faith Landscape: Some Thoughts on Reconstructing Mission,” in Bangalore Theological Forum 2010. Also published in *Towards a Reconstruction of Mission Stories* edited by Wauchope, Joshva Raja, Sumithra N. Fernando, Val Ogden (ISPCK: India, 2010).

much of our understanding of God still operates within the confines of a certain deposit of faith that restricts the Divine? Is our understanding, for instance, a homogenous and unifying one that will not allow space for 'multiple monotheism', for a Divine embodied in diversity?

- b. What if we read the Divine not as the One but as the "Manyone", - "a countless divinity"? [Schneider 2008:26] Can it be that a *missio Dei* which continues to be premised on the 'logic of oneness' smacks of imperialising and totalising tendencies and has "fallen into more or less of a Docetic groove, unwilling to grant to divinity the freedom to incarnate except in one 'conclusive' time and place in the person of Jesus?" [Schneider 2008:139] In the articulating of the *missio Dei* how do we give space and agency to the illogic of multiplicity without always reverting back into the logic of One?³
- c. It is the case that Christianity has been too preoccupied with singularity – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God etc. Our diverse landscape (faiths, peoples, cultures) present us with another reality – a plural one. It is time to rediscover the grandeur of the *pleroma* of the Divine and the God's work of grace throughout the whole of creation. Oneness is not the only tune and dance of the Divine: it is a human imposition.

2. *Mission as Hospitality*: Much is being written on *mission as hospitality* to the extent that what we now need is to live it out fully! The fact that people who look like me may be leading mission and ecumenical bodies is no guarantee that hospitality is flourishing.

- a. The way(s) that mission continue to use power and money to manipulate and compromised hospitality need reflecting on. As the new WCC affirmation on mission and evangelism puts it: "Although our theological and missiological talk says a lot about the mission of the church being in solidarity with the poor, sometimes in practice it is much more concerned with being in the centres of power, eating with the rich and lobbying for money to maintain ecclesial bureaucracy. This poses particular challenges to reflect on what is the good news for people who are privileged and powerful." [WCC, TTL 2012:8]
- b. While our ecclesial landscape has changed in the UK with the presence of large "migrant communities" and Black Majority Churches (including a growing Black Minority Ethnic presence in our "historic churches") contemporary mission-ecumenical engagements continue to neglect this. Even when recognised, how to re-configure our life together (our relating) remains a massive challenge. It is scandalous how we all go on about mission as incarnational, and remain terrified about including real flesh around us – because they are not like us!
- c. Have we really done our homework as to why and how the mission theology of the Church has been used to restrict the expansive generosity of the Divine only to the elected? What have we done to come up with a "myth of scarcity" to represent a

³ See also my essay: "A Brief *Con*-version: A Caribbean and Black-British Postcolonial Scrutiny of Christian Conversion" in *Black theology: An International Journal* 7/3 (2009), pp. 300-324.

God whose nature is best characterised by a “liturgy of abundance” and fullness of life? [Brueggemann 2000:69]

- d. Hospitality as living a life turned towards one’s neighbour, entails engaging with and living out the power of mutual transformation. Hence, the need to constantly interrogate all missional relationships built around hospitality, as it is never one of equals, however well-intended our theology may be. Relations between guest and host are never static – they are always fluid and there is the element of “guest/host reversal” that is crucial of the relationship. As in a dance “[t]he host and guest are often locked in a complicated ballet of proposals, expectations and careful interpretations of seemingly infinite offers.”[Rosello 2001:172]
- e. How will a re-constructed mission handle binarism, power relations and especially identities in its discourse? How will our re-visioning puncture imperialistic and oppressive dualisms? Binarisms play into the imperial agenda, rob humans of abundant living, and attempt to restrict hospitality through a single set of discourse, rather than giving agency to a hybrid—a third space (limbonal spaces)—where local and global images meet in fluid and dialogical interweaving with its own surprises, fresh configurations and challenges. Given the complexity and messiness of people’s lived realities, how can mission enable a positive exploring of the space of in-between-ness or ‘limbonal spaces’ that people have to daily negotiate as a result of multiple identities, heritages and complicated circumstances?

On-going Conversations – Hope as Missional Impulse

Whatever our contexts, there is a desperate need for hope. The rich despair because they are unable to find security, well-being and happiness in spite of their wealth. The poor groan under the weight of and despair in the face of chronic impoverishment, the piling-up of the odds against them, and the reality of scandalous disparities. To a world caught up in various forms of deceit, denial and the robbing of full of life for all, the challenge to witness to hope and living lives of integrity seem almost impossible. Yet, the nature of hope born of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one that leads us to look at life here on earth from the perspective of deeper values: love, holiness, generosity and communion with God. This is the perspective that gives hope content - balancing the eternal with the immediate; incarnational, relational; generous and hospitable; audacious and daring; prophetic and not fearful; joyful and flexible; seeing the whole – a larger picture.

Seeing our missional vocation through the lens of hope is not to dismiss the brokenness around us, but to believe in the possibilities – that Christ will raise all things up. Hope is about singing “tune without the words”, for God’s love and promise is a tune that never stops playing – it is what makes sense in spite of the evidence around us. Our hope is a faith and theological conviction that affirms the generosity of God in Christ - God who loves us extravagantly. In small ways we strive to live by the conviction that the currency of the kingdom is grace which we have been gifted with in abundance. Through this grace and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we strive to believe in more than what is believable in order to work with others to participate in God’s offer of ‘fullness of life’ in Christ for all. This calls for holy imagination!

If the Spirit blows where she wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where she comes, and where she goes... (John 3.8) then honesty and openness must characterise our missional vocation [CWM, *MitCoE* 2010:15]. Honest and hopeful missional vocation

- asks us to interrogate motivations: for if “mission is finding out what God is going and joining in” (Rowan Williams), how much of our missional prioritising operates on this premise and how are we discerning together what God is doing and joining in?
- invites us to enjoy the surpluses of our heritage while engaging critically with our inherited theologies and doctrines – mindful of how traditions can lock us into static ways of being and how structures can dictate default habits that are stifling;
- is facing up to the reality that while the centre of Christianity has shifted, a real danger is that it can still remain a centre with a new power base and a re-inscribing of restrictive habits;
- asks us to avoid becoming what psychologists call “cognitive misers” – thinking instinctively in either/or categories and banking on a low “hope account”. We need maximum generosity boost to counter the “glamour and liturgy of scarcity”, that in my view, continue to paralyse faith and faithfulness in the UK.

An honest and hopeful missional vocation will not live in fear and will certainly not take on the burden of conserving ‘faith’ which ought to blow where the Spirit leads. It is about becoming “hope filled-saturated”, wise, joyful and generous communities: thinking differently about what is at stake for Christ’s Sake. We have not inherited the gospel from ancestors and historical traditions: rather, we have borrowed this gift from the present and future generations. What are we handing over to them?

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