

Growth of Global Christianity  
Shape and Significance for Theology<sup>1</sup>  
[Draft]

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Wonsuk Ma, wma@ocms.ac.uk  
Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

Introduction

This study identifies three priority issues in Christian mission in the specific context of the contemporary shift of global Christianity. They are: 1) the expansion of global Christianity, 2) shaping of the understanding of Christian mission, and 3) preparation of mission players. They are closely interrelated to one another, and there are several ways to link them to each other. For example, taking the expansion or growth of Christianity as a missional goal, then the revisioning of mission will provide theoretical or theological foundation, while the mission-player part is viewed as a practical approach to actualise the theory and ultimate to fulfil the goal.

Each discussion begins with the current southward shift of global Christianity, making it a religion of the global South, for the second time in church history.<sup>2</sup> When necessary, time may be spent to take a close look at the shaping of the ‘received’ mission thinking, paradigm, and theology through the Christendom legacy. The discussion will eventually examine the future of global Christianity with its challenges and possibilities. Each section will end with a brief implication to an audience community, in this case, the Anglican family of global Christianity.

As a Korean Pentecostal, I come with a grave handicap in two major areas: Christendom and Anglicanism. First of all, Christendom as a western historical legacy has no direct implication to young Korean Christianity, although its pervasive influence is far more present than expected. It has been more influenced by North American Evangelical free or denominational church traditions than European state church framework.<sup>3</sup> Any state church system would have caused a political conflict with the Japanese colonisers in Korea.<sup>4</sup> In an indirect manner, Korean Pentecostalism may stand more in the ‘dissenting’ tradition.<sup>5</sup> In the Korean context, where Christianity is only (latest) one of several historic religions, the Anglican Church has been a perplexing or even obscure community to Christians in general. This is due to its small size and the Church’s similarities to Catholic faith. The latter general impression among Korean Christians is to be understood in the context where Catholicism and Protestantism have been viewed as almost separate religions (as in China).

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<sup>1</sup> This is an adaptation for a global Anglican audience of ‘A “Fuller” Vision of Mission and Theological Education in the New Context of Global Christianity’ (a presentation at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, Oct 2015). The original version is in the process of publication, thus, the present study should be used internally.

<sup>2</sup> Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 52-53. Henceforth *AOGC*.

<sup>3</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that one study identified the Anglican Church’s status as the state church had an adverse effect to the growth of Anglicanism in Korea. [Wales dissertation details.]

<sup>5</sup> Wonsuk Ma, ‘Megachurches in Asia and Dissenting Movement: The Case of Yoido Full Gospel Church’, in Jehu J. Hanciles (ed.), *The Twentieth Century: Traditions in a Global Context*, The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, vol. 4 (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

Therefore, any attempt to suggest any implications of this discussion to the Anglican friends is to be left to the able insiders, although I may still try.

In the discussion of global Christianity, trajectories and numbers presented by *Atlas of Global Christianity* will be used. In spite of debates around specific numbers contained in the book, I found this publication useful in identifying trends and movements. I speak as a member of the ‘southern’ and ‘newer’ church, and my understanding of global Christianity bears this perspective.

## 1. Growth of Global Christianity

### 1.1 In the Previous Century, and Sometime in the Early 1980s

The growth of Christianity in the twentieth century shows a significant change in its trajectory and in numbers. The steady growth of churches in the newer lands, particularly in Africa and Asia, is noteworthy. At the same time, the consistent weakening of churches in the northern Christian heartlands (or the ‘West’) has accelerated the southward shift of numerical centres of global Christianity.<sup>6</sup> This trend, according to Johnson and Ross in the map, began since the sixteenth century, but a strong momentum was built from the 1950s.<sup>7</sup>



The net numerical increase of worldwide Christianity by the twentieth century is staggering. Africa witnessed an unprecedented 42.3-fold growth of Christians between 1910 (11.7 million) and 2010 (494.7 million). This is particularly significant as at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference (1910), the prospect of Christian mission in the continent coloured rather not so bright. Furthermore, the Christian missionary gain was recorded in places where Islam was active before the arrival of Christian missionaries. Kenya, Tanzania, and Nigeria are but a few cases. The important role played by indigenous as well as Charismatic forms of churches must be acknowledged. On the other hand, Asia’s record is not as glittering as Africa’s, from 25.1 million to 352.2 million (still a 14-fold growth!);<sup>8</sup> nonetheless, impressive in other ways. As the trajectory of the centre of Christian gravity indicates, the existing southward move has been pulled eastward, resulting from the impressive growth of churches. A few can be named: the rise of the Chinese church from the 1980s after the Cultural Revolution, revivals and growth of churches in Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Nepal and others. This move has been steadily sustained until now, and is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. In the second half of the twentieth century (from 1950 to 2010), Asian Christianity grew from 43.4 million to 352.2 million.<sup>9</sup>

The 1980s was another key period in the development of global Christianity: the balance of global Christianity tipped over towards the south from 1981, according to *AOGC* (as seen in the graph).<sup>10</sup> Today, more than three Christians out of five live in one of the three southern continents (or ‘global

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Johnstone gives us a stunning visual presentation of continental changes of Christian demography between 1900 and 2015. The contrast between the growing continents and declining ones is striking. Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities* (Colorado Springs: Global Mapping International, 2011), 95.

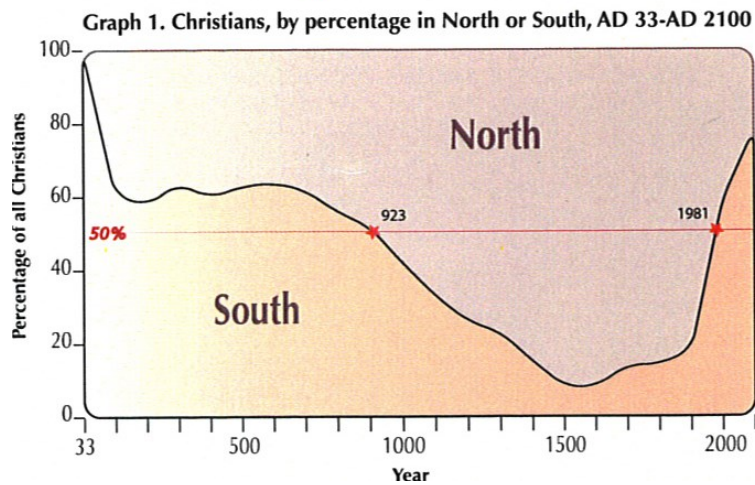
<sup>7</sup> Todd M. Johnson and Sun Young Chung, ‘Christianity’s Centre of Gravity, AD 33-2100’, in *AOGC*, 50-51.

<sup>8</sup> *AOGC*, 57.

<sup>9</sup> *AOGC*, 59.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson and Chung, ‘Christianity’s Centre of Gravity, AD 33-2100’, 50-51.

South’). This ‘southern’ nature of global Christianity has come for the second time in church history, according to the diagram prepared by T. Johnson. The growth of ‘southern’ Christianity is attributed to various factors, but perhaps the most important will be the concerted missionary efforts of the western churches. The Anglican Church played no small part in this great rise of Christian

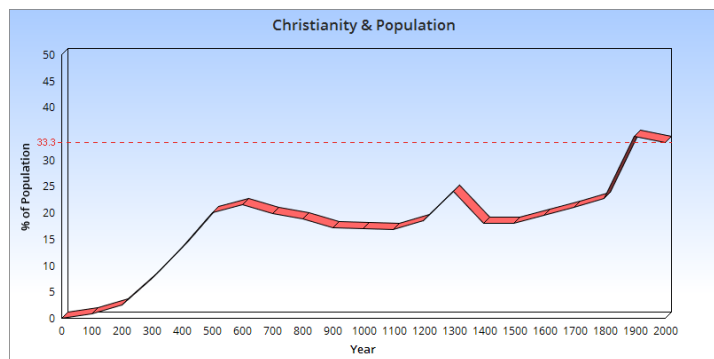


communities, particularly in Africa and some parts of Asia. One of the biggest contributions of the Christendom development (including that of mini-christendoms in Europe) is the intentional operation of mission. Often, therefore, missionaries were the well trained with deep commitment. Stories of heroic and sacrificial missionary work remain as treasures of today’s church. Many ‘new’ churches are now sending missionaries profoundly inspired by western missionary legacies.<sup>11</sup> However, it also comes

with serious unintended shadows, as we will see later.

## 1.2 ‘1/3’ Challenge and Possibility Ahead

Now the same reality may be examined from a very different perspective. When we take the present proportion of Christians in the world population, then global Christianity receded in the last hundred years. At the time around the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, Christianity recorded the highest watermark throughout its entire history: 34.8% of the world population! Indeed, this was the very first, but brief, time in church history, when Christianity crossed the 1/3 line of the world population. Optimism that evangelisation of the world was within reach in their own generation was not a wishful prayer, but realistic possibility. Except eastern part of Asia, much of the world was either already Christian or under Christian (colonial) rules. The development of Christian mission since the Edinburgh Conference has been complex. And yet, one thing is sure: more efforts, researches, missionaries, funds, institutions, mission societies/boards/agencies were made for mission in the twentieth century than in all the previous centuries. The net result is the unprecedented growth as we observed above. And yet, world Christianity slid below the 1/3 line (or 33.2% in 2010). This race against the growth of population and other religions has proved to be extremely challenging.



Before going any further, I would like to ask a two-millennium old question: Can global Christianity grow beyond the 1/3 line of the world population, for the first time (in a true sense), in ‘our generation’? What signs point to this possibility? What role are we called to play to ‘ride’ this wave of possibility? To tackle the first question: Let’s go back to the growth in the southern continents (or in the twentieth century. In 1910, slightly more than 18% of world Christians lived in the global South,

<sup>11</sup> In Korea, for example, the missionary cemetery in Yanghwajin, Seoul, has now acquired a pilgrimage status for the Korean church, especially among missionaries and mission historians. See Taekbu Jeon, *Stories of Yanghwajin Missionaries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [in Korean] (Seoul: Hongsung, 2005).

which had close to 70% of the then world's population. In 2010, more than 60% of world's Christians were found in these continents, whose population grew to 84% of the world's. Although the decline of Christianity in the northern continents has seriously contributed to the rate of the shift, the very fact that Christianity has significantly grown in the places with higher numbers of people give us hope for the future. The south and southeast-ward move of the centres of global Christianity reflects the sustained and significant growth has been recorded both in Africa and Asia. In fact, several predictions forecast that world Christianity will reach 33.8% of the population by 2025, way above the 1/3 line.<sup>12</sup>

In particular, Asia holds the most important key to this global prospect. Its population is more than 60% of the world's total, and yet, its rate of evangelism is only 8.5%, about a quarter of the world's average. Once the main 'culprit' for the 'under 1/3' state of Christianity, now Asia can lead the world church towards this historic '1/3' breakthrough and keep it beyond the line. China and India, the two 'billion' club-nations, are recording impressive growth of Christianity, while similar growth have been recorded in other countries in the continent. Since the 1980s, equally importantly, some of these churches have emerged as prominent missionary powers. The Korean and Philippine churches, the only two Asian nations with Christians at around or above the world's average (33.2%), are good examples. Koreans have more or less followed the established pattern of mission, and close to 60% of its mission forces work in Asia.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, Filipinos, perhaps through the large number of immigrant workers, have shown creative engagements which suggest new ways of mission.

The other powerhouse for this global prospect is Evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity. A good portion of the growth of Christianity in the last century, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, was among Evangelical and particularly Pentecostal varieties.<sup>14</sup> Some of them are African Independent Churches, Chinese Church, and 'new Evangelicals' in Latin America. Much of the exponential growth in Africa, for example, is attributed to the emergence of non-missionary indigenous Spirit churches. It is projected that by 2050, one-third of Christians and one-tenth of the world population will be composed of various Pentecostal families.<sup>15</sup> In Asia, 51% of Christians are Spirit-Christians. Their role is important in the expansion of Christianity for two reasons. First, they tend to have dynamic faith in God's role in life, and this makes them more likely to retain Christian faith in hostile circumstances, and ready and zealous (and sometimes, more effective) soul-winners. Particularly significant are their belief in, as well as experiences of, healing, miracles, exorcism, and the like, which has a great appeal in the global South, where one's religion is expected to include such experiences (while traditional Christianity fails to deliver them). Second, their churches, in addition to the well-known mega-church movement, tend to proliferate and reach small communities. For example, in Burkina Faso, the Assemblies of God denomination has 1.1 million members in 7,100 congregations, while the Catholic Church has 1.9 million members in 2,420 churches.<sup>16</sup> The average number of people for each church or congregation is 155 for the Assemblies of God and 785 for the Catholic Church. This shows how the Pentecostal church has 'saturated' across the nation, reaching out to small villages as well as urban centres.

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<sup>12</sup> For example, Todd M. Johnson, 'Counting Pentecostals Worldwide', *Pneuma* 36:2 (2014), 265-88.

<sup>13</sup> As of 2014, 57.7% of Korean missionaries work in Asia. For a more detailed analysis, see Timothy K. Park, 'The Missionary Movement of the Korean Church: A Model for Non-western Mission', in Wonsuk Ma and Kyo Seong Ahn (eds.), *Korean Church, God's Mission, Global Christianity*, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series 26 (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2015), 24-26.

<sup>14</sup> See the recent report in *The Economist* typifies this growth dynamic of Pentecostalism. 'Global Pentecostalism: Ecstasy and Exodus, Charismatic Christianity thrives among people on the move', *The Economist*, 23 January, 2016 (<http://www.economist.com/node/21688880/print>), accessed on 7 Feb, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends, and Possibilities* (Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Media, 2015), 125. Also Johnson, 'Counting Pentecostals' predicts that Pentecostal-type believers will be 9.8% of the world's population.

<sup>16</sup> Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2010), 177-180.

In summary, we can raise several further questions. Is the numerical growth of Christianity really important? Don't we laugh at a Christianity that is 'mile long but inch deep'? These questions can receive different reactions depending on who is answering. If it is a typical western European Christian leader, his or her missionary priority may be 'witnessing' than direct 'evangelism'. The current debate as to how the church should bear witness to the influx of refugees many of whom are from other religions is a case in point. If a church leader in northern Nigeria or Pakistan answers the question, the growth of Christianity may be a matter of survival of Christian religion in the given context. I personally feel strongly that Christianity cannot survive without its believers or communities. The future of Christian faith critically requires healthy and missionary local communities and believers. No one wishes that African and Asian churches will follow the path which the western church has treaded. Then what do we do about the 'mile and inch' argument? It is a serious and contentious challenge. And yet, at this point, I still like to argue that beginning with enough believers (or 'mile long') ensures the possibility of healthy theology (or 'mile deep'). It cannot begin with a mile deep theology and only an inch-deep Christian population. Then is '1/3' an arbitrary mark for discussion? It may be. Nonetheless, it may be a useful number for Christianity to be a available witness in a pierce missionary competition with Islam. It is now predicted that Islam will outgrow Christianity by 2050, while global Christianity is expected to growth beyond the historic 1/3 mark of the world population. In coming decades and centuries will witness more clashes between these two missionary religions for the remaining and shrinking religious pies. It is also important to remind us that it's not just two of us around in the world. Other religions would not just sit and allow their sizes to shrink.

Then what does this say to the worldwide Anglican Communion? This is a part I feel extremely inadequate to undertake. But here are a few points for consideration. First, it is important to recognise, celebrate, and learn from, the success of Anglican mission, especially in Africa and Asia. The church played a critical role to make the nineteenth century a Great Century of Christian mission, and this continued through the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> Although often polarised between the missionary churches and indigenous ones, the role of missionaries in African revivals and the birth and development of indigenous or independent forms of churches was not a small feat. Anglican mission also placed as its priority the equipping local and national church leaders and relinquishing church leadership to them. Second, as observed above, the evangelical and charismatic segments recorded a substantial growth in its mission fields. And this growth trend with dynamism is also noted at 'home', where Christianity in general and the Anglican church in particular has constantly been losing its members. For the sake of global Christian expansion, the Evangelical and Charismatic segments should continue its 'life-giving' role to church life and its mission. They should be able to freely set evangelism and church planting as their mission priority place without any pressure from other parts of the church. Large and intra-parish urban congregations have a unique role to play in They should also watch not to fall into several nasty mega-church pitfalls. Third, as a communion, it is essential for the Anglican Church to maintain its extremely wide and inclusive ecclesiastical space, which allows variety of theological strands to exist within the church. And this vision for diversity should also be encouraged in its provinces. It may be my biased observation, but at the Cape Town gathering of the Lausanne Movement, a large number of Anglican delegates were present from Africa and the United Kingdom, but not many, if any, Episcopalian delegates from the United States or Korean Anglicans.

## 2. 'Licence' to Do Mission?

We live in a uniquely exciting time for Christian mission. And the prospect of a continuing growth of Christianity is 'green'. However, this kind optimism is not a new story: we had it one hundred years ago in Edinburgh! 'Evangelisation of the world in [their] generation' was believed achievable,

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<sup>17</sup> Scott W. Sunquist, *The Unexpected Christian Century: The Reversal and Transformation of Global Christianity, 1900-2000* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), ch. 2 has a useful study of Christianity in the twentieth century, making it a 'Christian century' in several unexpected and surprising ways.

feasible, and likely. Besides the two devastating world wars, what turned this prospect upside down? What will keep us from repeating the same historical experience?

## 2.1 'Mission' Then

In the 1960s, when the church growth movement was birthed, McGavran's vision for an institution was for 'experienced missionaries...[to] study the growth and non-growth of the churches in which they worked'.<sup>18</sup> From this short statement, several elements are detected as components of mission assumptions prevailing among western (and also global) Christians. First, the subject of mission was western church and its missionaries. Second, in its 1960s context, the object of mission is 'unevangelised' or 'under-evangelised' in Asia and Africa (and also Latin America). Third, accordingly, mission takes place 'out there' as a popular language in the mission world was 'foreign' mission, which later 'world' mission. Fourth, mission therefore will require 'going' to a place other than his or her own. This orientation is perfectly understandable from the point of a Christian nation. At the end, once we put all these together, a mission paradigm emerges. A small number of specially committed and trained people from the West are sent to carry out mission in the 'Rest' of the world. We call them 'missionaries'. There is no doubt that the context birth a very intentional mission thinking and approaches.

These characteristics of mission seem to appear quite 'natural' and 'normal', even 'normative', both to the mission subjects and objects. Is this really the case? In order for us to explore this, we will need to dig deep to trace the shaping of mission thinking in the West. It is commonly agreed that an intentional missionary era began in the sixteenth century by the appearance of the Jesuit order as part of the Counter Reformation process, and its members received special status and support, along with specific training and commissioning. In fact, the words 'mission' and 'missionary' as we use today also began in this new era. This radical move was motivated by, among other things, the discovery of new lands, where people needed to be evangelized. Jesuit missionary explorations were truly groundbreaking in South America and in East Asia, for example. This creation continued into the era of Protestant mission after Christendom was broken into smaller religious states, primarily in Europe. Special missionary societies undertook the missionary mandate of European Christians and churches, from the eighteenth century in their colonial territories.

In the second half of the second Christian millennium, this development of a missionary paradigm was a natural creation in the social contexts. Some of them: 1) The world was divided between Christian and 'heathen'.<sup>19</sup> The unevangelised were found far 'out there', as 'home' was understood to be fully evangelised. In fact, it's a Christian rule (Christendom)! 2) Because the mission 'fields' are radically different in weather, culture, language, people, and in the level of civilization, a small group of chosen people were trained, sent out, and supported under special arrangements. 3) As a result, the church at 'home' has been kept away from mission. The most they were to do was to support and pray for those who were 'doing mission'. This context also affected theological education and mission was not part of a regular theological curriculum.<sup>20</sup> Subsequently, mission has become an elitist movement, left to the hands of experts.

This unique shaping of the understanding of mission had serious consequences.<sup>21</sup> Particularly, this elitisation of mission dictated how mission was carried out and by whom. At the end, unfortunately,

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<sup>18</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *SWM/SIS at Forty: A Participant Observer's View of Our History* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 13.

<sup>19</sup> This is the first characterization of Christendom according to Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 83.

<sup>20</sup> For more discussion, see Wonsuk Ma, "'Life" in Theological Education and Missional Formation: A Reflection for a New Christian Era', *Transformation* 33:1 (2016), 1-15.

<sup>21</sup> For more discussion, see Wonsuk Ma, "'Life" in in Theological Education and Missional Formation: A Reflection for a New Christian Era', *Transformation* 33:1 (Jan, 2016), 1-15. Also helpful is a Catholic reflection by Stephen Bevans, 'Theological Education and Missionary Formation', in Steve Bevans, et al. (eds.), *Reflecting on and Equipping for Christian Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2015), 94-96.

the church has theologically become deprived of the call to mission. The church today has inherited this distorted picture of mission, not only in the West, but also in the whole world.

## 2.2 Democratisation of Mission: The Present and Future Agenda

The revision of Christian mission in our time can be summarized as ‘democratisation’ or even ‘liberation’ of mission. ‘Democratisation’ is a theological concept referring to a process through which a privileged status or call, initially granted to a small group of select people, is eventually expanded to include the whole community of God’s people. For the democratisation of mission as an urgent agenda for revisioning mission, three resources can be identified: 1) the Christendom process which resulted in an elitist and narrow conception and practice of mission; 2) contemporary socio-cultural contexts where mission is practiced; and 3) the ideal of mission as taught and exemplified by Jesus, and a glimpse of it in the records of the early church. There may be other resources, but these three will help the church to begin the journey. Then there are at least four areas where mission democratisation will have to be considered in order for Christianity to be relevant and effective in the new era and world.

The first is the democratisation of missionary-sending (subject) and missionary-receiving (object) places. Until the middle of the twentieth century, the movement of Christian mission was more or less unidirectional: from the West to the ‘Rest’. This historical phenomenon was shaped by the reality that the West was Christian and the rest ‘heathen’ either by reality or perception. This was further reinforced by the removal of ‘world’ from theology and church life during the Christendom framework. As its territories were under Christian dominion, thus, the ‘world’ had been successfully brought under the kingship of Christ. In this setting, the mission objects/targets were found either in the fringes of the empire or faraway lands, and mission model was the recreation of Christendom societies by introducing Christian religion, civilisation, and commerce.

Then we began to hear a new popular expression especially among the Lausanne circles: ‘mission from everywhere to everywhere’. This may have been an outcome of a serious theological reflection on mission, but the rethinking of the ‘West-Rest’ binary was also forced by the steady demographical changes in global Christianity. By the 1980s, the balance of global Christianity was tipping towards the South. This shift had two sides: growth in the South, but decline in the North. The West was no longer ‘Christian’ nations, with new generations growing up without Christian influence. The ‘world’ is now at the doorstep of the church, and soon it will be surrounded and pressured by its forces. This has certainly challenged the notion of mission that’s ‘out there’. Now, Jesus’ sending out of his disciples to the ‘world’ (John 17:18) can be ours in a true sense, as finally the world has been recovered in our life and theology. The rise of new missionary-sending churches from the global South has also had an impact on this change of thinking. For example, the South Korean church began to send its missionaries en masse from the late 1970s, and soon it became the second largest missionary sending church among Protestants. Before the turn of the century, missionaries from the non-western churches outnumbered those from the traditional western churches. The rise of mission consciousness among Christian migrants in the North and throughout the world further contributed to the erosion of the old two-tier divide of the world.<sup>22</sup> Theological minds have been challenging the church to bring back the world to its mission thinking and practice by utilising the theological resources mentioned above.

The second area of mission democratisation is in the domains of mission. Evangelism as mission was a universal understanding as observed in the 1910 Edinburgh Conference theme: ‘Evangelisation of the World in Our Generation’. However, in subsequent decades, mainline Protestant missiology was

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<sup>22</sup> An in-depth study of African Pentecostal/Charismatic immigrants to Germany shows a strong missionary consciousness. See Claudia Währisch-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe: Bringing Back the Gospel* (Frankfurt am Main: E.J. Brill, 2009), esp., 254-62. Cf. a critical and reserved view by Paul Freston, ‘Reverse Mission: A Discourse in Search of Reality?’, *PentecoStudies* 9:2 (2010), 103-74.

shaped first by the International Missionary Council and then by the World Council of Churches. Their close attention to social contexts and distancing from the old mission paradigm resulted in a radical missiology, such as liberation theology, which betrayed, to Evangelical eyes, the Edinburgh commitment to evangelism. By the middle of the twentieth century, mission thinking was clearly divided between evangelical and conciliar missiologies, leaving almost no middle ground. Interestingly, this extreme dichotomy roughly corresponds with the Cold War period. The Lausanne Congress in 1974 visibly demonstrated this divide, as it set out the evangelical mission agenda.

However, in that very meeting, a small but important voice was also heard representing churches in the global South, later known as 'radical evangelicals'. Based on both the reading of the Gospel in their own social contexts and taking seriously their contexts in the global South, Christian mission, they argued, must take the daily struggles of ordinary people as a mission agenda as being as valid as evangelism. To distinguish themselves from conciliar missiology, they affirmed their commitment to the authority and full message of the Bible. Thus, the steady rise of new missionary churches from the South and their engagement with challenging social contexts has challenged Evangelicals to think and act on mission wholistically. It is important to remember that the 'new' missionary churches do not have to cross borders to find the 'world' to evangelize: they *are* already in the world, surrounded by religions, corrupt political systems, poverty, exploitation, and many signs of the world which are against the Kingdom of God. The organization of the International Fellowship of Mission Theologians in the Two-Thirds World (INFEMIT) in 1987, and the opening of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies in 1983 provided a strategic avenue for 'radical evangelicals' to network, train, and research.<sup>23</sup> By the time the Lausanne Movement had its Cape Town meeting in 2010, the wholistic nature of life, the gospel, and Christian mission was taken as a given. What a change in less than four decades!

The third area of mission democratisation is in mission players and workers. Until recently in the West, it was largely either missionary orders (of the Catholic Church) or interdenominational mission societies and boards (of Protestant churches) that carried out missionary programs. Then denominations soon began to establish their mission programs. Parallel to these church-based missionary bodies, specialized mission agencies emerged at a fast rate, further encouraging local churches and believers in mission participation. American Christianity, free from any burden of a state-church alliance, was able to bring Christian mission one important step away from the Christendom paradigm, thus, bringing the church one large step forward towards the democratisation of mission. However, we still face a challenging question: how can the 'whole church'--both North and the South--fully participate in mission?

For the moment, I would like to focus on the missionary call for the individual Christian. If every believer is called by God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and sent to the world by the Son for God's mission, what should mission be like? We have come to agree that 'missionary' is one of the most problematic words in today's mission thinking. In addition to the historic perception of 'power', especially in the context of colonial history, it has an elitist notion that mission is a call applied only to a few specialists. In order to shape 'mission for the rest of us', it will require, first of all, to add the everyday 'world' to the 'mission field', which has been understood until now, as the faraway 'ends of the earth'. This then will allow believers to participate in mission through their daily work, making their workplaces a mission field. Professions then become valuable mission tools. This will further provide a firm ground for every believer to be a missionary. The net outcome of this will be the wholistic view of life: Christian mission brings God's rulership over both 'life before death' and 'life after death'.<sup>24</sup> Through this process, the believer's life becomes a living testimony to the saving grace of God in addition to words and works. This will also contribute to a balanced theology of world:

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<sup>23</sup> Al Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne: Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-Local Perspective* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Julie C. and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010), pp. 264-65.



presently under the enemy's domain but yearning for the day of redemption. After all, God so loved the world!

Now, it's time for their implications. Fortunately we have one consensus: mission cannot go on as 'business as usual'. It requires a serious re-envisioning at this opportune time. The Anglican Church has shown great resilience in negotiating rough waters and maintained its global unity with much diversity. Church hierarchy and its tradition for sure helped to sustain this togetherness. Its wide 'space' for diversity has earned much respect both within and without. The wholistic nature of mission has been part of the Anglican mission tradition. William Wilberforce, a lay politician who campaigned for abolition, established the Church Mission(ary) Society, the Evangelical mission community of the church. This Society was also the largest in the delegation to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, which sharply focused itself on the evangelisation of the world. Its efforts to recover the 'world' in Christian life and mission are impressive. At the same time, its sophisticated hierarchy gives out a strong impression of clericalism. In some cultures, such a structure will create a large social distance between clergy and people in the pews. Many terms like 'bishop' and 'palace', as well as symbols, do not help the abolition of the clergy-laity divide.

As a worldwide communion, the Anglican Church is in a positive position to bring the South and the North to the same table, and undertake a corporate process of revision of mission. Anglicans in the North can critically reassess its Christendom formation and legacy and disavow its ills, while identifying what should be preserved and learned. This deconstruction of the 'received' mission paradigm will be an important learning process for the Southern churches. When it comes to the reconstruction of Christian mission, its theology, assumptions and practices, the North and the South should come together to formulate mission thinking and practice, which will also empower 'poor' churches. The global communion of the church is an important asset for this important task.

### 3. Equipping and Nurturing Mission Players

The expansion of Christianity has been set as a priority goal of mission, especially with the possibility that in the near future, global Christianity may break through the 1/3 of the world's population.<sup>25</sup> With this unprecedented opportunity and possibility, the focus is how to prepare the majority churches in the global South for the task. Two immediate challenges are faced by these churches. First, they have not had much history of, or experience in, mission. In fact, they have been, and some still are, receiving mission gifts from elsewhere (traditionally from the West), even if many churches are richer in human and spiritual resources than the benefactors. Second, the majority of them do not have sufficient financial resources to undertake a missionary enterprise. For this, we need to either wait for these churches to get richer, or alternative approaches are developed for and taught to them. Otherwise, mission is likely to remain outside of their life. This section ponders the question: Then how can the growing churches in the South, as well as the waning churches in the North, be prepared, equipped and empowered for mission? My discussion will explore two major missionary paradigms found throughout church history.

#### 3.1 Mission Approach, Then

Now when it comes to the missionary paradigm, we have already discussed some of the issues. In this discussion, I am using the concept of 'power' as an important element characterizing mission approaches. Perhaps without any intention, the Christendom shaping of Christian mission resulted in a definite mission paradigm: mission with power. Before going any further, I would like to make two comments on power. First, power produces effects not only by the wielding of it by the subject, but

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<sup>25</sup> Even a conservative Pew report predicts that the Christian growth will roughly correspond to the rate of the population growth: Pew Research Center, 'The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050' (April 2, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>), checked on Sept 1, 2015.

also by the perception of the object. In a mission setting, a western missionary, even if extremely careful not to exhibit any behaviour or attitude of power, can still be viewed as having power, or coming from a privileged position or status. Therefore, this discussion is not to undermine the sacrificial and genuine dedication of most western missionaries, but to highlight the grim reality of perception. Second, as our attention is now on the non-western or majority churches in the global South, the perspective of this particular discussion is of the majority and southern churches.

The perception of mission with power has been shaped in several areas. The first is the political superiority of traditionally missionary-sending nations. Since the sixteenth century, this political power with corresponding military might was permanently etched in the minds of the global South through colonial experiences. Christianity was, thus, perceived by nationals as the religion of the powerful. As a consequence, embracing Christianity was also viewed as a path to power, though this generalisation may not apply to East Asia where the colonial power was not Christian. The net result, to the eyes of the South, is that mission is a privilege limited only to the politically powerful nations. The second one is economic power. Although the colonial powers exploited resources, their advanced societies were undergirded and supported by superior economic power. This point is important for later discussion. The third is the power of civilisation, often expressed in governance, education, law, human rights, arts, and medical advancements. Although the South boasted several rich and ancient civilisations, in the modern era, it was the Euro-American states that became a benchmark of civilisation. The fourth and the net 'power' is that of 'superior race'. It was no one's making, but the historical reality was that of white people preaching the Christian gospel to the coloured. Under this general perception, to the majority eyes, mission was a privileged call for the powerful, and power is unfortunately perceived as a prerequisite for mission. I know this is an unjustifiable overgeneralisation. Within western Christianity, there were many marginalised segments which were persecuted by the dominant form of Christianity. But the general perception from outside still stands. How do we know this? Ask a thriving church in Asia or Africa in a Christian majority nation if their church is doing mission. Most likely the answer will be 'No, because we do not have money'.

### 3.2 Mission with Weakness: Possible?

Going back to the question at hand: Can we develop a mission paradigm which the 'new' churches in the South can embrace, with its political, religious, cultural and economic challenges? If mission is perceived to be a work of the powerful, or worse yet, power as the prerequisite for mission, the logical alternative is the other end of the continuum: a paradigm of mission with weakness or from a position of weakness. Then where can you look for models of mission with or in weakness? I suggest at least three places for our exploration: 1) The life of Jesus and his early church as recorded in the Bible; 2) Missionary models in the first Christian millennium; and 3) Contemporary cases that point to the paradigm of weakness.

My reading of the Gospels is strikingly counter-Christendom. Jesus' incarnation is often characterised as a process of kenosis, and Paul admonishes early Christians to imitate his life (Phil 2:5-8):

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross (NRSV).

It is not through miracles and demonstration of divine power (as clearly seen, for example, in his temptation), but through dying on the cross, he fulfilled his call. His voluntary assumption of weakness is the way of mission, and we are called to follow his way.

The early church, to begin with, was a persecuted community. They were, both Jews and Greek-speaking, political, social, and religious underdogs or even *personae non gratae*. For Paul, the only thing he can boast is the foolishness of the cross. In the short life history of the Jerusalem Church,

there may have been a notion of ‘professionalism of mission’, that is, the apostles and the deacons were called to preach. When persecution scattered the believers, unknown believers were responsible for the establishment of the church in Antioch as they preached the risen Lord everywhere they went (Acts 11:19-21). The minority circumstance, hardship, and persecution left them with only one option: mission with, or in the position of, weakness. Although no church is perfect, weakness is definitely not a handicap but a favourite means that God uses for his mission.

In the first millennium of Christian development, one of the best mission forces was Syriac or Persian Christians who were credited for reaching India and China. They were subjected to state persecution and later to Islamic oppression. Even after the Roman oppression of Christians ceased from the fourth century and the religion eventually attained a privileged position of power, these Christians continued their marginalised life due to their following of Nestorian teachings. Their mode of mission was their embedded life in new places. Although dramatic, the story of Frumentius, the first Ethiopian bishop, is another illustration of missionary life of Syriac Christians. Rescued and then enslaved in Ethiopia, when he was eventually freed, deciding not to return home, he converted Ethiopia to Christianity.

In our day, it is argued that the total Muslims converting to Christianity through Filipino maids in the Middle East outnumbers the total converts through the efforts of missionaries.<sup>26</sup> If this is true, then why? To begin with, these migrant women work away from their families and sometimes leaving children behind in order to earn enough money to support their families. They are neither recognised as missionaries, nor trained or commissioned to these Islamic nations. Perhaps many struggle to live (and work) each day, let alone, continuing a conscientious Christian life or fulfilling their missionary call. It will have to be their life of serving others that is responsible for Christian witness. It is mission with, and in the position of, weakness.

These are only a few examples of mission from weakness in several time periods. This discussion appears more anecdotal than a substantiated argument, but the Bible clearly presents this model of mission. Consequently, we stand at the crossroads of two major mission paradigms: mission with power and mission with weakness. Both paradigms were shaped by the locus of the church in society, and both are valid approaches to mission. The paradigm of weakness is a paradigm which the church today has to recover, in addition to the paradigm with strength and resources. Then global mission circles are called to diligently collect cases of how these paradigms are tried and work in actual settings. Perhaps both paradigms may merge into workable and healthy models of mission in practice.

What would be the contribution of the Anglican families towards this effort? Again, I suffer the shortage of ideas. Western Anglican or Episcopal churches can bring a serious reflection on their mission histories, sacrificial life and work of selected mission workers may epitomise the paradigm of mission in and from the position of weakness. At the same time, these churches can establish ‘good practices’ in the stewardship of power, which is an important contribution. From the majority world, the Anglican network may diligently collect creative mission stories based on weakness. Many socio-economic settings have placed Christians in a disadvantaged position, and their mission stories would be an important resource for a new missiology. The reflective process may bring the global Anglican family to undertake the task together.

I know only of Korean settings, and here is a small contribution. The established Anglican Church in South Korea maintains a high church tradition with a clear hierarchical structure and polity. I am sure this fits well in the hierarchical social system of the nation. During the decades of struggle for democracy under the military dictatorship in the 1970s and 80s, the church was in the forefront to advocate human and workers’ rights. To the general public, however, the church remains enigmatic as a spiritual community. Jesus Abbey, on the other hand, is another influential ministry with far

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<sup>26</sup> It was first pointed out by Melba Maggay at International Symposium on Asian Mission, although her published chapter records only the significant presence of Filipino Christians in the Arab Peninsula: Melba Padilla Maggay, ‘Early Protestant Missionary Efforts in the Philippines: Some Intercultural Issues’, in Wonsuk Ma and Julie Ma (eds.), *Asian Church and God’s Mission* (Manila: OMF Lit., 2003), p. 39.

reaching impact to Korea, both Christians and non-Christians. Established by American Episcopal priest Reuben Archer Torrey III in a remote mountain, his life and teaching drew thousands of young adults to learn spirituality and lifestyle of a simple farmer's life. With their life transformed, they serve in wide sectors of society and mission. Little known of its Anglican roots, Torrey made a powerful impact to Korean Christianity. For example, he was a favoured spiritual teacher for Yoido Full Gospel Church, the largest congregation in the world. If the former represents mission *for* the weak, the latter does mission *from* the weakness, and both deserve our close attention.

#### 4. Going Forward...

The opportunity open before us is unique, rare, and unprecedented. Three aspects of the new era of mission have been discussed, many more can be added. The shift of global Christianity is not just a redistribution of numbers between the north and the south: it is a new opening of opportunities, understandings and challenges.

Only one important mission priority is picked up: continuing growth of Christianity in the age of missionary competition. A modest proposal is made for a revision of mission assumptions and practices. I am sure there are several other important areas to explore to make the mission agenda fulfilled. At the same time, several other mission priorities can be explored in a similar manner. For each discussion, historians, theologians, anthropologists, sociologists, and most importantly mission practitioners can make important contributions towards the revisioning of mission.

This process will definitely require a north-south collaboration: in experience, input, and reflections. The North has a rich experience of mission engagement and various resources in human, knowledge, institution, and finance. With its long history of Christianity and mission, only the North can provide a self-analysis and discernment of the 'received' mission thinking and practices which they created. It can especially help identify the pervasive and concealed influences of Christendom legacy, both positive and not-so positive. The South can take its 'weakness' as a critical mission gift and theologically and practically explore what it means to be empowered by the Holy Spirit in such contexts. In a practical term, the target will be for a small congregation in a struggling situation to rise as a viable mission community, no longer excusing the lack of financial resources for not doing mission. We all live with an unprecedented time in several crucial ways. Our call is to be good stewards of this opportunity. The Anglican Communion as a worldwide church family has much to contribute to this historic mission journey.