

Mission and Political Power – Edinburgh 2010, Commission VII Revisited

By Professor Tinyiko Sam Maluleke

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1. Whose Missions and Whose (Political) Power?

If the two words, 'mission' and 'politics' are pivotal to our topic, we will do well not to neglect the role of the little conjunction in between the two notions. The conjunction serves the double function of asserting distinction between the two without suggesting irreconcilable non-relationship between them. Consider how the focus of our topic might change if the title was: i) Mission *or* Political Power. ii) 'Mission *in* Political Power' or iii) The 'Political Power *of* Mission'. iii) And, in the same way that politicians and political scientists nowadays speak of the 'political, diplomatic, military and economic missions' of governments, could we also speak of the politics and economics of Christian mission? If one considers these aforementioned permutations and their implications, we come to appreciate breadth and immensity of the topic at hand. Although invoking only a seemingly relational consideration of the mission and politics, the topic actually invites all of the other permutations suggested and implied above. We cannot adequately address the question of 'mission and politics' without consideration the 'mission' *of* politics and vice versa. We cannot adequately consider political power and mission without dealing with the historical power of Christian mission, its nature and its exercise.

But we have to establish a beginning and an entry point. One specific way of doing this is to ask a series of questions such as: Whose mission and whose (political) power? What mission and what political power? Exercised by whom, how, where and to what end? We will now try a preliminary and sweeping attempt to answer these questions by means of a brief elucidation of what we consider to be some of the basic assumptions of and characteristics of Edinburgh 1910.

2. Edinburgh 1910 : Overview of Basic Character and Assumptions

The full title theme of the Edinburgh 2010 conference is worth our careful recollection: *World Missionary Conference to Consider Missionary Problems in relation to the Non-Christian World*. At least five things are remarkable about the vision behind Edinburgh 2010.

The first is the firm idea of the world as one unit, hence the boldness of declaring a 'world' missionary conference:

...one world, waiting, surely, for who shall carry to it and place in its empty hands one Faith – the only thing that can ever truly and fundamentally unite it or deeply and truly satisfy it, bringing its one human race into one Catholic Church (Gairdner 1910:6).

Clearly therefore, not only was there a growing vision of the world as one, such a vision inspired by (and it in turn inspired) an understanding of the world without Christ as a person with 'empty hands' and in need of 'one faith'. The vision of unity

here is not merely the scientific (earth as one planet amongst others) or the merely technological (earth ‘organically knit by the nerves of electric cable and telegraph wire ...’ [Gairdner:6]) . Rather it is a unity of a world, which despite its apparent scientific and technological unity will never be truly united until and unless it is united by coming to faith in Christ.

The second remarkable thing about the theme is its clear and specific focus, namely, ‘to consider missionary problems in relation to the non-Christian world’. Commentators may have sometimes spoken of Edinburgh as if it was a conference about everything to do with missions. But this was a very focussed conference with a clear and limited brief, to consider missionary problems in relation to the non-Christian world. Another way of amplifying this is to speak about what the conference was NOT primarily about. It was NOT a conference about the challenge of missions to the ‘church at home’. Indeed, it appears that mission was understood main in terms of foreign missions so that ‘church at home’ was only conceived of as ‘the home base of missions’ not a site of missions in its own right and its own context. More positively stated, the conference focus was on the non-Christian rather than the Christian world. It seems to have been the overwhelming view then that there was nothing wrong with the Christian world but attention ought to be focussed on the non-Christian world. Ironically, the non-Christian world was represented by mainly missionaries working in that world rather than the peoples of that world themselves. It seems that except for the missionaries working in Africa, of whom there was a good number, not a single native African was in attendance of Edinburgh 1910 – save the African American missionary to Liberia, Rev Alexander P. Camphor (Friesen 1996:27f).

Third, from the preceding point, it is clear that though the notion of the world as a unit was making inroads in missionary thinking, the dominant reading of the world was one in which it was further divided into two; the Christian and the non-Christian world. It is clear that this was the main diagnostic manner in which the world was viewed. The major challenge for missions and missionaries therefore, was one of how to expand the Christian sphere at the expense of the non-Christian sphere in the world. As well as the notions of Christian vs. non-Christian, the world was further interpreted in terms of high civilisation and low civilisation. Note how the commission on missions and governments goes about classifying the ‘mission lands’:

Without entering into detail, we may divide mission lands roughly into five groups: a) those of low civilisation, but independent; b) those of higher civilization And independent; c) those of low civilisation, under Christian rule; d) those of higher civilisation under Christian rule or influence, e) those of the highest international rank. (RCV11:88).

Fourth, the conference is touted as ‘deliberative and consultative’ (Gairdner 1910:13) rather than taking the form of a practical demonstration. This is true insofar as when Edinburgh is compared to similar conferences before it. However, the slant of conference topics and discussions did bear a very practical ‘how to’ rather than a ‘why’ tone. Its alleged consultative and deliberate nature owes to the two year preparation, the rigour with which the reports were compiled, the order with which the entire conference was conducted and its entire structure of deliberations based on pre-received commission reports. Nevertheless, it is significant that the planners of

Edinburgh 1910 coined the problem and deliberations of our commission (as they did with other commissions), not in terms of the apparently more theoretical construction of Christian mission and political power, but rather, more practically in terms of mission and governments – in fact in terms of specific missions/missionaries and specific governments. A huge chunk of the principles section of the Report of the Commission non Mission and Governments pertain to the roles, attitude, and functions of the missionary rather than missions as such.

Fifth, we consider the prevailing notion of mission at Edinburgh. Mission was understood in a more immediate and more pragmatic sense. In these pre-Barth and pre-Hoekendijk times, talk was of missions rather than mission. Mission was understood mainly as ‘foreign missions’, as the missions of the missionaries rather than in terms of a theological understanding of missions *per se*, the mission of mission societies and mission as the work of evangelisation in a mission field. In those days the current of mission did flow, not from everywhere to everywhere, but rather from the Christian world to the non-Christian world. These are the prevailing understandings of mission that informed Edinburgh 1910 and certainly the understanding that informed Commission Seven on ‘Missions and Governments’. Theologically, this man-based and church based understanding of missions, was nevertheless grounded in God. In the words of the conference chronicler, Gairdner (1910:14), the conference methodology and objectives were the following:

Like Solomon it sought wisdom – *to know ... to know what?* The work abroad, of course, with its thousand facets; the nature of the supreme crisis that faces the Church; the Church Catholic itself, to which the whole [mission] enterprise has been committed; and – God.

We sense here a kind of latent missionary theology built around an understanding of mission with the church as the main driver of mission. In understanding and performing its duty in the world, it was optimistically believed the Christian church had ‘possibilities as illimitable as God Himself ... The issue to which the consideration of the world task of Christianity drives us back is *whether the Church really possesses Christ’s thought about God, and, if not, whether it can get it back*’ (Gairdner 1910:16, quoting from a pre-conference communiqué). The overwhelming sense was one of mission as an immensely achievable duty of the Christian Church – albeit a duty to be accomplished in faith and faithfulness to God. The countenancing of failure in achieving the goal of evangelising the world was regarded as a sign of both a lack of faith in God and a lack of faith in self. ‘Can anything stand in the way of the accomplishment of the good will [of God] but the unbelief of the Church?’ (:16).

Sixth, the very *modus operandi* of the conference, i.e. the construction of eight commissions says a lot about the manner in which the conference organisers understood and conceptualised the task of mission. This was a conference by commissions; a conference preceded by several diffused ‘conferences’ as the commissions solicited data and comment from far and wide; it was a conference documents – heaps of documents, letters and questionnaires; it was a conference tightly and purposefully coordinated by a central organising committee; it was a business conference rather than a ceremonial one. The purpose of the conference was,

... to bring together the most talented missionary historians, strategists and executives on the home front, along with the most creative forward-looking missionaries on the field ... By design the conference was selective and represented the thinking of the leadership (Friesen 1996:3).

It is not clear (or at least I have not been able to establish) why and how the eight subjects (which guided each of the eight commissions) were specifically 'isolated for the purposes of this research' (Gairdner 1910:19). What is clear is that these eight subjects were regarded as 'subjects of cardinal importance and special immediate urgency'. In other words, these eight subjects constituted what was thought to be the paramount issues facing Christian missions at the time. These subjects comprised the following:

- I. Carrying the Gospel to all the non-Christian World.
- II. The Church in the Mission-field.
- III. Education in relation to the Christianisation of National Life
- IV. The Missionary Message in relation to Non-Christian Religions
- V. The Preparation of Missionaries
- VI. The Home Base of Missions
- VII. Relation of Mission to Governments
- VIII. Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity

3. The 'Unusual' Subject of Mission and Governments

3.1 The Theoretical Underpinnings

In all the other commissions, ... the Conference kept, so to speak, within the sphere of the Christian Church; but in the Report now to be considered it was dealing with an external power, the power of the State all over the world. It was one more of the novel features of this Edinburgh conference, that this unusual subject had received treatment... (Gairdner 1910: 154).

From the above, it becomes clear that the *first* notable matter underpinning the conference's approach to the subject was that the subject was itself considered unusual if not daring. It was a subject considered the normal purview of Christian missions. This was driven by an understanding of society as organised by and organised into different and separate spheres. This understanding governed the way in which the commission understood the relation of the sphere of the Christian Church and the sphere of the state. The daring and peculiar nature of the work of this commission owed to the fact that the conference was seen to overstepping its proper sphere and moving into another sphere. To this notion of separate spheres, we must keep, at the back of our minds other tools used to interpret society, already alluded to, such as the schemes of high and low civilizations, Christian world and non-Christian world, Christian and non-Christian religions. These form the 'Edinburgh toolbox' of conceptual instruments with which the world was to be read and to be understood. In this regard, the sphere of Christian mission was seen to be different from, for example the sphere of government.

Secondly, the commission chose to conduct its task in terms of an analytical-descriptive rather than an analytical-critical approach to the subject. It was, in the first instance, not concerned with theoretically or theologically debating let alone defining the ideal. And this was not for lack of awareness of the issues at stake. The commission noted that its subject:

... maybe theoretically regarded as a study of one aspect of the great problem of the relation between the Church and the State and the discrimination between the two spheres. ... (with a keen awareness of the) contending principles in the contact of the expanding Church with Governments which, for the first time, have had to take account of Christianity both as a destructive and a constructive force, contending for a law and a loyalty different from and higher than those recognised by any State. (Report of Commission VII [R-V11]:2).

The mouth-watering issues and complex theoretical and theological issues implied in the above quotation notwithstanding, the path chosen by the commission was one of accurately establishing the *status quo*, its problems and promises and

...not the ambitious one of defining the ideal relations of Church and State. It is the humble work of ascertaining, by a survey of existing facts, what attitude the various governments assume towards missions working within their borders, how they help and are helped by missions, how they hinder them and, perchance, are hindered by them, with a view to disentangle the principles upon which missions do work and should work in order to avoid needless offence, and to promote the common end, both of governments and of missions – the welfare of the nations.

Thirdly, though recognising the different spheres occupied by the two, as discussed in the first principle discussed above, the commission ultimately recognises and recommends a ‘co-operant’ rather than a conflicting relationship between missions and governments. The reason is that ‘to restrain evil and promote good is the duty of government’ and both missions and governments are interested and invested in ‘the welfare of the nations’.

Fourth, there were, even after the decision for the commission to seek non-confrontational principles upon which to build mission and government relations, there were at least ‘three wrongs’ discussed at the conference were confrontation between mission and government lurked. The ‘three wrong’ were: i) opium traffic, ii) liquor traffic and iii) enforced labour. All three impinged on the income and profits which major Western countries were making in relation to other countries.

3.2 Findings and Recommendations of the Commission

It is necessary to recall here the distinctions between governments highlighted earlier on, namely countries of a) low civilisation, but independent; b) higher civilization and independent; c) low civilisation, under Christian rule; d) higher civilisation under Christian rule or influence, and e) those of the highest international rank. How missionaries should behave in relation to government and how the relations between

missions and governments are to be structured depends on the type of government in place, as sketched out in the foregoing scheme. For the rest, the findings essentially contain a set of elucidated guidelines for missionaries in terms of how to relate to various governments in such a way as to advance the missionary cause. These guidelines were themselves compiled from the inputs of missionaries in various mission fields controlled by various types of government.

3.2.1 *Concerning loyalty* to political governments, the report suggested that missionaries should generally be guided by the principle of ‘rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s’ regardless of the form and face of Caesar in the various contexts of the world. This included a recommendation to pray for the ruling prince. In this regard, the commission rejoiced in the knowledge that ‘the Gospel is the Gospel for the national and not the product of Western thought nor a means of advancing Western interests’ (R-VII:94).

3.2.2 *Concerning the heightened sense of political aspiration* in many parts of the world, combined with the missionary efforts to ‘disentangle the essentials of Christian faith and life from the Western outgrowths and accompaniments ...’ (R-VII:94), the commission found that the work of missions could not but be affected, ‘especially in the many lands where the missionary belongs to a dominant race’ (:95). In this regard the commission highlighted three crucial principles: a) missionaries were to desist from ‘political agitation’ for ‘this is outside their sphere’, b) missionaries have a duty to ‘teach and practice obedience to settled government’, c) they also have duty to ‘exercise their influence for the removal of gross oppression and injustice, particularly where the Government is in the hands of men of their own race ... provided that in so doing they keep clear of association with any political movement’.

3.2.3 *Concerning the public services of missionaries*, the commission was most articulate and full of praise for the numerous ways in which the work of missionaries was of great service to governments, especially in ‘forms of service lying of strictly religious work’. Such services include exploration, sociology, linguistics, education, introducing the printing press, introduction of literature, medical work, moral influence and more ideologically, by

Penetrating into barbarous lands before the advent of any civilised Government, they have, by moral influence alone, mitigated war and slavery, and cruel and abominable usages, and prepared the way for an enlightened and civilised rule; and where civilised rule has followed them, they have proved, both in official and unofficial positions, the best mediators between the new, strict, and exacting Government and the suspicious native races, resentful of interference with their ancient ways, evil and good alike. ... they have won an influence which has made the task of governments comparatively easy; and everywhere they continue to manifest and inculcate that loyalty to and co-operation with governments, without which the latter indeed may rule, but without which they cannot fit a people for the higher task of ruling themselves (R-VII:96-97).

3.2.4 *Concerning other more generalised principles* governing missionary relations to governments, the commission pronounced thus:

- Missionaries remain subject to their own governments as domiciled foreigners, ‘entitled to all the privileges and subject to all the disabilities of domiciled aliens’ (R-V11:97).
- The convert remains subject of his government. ‘His civil status is not changed, except insofar as the law of the country may impose civil disabilities upon the profession of Christianity’
- Relations between missionaries and converts are ‘purely religious’.
- All independent states have the right to control and regulate the civil and municipal lives of its subjects.
- All independent states have the civil right to admit or refuse missionaries.
- ‘...where settled government exists, it is the protector of all within its borders; and the missionary should act on the presumption that it will protect’ (:112).

3.2.5 *Concerning the main points of difficulty* between missions and governments (in restrictions on movements and settlement of missionaries, their acquisition of property, persecution or discrimination against converts, compensation for injuries, cooperation in matters of public welfare) the commission made the following general observations:

- ‘The government has the legal right in its own order (civil) to lay such regulation as it thinks necessary upon the missionary’s action’ (:104) (Recognising that the missionary may choose to disregard, but only at the pain of relinquishing his civil rights).
- Missionaries were urged to appeal to civil powers sparingly and to exercise wisdom/restraint in claiming extra-territorial rights.
- Missionaries should always seek to strike a balance between ‘Christian expediency’ and their demand for legal rights.

3.2.6 *The prophetic edge to the work of the commission* i.e. pronouncements on contentious issues in which the commission ‘stuck its neck out’ can be gleaned from the following:

- The commission contended that ‘a respectful remonstrance’ should be made to the British government for the excessive deference to Islam and the excessive restrictions placed upon Christian missionaries in such countries as Egypt, the Sudan, and Northern Nigeria.
- It was strongly suggested by the commission that the conference should ‘make a decided pronouncement upon the Congo question’ (R-VII:113) where massive atrocities were being committed by the Belgian rulers in the context of forced labour in pursuit of profits connected with the acquisition of rubber. In this regard, the commission also noted that ‘a system of forced labour is always liable to the greatest abuses’ (:117).
- Concerning the difficulties faced by Christian missionaries and their converts in so-called Mohammedan lands, the commission asked the rhetorical question of whether ‘the time (has) not come in the development of a world civilisation

and of international relationships when the enlightened nations of the world may make freedom of action in religious profession the birthright of every man? (R-VII:114).

- Notwithstanding all the ‘hindrances put in the way of missions by the policy of governments .. nothing is a greater hindrance than the feebleness of the sense of responsibility for the welfare of the more backward races which is felt by the more advanced ... (so that) even men in high public positions do not hesitate to speak of all “coloured” races as if they were doomed to perpetual national servitude ...’ (:115).
- The Commission advocated that ‘the traffic in opium should cease unless under the restrictions proper to a dangerous drug’ (:117) whilst also expressing the hope that the British government ‘may be able to meet the financial difficulties created by the cessation of opium revenue’ without further burdening the people with tax.
- The commission further urged the ‘severe restriction, if not the absolute prohibition of the sale of intoxicating liquor to native races, among whom its use has hitherto been practically unknown, or on whom its use is manifestly producing deteriorating effects.

3.3 Concluding Recommendations

The commission presents eight final recommendations. The first confesses thankfulness for the and growing cooperation between missions and governments and calls for more. The second is an appeal to all Christian governments to allow for easy entry and movement for missionaries into and within their countries. In similar vein, the third recommendation beseeched Christian governments to display a growing sense of responsibility towards those over whom they rule as colonial powers. The fourth recommendation was a re-assurance given to all governments that Christian converts would be taught to respect the civil authorities of their lands. In return governments were asked to desist from discriminating against the converts, affording them instead, full civil protection. The fifth recommendation was a piece of advice to governments dissuading them from unilaterally allocating different areas of work to different missions. The sixth recommendation was a restatement and expansion of the second recommendation but limiting it to (British) India. The seventh recommendation related to a call for immediate action by all the governments who signed the General Act of Berlin (with respect to the partitioning and ruling of Africa) with a view to stopping the continued violations of human and mission rights in the Congo. The last recommendation was a ‘way-forward’ one in terms of which it was suggested for a committee to be set-up whose task it would be to construct a brief statement of principles underlying relations between missions and governments for the future benefit of both.

4. How Far Have We Come?

4.1. Church State Relations Before Constantine

During the 20th century, few topics have exercised the mind of the church, its practitioners and its thinkers as the agonising question of church and state. In this regard the work of the commission on missions and governments must be seen as forming much of the basis of the debates that were to rage for the next hundred years. But stating the matter in this way is to go ahead of ourselves, so to speak.

Church is a topic steeped in the earliest memories of Christian history. After all, Christianity started as a small band people of the *way* in the context of the powerful and a generally hostile Greco-Roman which though somewhat tolerant to Judaism was nevertheless intolerant enough to new religions that it allowed conditions that led to the execution of Jesus Christ. This is the original context of ‘church-state’ relations - a vast, powerful and extensive state demanding both taxes and allegiance on the one hand, and a small, weak, small but determined formation of followers of Christ who believed and confessed him as Lord and saviour, on the other. Here lies the inherent subversive nature of the Christian faith: the *admission* that upon being crucified Christ died, the *belief* that Christ rose from the dead and the fervent *hope* Christ will come again to usher in a new dispensation. This is the triad of beliefs in which is contained the seeds of Christianity’s relations to civil authorities. It was in this context that nascent Christian church was born – developing its identity, defining its mission, developing its theology and perfecting its rituals and structures. This was the context in which Jesus, upon being asked by Pharisees whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar or not, he advised them to ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’ (Matthew 22 15f), whose portrait and inscription was on the coin used for payment of taxes. In the same way he declared to the religious leaders of his day that ‘Sabbath was made for man and not man for Sabbath’. He displayed the same kind of conviction when, upon being asked to explain his teachings by the high priest, he defiantly advised the high priest to ‘ask those who heard me’.

Yet the same Jesus fearlessly called Herod a fox. Jesus’ engagement of Pilate as Pilate sought to establish whether Jesus was king or not is quite instructive. First he seemed to brush the question aside by fearlessly implying that Pilate might not be unable to think independently, retorting ‘is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?’ (John 18:54).

Later Jesus puts it to Pilate that ‘you are right I am king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for I came into the world ...’ (John 18:37 even though he had also said his kingdom was not of this world. When Pilate asserted his ‘power’ (from Caesar) either to crucify or free, Jesus disputes the source of Pilate’s ‘power’ declaring ‘you would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above’ (John 19:11). With these words, Jesus seems to dismiss both the ‘power’ of Pilate and the authority of Caesar deferring instead to the real power and real authority of God. Denuded of his ‘power’ both by Jesus and by the crowds who were determined to coerce him to do their will, Pilate, as a final resort, takes to a ‘what-I-have-written-I have-written’ stance - all in a pathetic and hollow attempt to salvage some semblance of ‘power’ and to mitigate the indignity of being stripped of power so completely and so publicly. This same insistence of Jesus on a higher form of allegiance, allegiance to God and not to ‘man’ was to be invoked by Jesus’ disciples and followers many times in the course of the first few centuries of Christianity, even in the face of persecution and death.

5. Church State Relations after Constantine

The conversion of Constantine and the resultant mainstreaming of Christianity were to ease conditions of profession of faith considerable. From then on Christians had to reorder their relations with the state – a benevolent and friendly state. Indeed the question of church and state only really emerges after Constantine and not before; prior to this, there was no ‘church’ to speak of (both in terms of size and in terms of lack of state recognition). In this sense the question of church and state relations might be at its thorniest when the state is benevolent and friendly rather than when the state is openly hostile. In this sense it may be instructive to remember that the reformation was as much a matter internal to the church as it concerned the redrafting and re-ordering of church-state relations.

But one must be quick to point out that ultimately, church and state relations is ultimately a matter of speaking about power, its understanding and its exercise as well as the social and economic arrangements between people. In these regards, the Deuteronomic and prophetic teachings of the Bible become relevant alongside the teachings and practice of Jesus and the early church. The topic invokes a discussion of how the church understands, power its structuring, its purpose and its exercise. For example, there is really no church and state relations to discuss when both church and state understand, structure, order and exercise power in essentially the same way. The advent of the Constantinian era does not erode the importance of Biblical teachings, if anything, these teachings are become an important resource as the church defines and redefines its own attitude to power both internally and externally. To return to the phraseology we used at the beginning of this essay, after Constantine the Church can no longer afford to ignore the ‘politics’ of its message, or assume the innocence of its own ‘political existence’ anymore than the church can afford to ignore the mission of the Constantinian state. After Constantine the state is no longer satisfied (if it ever was) with being given what belongs to it because it is now possible for the church to be drawn into the sphere of the state. After Constantine the church is no longer innocent, but it is implicated in the state even as the state is implicated in the church. This mutual implication is complex, as apparent as it is subtle, it is both overt and covert; both voluntary and involuntary, both normal and abnormal, both obvious and not so obvious. After Constantine there is formal and legalised mutual seduction between church and state. In this regard, the Reformation notion of spheres is a helpful hermeneutical key, but the actual determination of what aspect of what issue belongs to which sphere is not easy.

6. Evaluating Edinburgh 1910 (Commission Seven) for our Times

How the church will relate to the state will depend on how the church understand its calling as well as its (eschatological) vision for the ideal society.

i) The late David Bosch (1991) has been criticised by among others, Greg Curthbertson, in one of the early reviews of his book for overstating the influence of the enlightenment on mission. While I agree with some of the criticism in Curthbertson’s review, I do not think that (at least for Protestant missions) it is possible to overstate the influence of modernity. The long shadow of the enlightenment was cast over the Edinburgh conference, perhaps in more ways than many of the subsequent conferences. This does not mean that Protestant missions

were a carbon copy of enlightenment thinking. Rather it means that the enlightenment provided the major and the dominant framework in which the theory and practice of missions was developed. Whilst not a carbon copy of enlightenment thinking, Protestant thinking on mission – even thinking that was decidedly opposed to aspects of enlightenment thinking - was often either mirrored or modelled on enlightenment paradigms. The context we face is one of post-modernity – the backlash of modernity, disenchantment with modernity. This is a culture of mobility and virtuality – what George Ritzer has called the ‘McDonalized culture’. Its logic is one of standardization, efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. This is a culture which Emmanuel Katongole suggests is characterized by disposability – the throw away culture, feel-good culture and culture of playful nihilism. This is the culture which confronts us in Africa today.

ii) We have noted how the growing scientific belief of the earth as one planet among others was used, by the participants in the Edinburgh conference to argue for i) the uniqueness of earth as *that* one special place where God chose to send His Son with ii) the coherence and oneness of earth interpreted as a metaphor for a single world emptily and hungrily awaiting *one* salvation, *one* baptism; *one Lord* . Indeed its scientific oneness was transfigured into a necessary and imminent oneness in Christ which would come with missionaries doubling their efforts and governments assisting accordingly. It is in this belief that the missionary cause was sometimes appeared indistinguishable from the colonial project. What confronts us today is the notion of the world as a ‘global village’ – one of the most subversive expressions of our times - with instant links of communication and travel, cultures, peoples, sounds, tastes and smells from afar, available at the touch of a button. But how real is the global village to one and all? Is it a global village for goods, people or money? Is it a global village for all or is it for some? Is the global village available and amenable to mission? What is the difference between ‘globe’ and ‘earth’?

iii) Edinburgh 1910 participants, not only borrowed from enlightenment descriptions of the world and enlightenment ordering of the world’s peoples, cultures and religions, they adapted and, in some cases conservatively resisted, enlightenment interpretative frameworks in order to construct their theology of mission and vice versa¹. We now live at a time when the economic metaphor reigns supreme. Countries and peoples are defined by their placement on the economic scale – the time of the market, the emerging market, the established market and the self-regulating market. We speak

¹ Bernard Macgrane (1989) in his *Beyond Anthropology* suggests four general ways in which non-Europeans were classified. The earliest is the ‘theological paradigm’ in terms of which people and countries were either Christian or non-Christian. The second is the ‘enlightenment paradigm’ in terms of which epistemological categories of difference were increasingly used with the result that notions as ‘ignorance’, ‘error’, ‘untruth’ and ‘superstition’ were used to describe the other. The third is the ‘sociological paradigm’. In terms of this paradigm, non-Europeans were described in terms of ‘a vast haemorrhage in time’ so that a strict mapping is established between the ‘different stages of human development’ with the prehistorically fossilized ‘primitive’ at the tail end of developmental proceedings and the ‘civilised’ European at the top of the chain. The fourth paradigm is ‘cultural paradigm’ in terms of which the other is ‘fundamentally and merely, culturally different’. These are of course not to be seen as disconnected but overlapping understandings, used sometimes interchangeable, depending on the specific issue under discussion, especially in missionary circles of the early 20th century. Indeed, all four Mcgranian paradigms were heavily invoked in Edinburgh.

today of the developed, developing and underdeveloped world. How has missiology appropriated and dealt with the grammar? Is Christian mission an aspect of developmentalist and market paradigm or is it a challenge to this agenda or both? One of the remarkable things about both the notions of the world as globe and the world as market is how both seem to eschew and eclipse human beings. Neither the term 'globe' nor 'market' necessarily foreground people. It is one thing to criticise our forbearers for having depended heavily on the language and socio-analytical tools of their times, it is quite another when we have to consider our own captivity to the metaphors of our time. If we were to look do away with the economic grammar of our times; if we were to revise or do away with the notions of globe, market, development, what would we put in their place. If we were to discard the vision of a development as propounded by the IMF and the World Bank, what alternative vision of society would we put in its place and from what source would we draw the building blocks of such a vision. In a world which was scientifically defined as a unit, our missionary forbearers proceeded to argue that the world was not really 'one', until and unless it was evangelised. What then is the role of faith in Christ in the quest for economic development and control of the markets?

iv) One of the big suggestions of David Bosch in his *Transforming Mission* - the most controversial in my opinion - is the suggestion that one of the big moves we have to make in terms of our understanding of mission is the shift from **Mission is** to **Mission as** - his suggestion that mission has to be carried out in many modes. Bosch then makes a list of 'mission as' suggestions: liberation, justice, contextualization ... etc. . The real question is whether Bosch sees the transition from mission is to mission as a complete and single movement so the one replaces the other, one and for all. My sense is that 'mission as' is not a replacement of 'mission is' but an expression of it. Each generation therefore has the challenge both to define (i.e. mission is) and to contextualise (mission as) mission. Since Edinburgh 1910, we have moved from missions to mission, 'the mission of God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son' . Herein lies also our understanding of both the POWER of Christian MISSION as opposed to the power of our missions. While God is powerful the church may need to come to terms with the power of its powerlessness. We may need to engage in mission at the tactical rather than the strategic level – tactics being, as Michel De Certeau has taught us, the art of the weak. By and large, I want to suggest that we persist in subscribing to power models of mission, relying more on Matthew 28 than on John 3 even though the context we live in confounds our assumptions and methods.

v) The problem of spheres:

As compared with governments, missions have a more forward reaching view of human destiny, a more extensive sphere of operations, a more inward and spiritual motive of work, a more clearly defined sense of God's claim on the individual conscience. But they nevertheless recognise the Divine authority of the civil power, however constituted, as the power to which is committed whatever external coercive action may be necessary to vindicate righteousness. To restrain evil and promote good is the duty of government; and in this it is co-operant with the missionary (R-VII:2).

I remember an off-the-cuff remark of Stanley Hauerwas in one of his works where he says, the problem with the idea that we can give unto Caesar what is of Caesar is that Caesar will not be satisfied. Caesar wants it all. The flip side of the suggestion is also to recognize that Jesus wants it all too.

It is clear that our forbearers operated with the idea that, though there was much overlap, there was nevertheless a government sphere and a missions sphere. The problem is that there was not always a clear cut space of intersection and non-intersection. Indeed whenever the boundaries between church and state are too clearly defined and too easily recognised by both sides, it is a sign of danger. In South Africa, the problem of spheres was often invoked by Apartheid era politicians who cautioned against the mixing of politics and religion – so that the sphere of politics was meant to be totally detached from that of religions. Armed with the tool of distinct spheres our Edinburgh forbearers proceeded to map out some principles in terms of which church and state were to relate. The challenge we face in the globalizing world is that spheres are harder not merely to distinguish one from the other but to also to identify - for a variety of reasons. The walls surrounding most spheres are constantly being undermined and dissolved. No sooner are they set up that they are brought down. Think of the sphere of government as opposed to the sphere of the so-called private or corporate sector; the sphere of the private as opposed to the sphere of the public, the sphere of the personal as opposed to the sphere of the political. Have we perhaps reached a stage where, owing to the fluidity and porous nature of the spheres, we should consider either rethinking the whole scheme radically or abandoning it altogether? Think of the extent to which the nation-state has either ceased to have meaning and influence or ceased to exist. In this regard, the notion of government becomes elusive. Governments are an important site but perhaps not such centres of power as they once were. It also reveals the futility of limiting our focus to one government (or to government alone) when there is a network of other players benefiting from or influencing the government in question.

vi) It is remarkable that the Edinburgh 1910 managed to identify and speak out on some clear wrongs in relation to the action of governments: opium traffic, liquor traffic and enforced labour plus atrocities in the Belgian Congo. All three impinged on the income and profits of the major powers of the day. One of the most remarkable things about African wars and instabilities is the way in which some of them are able to rage on without seriously affecting the sale of platinum, diamonds and oil taking place in the same context. Similarly there are business arrangements between countries that affect and regulate sales of drugs, which arrangements do to address the crises faced by humanity today – the case of the AIDS drugs is an example. The traffic in women and girl children as well as the scourge of sex tourism is another example.

vii) Power relations in the world. The influence of the WTO, G7 and the USA (note how I have excluded the UN) has long been recognized as one of the main drivers of power and powerlessness, wealth and poverty, in the world today. We cannot discuss the question of mission and political power without confronting this reality. Indeed the real mega question for mission today is how we conceive of Christian Mission in the light of globalization as driven by WTO, G7 nations and the rampant USA – which also happens to be Christian.

vii) Would the 2010 Missionary Conference look different from its 1910 predecessor? In 1910 I was represented by Arthur Grandjean and Henri-Alexander Junod, Swiss Missionaries in the North of South African and the South of Mozambique². Would I be represented any better in 2010? This is the third decade in which we have listened to arguments indicating that there has been a shift in the gravity of Christianity from the North to the South. But what does this mean and why is it taking so long to sink in? One of the reasons why it has taken so long to sink in is that the South remains, by and large, an economically and politically powerless hemisphere. The swelling numbers of Christians in the South do not translate into power. Indeed, as Jesse Mugambi of Kenya asks rhetorically; ‘how come the most religious continent in the world is also the poorest’? The shift in gravity has not moved the WCC from Geneva to Accra, it will not move Wall Street to SOWETO, it has not moved the WARC from Geneva to Seoul in Korea. Perhaps we need a much more quantitative basis, a much more tactical basis, for creating a new vision for mission than numbers and gravities.

viii) While visiting the Netherlands (university of Kampen) last year, I ran into a debate about missiology and mission studies. The debate was on what to call mission studies and on the advisability of the term mission. The unspoken consensus in the room was that the word ‘mission’ was tainted and should either be abandoned or qualified. Agreement was that it should be abandoned and replaced by something to like: ‘Intercultural Study of Christianity’. This is missiology as cultural history and mission as cultural exchange. This is in fact a rather mild adjustment as there are many who would argue that it is not merely a debate about naming. It is a debate about whether missiology/mission studies is at all a legitimate and necessary academic discipline in our times. Where the debate has not reached this stage, it is probably only a matter of time before the suggestion of scrapping the entire discipline is made. Behind the argument lies the embarrassment with mission as part and parcel of the colonial project – and all the clever arguments by eminent missiologists and historians of Christianity have done little to shake this conviction off. Besides the embarrassment is the unspoken feeling that Europe/the North has ‘grown up’ and really has no more use for missiology and mission work. Certainly, Northern governments, the majority of whom are secular have long lost interest in mission or mission studies, or have they? Perhaps they might be interested in the intercultural studies approach to mission?

ix) An aspect to which we have hinted above regarding the Edinburgh conference is the extent to which it was comfortable with the practice of naming others in terms of Christian criteria and standards. The notion of the ‘non-Christian world’ may have seemed obvious and self-explanatory to them, but it has over the past 95 years become hugely problematic. It is for one thing a massive generalization. It also seeks confers on ‘the other’ a description whose intention is to evaluate and to prepare for eventual take-over. Admittedly the notion of civilisation was employed to balance out the notion of non-Christian, e.g. Japan and China were granted the status of being civilised though non-Christian. Yet the overarching frame under which they and all the rest fell was that of ‘non-Christian’ just as the world was seen to be either

² In that year the first African ministers – Jonas Maphophe, Calvin Maphophe and Samuel Malale were ordained as ministers – of the *Mission Suisse dans L’Afrique du Sud*.

‘Christian’ or ‘Non-Christian’. Ninety years later, we have learnt that it is fair and preferable to call people what they call themselves rather than describe them in terms of who we are. The insistence on naming others in our terms has many implications. It speaks against genuine exchange, stunts our capacity to listen and militates against genuine mission.

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