

# Introduction

THE LAST TWO TO three decades have seen a renaissance in the field of missiology, the discipline that researches and studies the field of Christian mission, its history, development, methods, and theology. If, fifty years ago, pundits were thinking that the forces of secularization would not only stifle religion in general, not to mention the Christian religion particularly, but also gradually strangle the impulses of religious mission, the explosion of religion since that time has precipitated a frantic search for a new paradigm for researching and understanding Christian expansion and its concomitant advancement activities. David Bosch's magisterial *Transforming Mission* became a classic almost overnight after its publication in 1991,<sup>1</sup> both because it captured the missional enterprise undergirding Christianity's vitality as a world religion and because it provide articulation for its theological sub-structure—the more specific tasks of *theology of mission*—that were in need of rethinking given the global dynamics.

This book enters at least in part into the theology of mission arena charted by Bosch but works intentionally in the direction of what might be called *mission theology*. If the former theology of mission focuses on the theological dimensions of the Christian mission—its rationale, justification, methods, and relationship to other theological loci—the latter mission theology accentuates how the Christian theological enterprise as a whole can be understood in missiological perspective. As a systematic theologian, I hope to contribute to the discussion of theology of mission not only by thinking about the Christian mission from a theological angle but also by reversing the emphasis and reconsidering Christian theology from a missiological or missional perspective. The four parts of this book thus work from more explicitly missiological concerns toward reconsiderations of aspects of the systematic and dogmatic theological landscape.

1. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

## 2 The Missiological Spirit

However, my work in Christian mission theology has also unfolded over the last fifteen years in sustained interaction with the realities of religious pluralism in our time. In this venue, a multiplicity of conversations are intertwined: in theologies of religions, theologies of interfaith encounter, theologies of interreligious dialogue, comparative theology, theologies of the unevangelized, theologies of pluralism, etc. Further, much of the developments at these various junctures are interwoven with theological engagements with the following, among many other topics: the legacy of the Enlightenment and its universalizing epistemology, globalization and its economic transformations, colonialism and the postcolonial reaction, secularization and the postsecular, and the postmodern condition (characterized also as our post-Western, post-European, and post-Christendom situation). A number of excellent missiologies have emerged in this context.<sup>2</sup> My own contribution is marked specifically by the pentecostal experience and perspective I bring, both informed by the explosion of contemporary scholarship on global pentecostalism.<sup>3</sup> The thesis of this volume, one that has emerged over the course of in my work in this arena, is that the missiological compulsion of the present twenty-first-century global and pluralistic context can be invigorated by a pneumatological imagination derived from the Day of Pentecost narrative, and as such can not only inspire more faithful Christian witness but also be a resource for Christian theology of mission and mission theology for the third millennium.

This book provides a more-or-less autobiographical perspective on these matters by following out the thread of my thinking about pentecostal faith and Christian mission in a pluralistic world. The four part titles of the book reflect aspects of my own journey, beginning with the sense of needing to establish my credentials as a systematic theologian rather than in the area that pentecostal scholars had been much more known for (missiology); moving into a more explicit attempt to reconsider pentecostal missiology in light of the challenges of religious pluralism and advances in theologies of interfaith encounter; then providing North American case studies of how such a pentecostally-inspired missiological posture—what I call in this book the pneumato-missiological imagination—might have something to contribute to the present discussion; and concluding by coming full circle to systematic questions and concerns, now illuminated by such a pneumatologically formulated missiology. The genre and structure of the volume thus presumes there is a biographical and narrative dimension to the theological

2. Besides Bosch, see Muck and Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, and Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*.

3. Including, but not limited to Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*; Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*; and Anderson, *Ends of the Earth*.

task and therefore seeks to not only depict, but conduct theological—in this case, missiological—inquiry in such a mode.<sup>4</sup> The following identifies the animating (autobiographical) concerns behind each of the chapters even while situating them vis-à-vis the volume’s overarching issues.

## RELUCTANT MISSIOLOGY: CHRISTIAN MISSION’S IRREPRESSIBILITY

Pentecostal theology as a scholarly enterprise began in the late 1980s and was sustained in its first decade primarily by contributions in theology of spirituality and theology of mission because, among other reasons, pentecostalism was considered more a spirituality and a missionary movement than a theological tradition. So while books had begun to appear on *pentecostal missiology* or *pentecostal spirituality* in the 1980s and early 1990s,<sup>5</sup> the notion of a *pentecostal theology* was still somewhat of an oxymoron at the time when I opted for graduate training in theological studies in the early and mid-1990s.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps I might be forgiven, then, when my training in systematic theology led me to embrace a professorial vocation as a systematician rather than as a missiologist. The problem was that pentecostal systematic theology had yet to emerge on its own terms (being reliant on categories, frameworks, and resources derived from other Christian traditions, sometimes to its own detriment),<sup>7</sup> so I labored to discern what that might look like and how I might make a contribution to such a task.

My response then, and now, remains that pentecostal spirituality and experience generates a distinctive hermeneutic, method, and imagination revolving around encountering the living God of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, and this spirituality of encounter has the potential to revitalize

4. Narrativity is central to the pentecostal tradition that informs my thinking; see Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, esp. 15–18. For more on the biographical dimension of Christian theology, see McClendon Jr., *Biography as Theology*; cf. my *Dialogical Spirit*.

5. I describe the emergence of pentecostal scholarship in my essay, “Pentecostalism and the Theological Academy.” One of the most important pentecostal theological contributions in that first decade (with ongoing influence) was arguably in the area of spiritual theology: Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*. Indicators of the emerging pentecostal contribution in missiology include Dempster et al., *Called and Empowered*, and Jongeneel, *Pentecost, Mission, Ecumenism*.

6. Even after the turn of the third millennium, the long history of pentecostal anti-intellectualism has perpetuated the oxymoronic reputation of *pentecostal theology*; this is documented by Nañez, *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds*?

7. For such an assessment, see Macchia, “Revitalizing Theological Categories”; cf. also my essay, “Whither Systematic Theology?”

#### 4 The Missiological Spirit

and renew Christian theology for the third millennium.<sup>8</sup> When starting out as a graduate student, however, my concerns were not merely to formulate such an expansive theological vision but to address what I felt were some of the most pressing concerns for Christian theology as a whole (including systematic theology) as we faced (then) the twenty-first century: that regarding the Christian encounter with other faiths. My early work was dominated by this horizon of theological reflection: how to make sense of the Christian tradition in light of religious pluralism, including the many theological (and other) claims made by adherents of other traditions. Again, my response then, as now, is that a distinctively pneumatological imagination had the capacity to enable both Christian interaction with others on their terms and Christian witness to others based on our commitments. My arguments at that early phase, however, were driven first and foremost by discussions in theology of religions, theology of interreligious dialogue, and comparative theological issues, all intended to make contributions to the rethinking of Christian systematic theology in a pluralistic world, and *not* by theology of mission concerns.<sup>9</sup> After all, my goal was to further the discussion as a systematician, not as a missiologist.

This desire to avoid being tabbed as another pentecostal motivated by missiological matters no doubt led me to approach the pentecostal missiology of Julie Ma as I did (chapter 1 below). I was invited then by John Christopher Thomas, the editor of the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, to review Ma's published thesis, and rather than interact with it missiologically, I donned the religious studies hat fitted during my doctoral course of study and reviewed it in light of those concerns. Readers of this book can surmise given later developments in my thinking how, if I were to review Ma's *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits* today, a more explicitly missiological perspective would note different emphases and make other connections. Yet while the disciplinary or analytical lens might shift, let me highlight a number of themes explicitly denoted in my initial assessment that I believe remain important for present thinking in missiology and missiological theology. First, the question of Christian mission, discipleship, and maturation across the majority of the world *after* globalization will remain with us going forward;

8. See Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, although the notion of "encounter" functions more rhetorically than technically in his treatment. My most comprehensive articulation of this so far is a one-volume systematic theology that is going to press simultaneously with this book, written with Jonathan A. Anderson: *Renewing Christian Theology*; cf. also my *Spirit of Love*.

9. Two of my first three books were in this vein: *Discerning the Spirit(s)* and *Beyond the Impasse*. I returned a few years later to develop these ideas in *Hospitality and the Other*, which remains the most succinct and mature articulation of my thinking along these lines.

there will be both theological and missiological dimensions to these matters, with the former being more unequivocally detailed in my thinking with Ma about what it means for the church, and theology, to be reformed and always being reformed (or renewed and always being renewed). Second, my identification of four horizons of intersection will persist for Christian theology and mission (see the final subsection, “Theological Methodology: A Genuinely Interreligious and Interdisciplinary Dialogue,” in chapter 1); those coming from perspectives other than a pentecostal one and those working with people other than Ma’s Kankana-ey Christians will nevertheless need to factor in those horizontal dynamics. Last but not least, at the heart of Christian theology and mission are the perennial questions related to the gospel-culture interface; my deliberations with Julie Ma from a religious studies perspective surely ought to be complemented by those of other vantage points, but they will not be displaced on this side of the eschaton, or so long as the religious and cultural dimensions of human life remain distinct but yet intertwined in anticipation of the coming reign of God.

It should now be clearer why I entitled this part of this book “Reluctant Missiology”: I considered my work in this earlier period demarcated primarily by the fields of religious studies and systematic theology, rather than by that of missiology. Yet even as I struggled to establish my bona fides in the field of systematics, the missiological character of the Christian theological task would not be easily marginalized.<sup>10</sup> Chapters 2 and 3 of this book provide glimpses into how my theological imagination kept getting interrupted by missiological interventions. Both articles reflect my realization, even then, that the most pressing issues raised by my initial monographs on theology of religions and interfaith encounter and dialogue were both theological and missiological, together. “As the Spirit Gives Utterance” (chapter 2) grappled with both fronts in the wake of the publication of my doctoral dissertation, *Discerning the Spirit(s)* (2000). On the theological register, I wrestled with how to make universal claims for Christian faith in a postmodern and even post-Christian world. This challenge turned fundamentally on the issue of how to talk both about Christian particularity (related to the scandal of incarnation and crucifixion, for instance) and universality. As a pentecostal theologian, it also pressed for me the question of pentecostal specificity and Christian catholicity. That one could err on either side on this matter (the former risking ecumenical relevance, the latter ignoring the gifts of the modern pentecostal movement) illuminated how one could also err on either side in the twenty-first-century context of

10. I tell more about this—now in hindsight, productive—struggle in my “Spirit, Vocation, and the Life of the Mind.”

## 6 The Missiological Spirit

the Christian encounter with other faiths. Thus did the theological register traverse both with and against the missiological axis: in a post-Western and postcolonial global context, how can Christians avoid an imperialism either of domesticating other faiths for Christian purposes or of muffling, twisting, or silencing the testimonies of religious others altogether? Hence I suggested then, and continue to defend, the idea that the biblical account of the Day of Pentecost event provides resources for both theological and missiological tasks, enabling distinctiveness of witness both within the Christian ecumenical field and across the wider interfaith spectrum.

It was my second book on comparative theology and the interfaith encounter, *Beyond the Impasse* (2003), which generated a more substantive response.<sup>11</sup> “A P(new)matological Paradigm for Christian Mission in a Religiously Plural World” was written specifically to address the acute questions raised by the theological program sketched in this early work. While a few of my critics rightly noted the importance of what I identified as the “christological impasse” for the overall thesis being argued, most missed that what was to be avoided was the missiological rather than christological scandal of particularity. I have always realized that any proclamation of Christ, the hope of Christian faith, would always be scandalous, as indeed already declared by St. Paul (e.g., Gal 5:11, 1 Cor 1:23); but that did not mean that Christian theology in the third millennium could ignore other faiths or could not gain from considering their claims, and it surely did not mean that Christian approaches to those in other faiths ought to be intentionally scandalous. More recently, evangelical theologians across the spectrum are realizing that Christian proclamation and mission can—in fact, should—proceed in respectful dialogue and encounter with others,<sup>12</sup> and I see my own proposals as providing a pentecostal and pneumatological justification for such undertakings. The point is not to urge an untenable universalism or a naïve syncretism of Christianity and other faiths, but to think theologically through the fact of religious plurality and its implications for Christian self-understanding and mission. Yet while I was thinking and writing principally as a systematician, I was realizing—however reluctantly—that I could not evade the missional dimension of Christian faith and theology.

11. Largely because of the Baker Academic imprint, I surmise (with seventeen published scholarly/critical reviews that have come to my attention), in contrast to my doctoral thesis, which was published in the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* Supplement series, and as such did not catch the attention of the broader theological academy as much (reviewed ten times).

12. E.g., McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn?*; Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*; and Metzger, *Connecting Christ*.

## PENTECOSTAL MISSIOLOGY: MISSIOLOGICAL PRAXIS

The three chapters in this part of the book reflect my thinking specifically about Christian missiology from a pentecostal perspective. By the time I wrote what is now chapter 4 in 2006, not only was I a bit more secure as a systematic theologian—I had just published my fourth book and finished a draft of a fifth manuscript<sup>13</sup>—but I had also relocated to working in the PhD program in Renewal Studies at Regent University. The latter invited me to live more explicitly into my pentecostal and renewal identity,<sup>14</sup> and I realized that this included the opportunity to embrace more intentionally the mission emphasis in pentecostal churches and traditions. Chapters 4–6 therefore together reflect my efforts to achieve a number of overarching theological objectives once I realized I no longer needed to be a reluctant missiologist.

First, I had to come to grips with the fact that there is a missiological aspect to, if not character shaping, all theological reflection. As a pentecostal scholar working in theology of religions, then, I had to ask both about the missional aspect of the Christian encounter with other faiths in a pluralistic world and about how pentecostal perspectives might inform, if not advance, such a discussion, especially at the theological level. Second, then, my systematic theological work in relationship to the religions could also be brought to bear on pentecostal theology. Whereas heretofore pentecostal scholarly work had been otherwise more practically focused on theologies of mission, I saw the opportunity to develop such both more systematically (read: more pneumatologically and more Trinitarianly) and dogmatically (read: in conversation with the historic and ecumenical theological tradition), with greater attention to the contemporary Christian encounter with other faiths (read: in light of actual mission practices and also in view of advances on the comparative theological landscape). Third, if all Christian theology is missionally-related in some respect, then all Christian missiology is also fundamentally theological. As a pentecostal theologian of the religions, then, I had the opportunity to speak into existing discussions in theology of mission both from a pentecostal standpoint and in view of practical and theoretical developments in Christian interfaces with other religions in the present time. It began to dawn of me that while these three

13. Yong, *Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, and, the later book, *Theology and Down Syndrome*.

14. “Renewal” at Regent includes pentecostal, charismatic, and other related movements stretching back through the historic Christian tradition and across the full scope of the contemporary ecumenical, including Roman Catholic and Orthodox, spectrum; see my article, “Poured Out on All Flesh.”

## 8 The Missiological Spirit

goals could be distinguished, they were also unavoidably intertwined, even as it would be difficult to prioritize them.

The fourth chapter, “The Spirit of Hospitality,” was written in response to the invitation to provide a plenary address at the 2006 annual meeting of the distinguished American Society of Missiology. The theme of the conference was devoted to the implications for Christian missiology of the growth and expansion of pentecostalism globally, so I took this opportunity to suggest how pentecostal perspectives might inform a more pneumatologically-oriented theology of interreligious encounter. Three themes are noteworthy in this context. First, a pentecostal and pneumatological approach would be concerned not only with abstract theological formulations but with more concrete practical explications, consistent with the modern pentecostal affinity with the New Testament Acts of the Apostles, which highlighted how the disciples of Christ carried out the Christian mission as empowered by the Holy Spirit. Hence, I suggested what I then, and still now, call a *performative* theology of interfaith encounter, an approach to the interreligious arena that emphasizes the missional work of the Holy Spirit in enabling relationships between people of any (or no) faith. Second, such a performative (rather than descriptive) approach to Christian mission in a pluralistic world would essentially involve being both hosts of and guests to those in other faiths. Such a performative theology of interfaith hospitality is profoundly pneumatological (in terms of the Spirit’s outpouring on all flesh; Acts 2:17), christological (in terms of Christ’s incarnation and reception into the world), and Trinitarian (in terms of God’s creating [making space for] and reconciling [inviting fellowship of] the world to himself through the Word and Spirit), even as it could potentially invigorate Christian witness in a postcolonial and postmodern milieu.<sup>15</sup> Last but not least, I developed this pneumatological theology and missiology of interfaith hospitality from the Lukan (Luke-Acts) portions of the apostolic witness. This not only develops my prior work on biblical theology in the various constructive sections of *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh* (2005), but also contributes at least thematically and from a pentecostal perspective to ongoing scholarship on Lukan materials.

Chapter 5 is coauthored with Tony Richie, a longtime sojourner with me on the otherwise oftentimes lonely roads where pentecostal theology transects with theology of religions and comparative theology.<sup>16</sup> Unlike detractors who could little appreciate, much less understand, me either because they have failed to conduct a thorough reading of my work related to

15. The seeds sown in this article germinated in my *Hospitality and the Other*.

16. See also my foreword to Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit*, xi–xii.



these matters or because their interpretive perspective is uninformed by the wider theological conversation (in the case of some pentecostal opponents) or is unsympathetic to pentecostal sensibilities and commitments (in the case of other evangelical, and non-pentecostal, critics), Tony has been a dialogue partner, theological editor, and thoughtful sounding board since we first exchanged emails in 2002 and then met personally in 2003. Our “Missiology and the Interreligious Encounter,” written as a methodological primer for the study of contemporary pentecostalism, provides in summary form the basic thrusts of the pentecostal and pneumatological theology of religions informing much of my work and situates these squarely amidst the ongoing discussion of pentecostal missiology. If I were to ever write afresh a book at the juncture of these topics, I would return to this chapter for the basic outline. The argument therein reflects most explicitly my recognition that pentecostal and Christian theology of religions has a missiological facet and pentecostal and Christian theology of mission also has to include consideration of the contemporary pluralistic and global context.

I wrote chapter 6 initially to respond to and conclude a collection of essays triangulating around the themes of global pentecostal and renewal Christianity, Christian mission, and religious pluralism.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, “From Demonization to Kin-domization” addresses one of the practical realities of popular pentecostal mission endeavors that is contested in the pluralistic public square, the demonization of other faiths and their adherents; on the other hand, the essay persists in developing a pentecostal and pneumatological approach to the interfaith encounter out of sustained engagement with the apostolic experience in the book of Acts. If the Acts narrative is central to pentecostal theology and spirituality more generally, here (again) I foreground its potential for inspiring missiological reflection in a pluralistic world.<sup>18</sup>

17. The book was published as Yong and Clarke, eds., *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, Great Commission*.

18. I have continued my exploration of Luke-Acts in a few of my books—e. g., *Hospitality and the Other* (2008), *In the Days of Caesar* (2010), and *Who is the Holy Spirit?* (2011)—and this cumulative work has led pentecostal biblical scholar Martin Mittelstadt to suggest: “Yong not only demonstrates ongoing Pentecostal persistence to embody the Lukan story, but stands as one of the most influential Pentecostal voices to bring this confidence to the current generation . . .” and “biblical scholars will soon come to regard him as the most influential contemporary Pentecostal scholar of the Lukan corpus”; (“Reimagining Luke-Acts,” 26, 29).

## NORTH AMERICAN MISSIOLOGY: MISSION POST-CHRISTENDOM

The chapters gathered in parts II and III of this volume were originally written over a similar period of time. In fact, there is a wider span for those in the second part (from 2005–2010) compared to those in the third (from 2007–2009). However, I have gathered them under their respective headings to separate out the more specifically pentecostal thinking of the former from the more focused contextuality of the latter. If the preceding triad of essays is more globally oriented by virtue of my taking up the issues as a pentecostal and renewal theologian, those of part III have their locus in the North American setting. This reflects in part my own diasporic identity as what some call a 1.5 generation Asian American theologian, born and raised in part in Malaysia but educated since my middle school days in the North American West.<sup>19</sup> Hence while the global horizon is continuously a part of my theological work, I have also been attentive to the peculiar opportunities and challenges for theology and mission in North America.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps at the popular level, many do not think of the Christian mission in relationship to the North American scene. But of course if mission is no more or less than the church's witness to the gospel, then this ought to be of global, not least North American, pertinence. Rather than being ordered sequentially according to the time of their original publication (one of the structuring guidelines for the rest of this book), the three chapters gathered here are organized in relationship to their historical content. I begin with "The Missiology of Jamestown"—written second, in 2009—because it deals with issues that stretch back further in North American mission history: the encounter between European missionaries and the native population. Although written and published first, in 2007 and 2008 respectively, "The Buddhist-Christian Encounter in the USA" follows because it unfolds such across its twentieth-century North American history. We conclude with "The Church and Mission Theology in a Post-Constantinian Era," which emerged out of the research and writing of my book on political theology in 2008–2009,<sup>21</sup> since it deals with the nature of mission in a contemporary

19. See my book *Future of Evangelical Theology*, especially its introductory chapter that documents my journey as an Asian American.

20. See my essay, "Between Local and Global"; cf. also part I of *The Dialogical Spirit*, which takes up the task of doing theology in a postfoundationalist epistemological era in conversation with thinkers in the tradition of North American philosophical pragmatism.

21. Chapter 9 of this book provides a parallel line of thinking to Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, ch. 5, which sketches a pentecostal theology of cultural engagement.

America that is paradoxically both postsecular and post-Christian simultaneously. In each case, however, Christian mission theory begs for practical explication and Christian mission praxis invites clarification of the underlying theological justification, for better or worse.

Chapters 7 and 8 deal with the post-Western, post-Enlightenment, and postcolonial realities as played out specifically in North America. The former revisits these matters in light of the history of the Christian mission to Native America, while the latter takes up similar issues against the North American Christian-Buddhist encounter. Yet thinking about Christian mission in conversation with Native Americans across the continent highlights not only the atrocities committed to indigenous cultures by more-or-less sincere Christians but also unearths the various theological warrants depended upon for such endeavors. Part of the vision that justified the triumphalism manifest in North American mission history rests between the lines of the seventh chapter rather than being unequivocally detailed, and it concerns the theological supersessionism that marginalized the Jewish character of Christian faith in order to assert a Euro-American version of the gospel, which had little capacity to tolerate, much less receive the contribution of, the voices and perspectives of indigenous and other non-Western cultures.<sup>22</sup> The point is that if Christian mission *after* Jamestown—as symbolizing the entirety of the Christian missionary encounter with Native America—has to find a way to be receptive to the indigenous contribution to Christian identity, self-understanding, and mission, then it also has to find a way to overcome the historical racism that infects at least some strands of modern Western Christianity. To be sure, lessons learned in this conversation are applicable across the majority of the world in light of the interwoven fortunes of the colonial and missionary enterprises.

The eighth chapter of this book deals with many of the same issues opened up by its predecessor but comes at them from another set of interconnected vantage points: the history of Asian migration to America, the globalization processes, and the phenomenon of the so-called reverse mission. While this last matter has in recent missiological literature referred to how majority world migration to Europe and North America has also invigorated missionary activities intended to renew Christianity in the Western hemisphere, the history of Buddhism in the USA also unveils the

22. This opens up to discussions on how modern Western theology depends on an unarticulated understanding of race that minimizes nonwhite racial, ethnic, and cultural perspectives. For explication, see Carter, *Race*, and Jennings, *Christian Imagination*. For pentecostal and renewalist conversations with the Carter and Jennings thesis, see the theme issue “Race and Global Renewal” of *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 36:3 (2014).

Buddhist missionary enterprise on American shores. This has involved both Buddhists drawing from Christian missionary ideas and practices on the one hand and Christians learning from Buddhists on the other hand. What emerges from a missiological perspective are how beliefs and practices are entangled, so much so that effective mission practices need more precise theological articulation even as some theological formulations ought to be jettisoned in view of what is happening on the ground with the Christian-Buddhist and wider interfaith encounters. While providing a performative missiological entry point to my work in this arena that spans the last two decades,<sup>23</sup> “The Buddhist-Christian Encounter in the USA” impresses especially the import of thinking about Christian mission in the West *beyond* the dichotomy of West and East (in our globalizing world), and also *after* the disintegration of Christian hegemony in the Western public square.

If the Christian missions to Native America and American Buddhists cross cultural, racial, and religious lines, then chapter 9’s “The Church and Mission Theology in a Post-Constantinian Era” picks up where the other two leave off. The opportunities opened up for Christian missionary engagements with those in other faiths (Native Americans and Buddhists included) in the present time are challenged by the postmodern and post-Christian condition within which we all live. On the one hand, postmodernity insists on the plurality of perspectives, even religious ones, so that no one can simply assert its superiority; on the other hand, our post-Christian political situation, rather than leveling the playing field between all religionists—which is what affirmative action, applied to religion, would insist on—actually puts believers in Jesus as Messiah in a more subordinate position given its dominance through at least much of the twentieth century. This final chapter of part III thus unpacks both the opportunities and challenges in what I thus call our post-Constantinian era, one in which Christianity is no longer the politically governing and privileged faith in the North American public square. On the one hand, such a post-Constantinian environment is pluralistic, democratic, and secular, presuming freedom of religion and no church-state coalition; on the other hand, it is also postsecular in that many see any segregation of religion and public life to be not only arbitrary but also antireligious and thus contrary to any purported advocacy of religious freedom. In such a vortex, Christian theology of mission has the opportunity to reengage its task not from the “Constantinian center,” but from the cruciform margins. Such an approach will be postcolonial and post-Western in a pluralistic arena but also postmodern and postsecular

23. For highlights of my sojourn at the crossroads of where Christianity has met Buddhism, see the preface to Yong, *Pneumatology and Christian-Buddhist Dialogue*, xi–xvi.

in insisting that those in all faiths ought to be able to speak into the public domain from out of the deepest resources of their religious traditions. The question is whether North American Christianity can—or even should?!—relearn what it means to be a countercultural and minority tradition while it maintains a majority demographic.<sup>24</sup>

## SYSTEMATIC MISSIOLOGY: TOWARD A MISSIOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

The case studies in part III clarify the major issues that any plausible Christian theology of mission for the twenty-first century will need to engage. So the concreteness and particularity of the North American case studies have to be read in tandem—or back and forth—with the last three chapters of this book, which return to take up, at a more abstract level of theological discussion, the salient themes reaching back across the volume. The shift here, however, is from the missiological and theology of mission concerns of before to the bigger-picture questions related to Christian mission theology. As a systematician, I have come to appreciate how any Christian theological articulation has a mission-related aspect.<sup>25</sup> This book, among some of my other more recent writings,<sup>26</sup> makes clear that Christian thinking about mission ought also to impact systematic theological reflection, and vice versa.

Chapters 10–12 sketch, at least rudimentarily, both sides of this mission-systematics thoroughfare. The first provides a pneumatological theology of mission framed by the classical history of salvation Christian narrative; the second explicates a pneumatological Christology of mission in our pluralistic context; and the last steps back toward a more Trinitarian vision of contemporary global mission. Hence together, the three chapters provide both a more diachronically oriented approach to Christian mission theology on the one hand, and a more synchronically, or systematically, structured theological framework for Christian missiology on the other hand. Further, Christian mission theology can only be Trinitarian and christological if it is robustly pneumatological on the one side, and Trinitarian theology can only be comprehensively pneumatological if it is missiological on the other side. Last but not least, a final set of commitments is registered

24. A parallel argument is presented in Yong, “Many Tongues, Many Practices.”

25. Already indicated, in more implicit form, in my argument in *Spirit-Word-Community*, esp. ch. 6, that all theology has a pragmatic and performative dimension.

26. Yong, *Spirit of Love*, and, with Jonathan A. Anderson, *Renewing Christian Theology*.

across these chapters: that the mission of the Spirit—the *missio Spiritus*—is also the mission of God and the mission of Jesus Christ, and that this involves the world as created by God, as the habitation of the incarnation of the Word, and as the receptor of the outpouring upon all flesh of the Spirit by Jesus from the right hand of the Father.

“Primed for the Spirit” not only unpacks the salvation historical structure of the Trinitarian *missio Dei* but also accentuates its eschatological horizon. The goal is not to generate any false or naïve optimism about God’s saving the world.<sup>27</sup> Yet the eschatological architectonic of this volume follows out the foundational character of the divine self-revelation as hospitable creator, incarnate Son, and Pentecostal (in the Acts 2 sense) Spirit to reconcile the world to God. Each moment of this cosmic drama—of primordial creation, historical incarnation, and eschatological culmination—is fully Trinitarian. This means not only that God’s salvation history has missiological implications but also that it cannot be fully elucidated apart from the triune—one and yet three—mission of Father-Son-Spirit.

“Christological Constants in Shifting Contexts” provides one of the most extended responses especially to criticisms of my earlier work that my view of the *missio Spiritus* as distinct from yet related to the mission of the Son bifurcated the divine mission.<sup>28</sup> The argument there both secures the distinction and yet relatedness of the Spirit and the Son and connects pneumatology and Christology to missiology and mission praxis, and vice versa. In other words, the performative dimensions of pneumatological, christological, and Trinitarian theology are unfolded in relationship to the Christian witness while contemporary mission practices and engagements with especially those in other faiths are given further theological (read: Trinitarian, and pneumato-christological) grounding.

“God, Christ, Spirit” returns to develop a Trinitarian mission theology. This both provides a theological undergirding for Christian witness

27. Any soteriological universalism will not be able to honor the freedom of creatures given by God, even as the latter exists as a fundamental intuition of the Wesleyan-Arminian theological framework that has informed my thinking since my seminary studies at Western Evangelical Seminary (now George Fox Evangelical Seminary). For the Wesleyan features of my theological work, see *Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh and The Dialogical Spirit*, ch. 3, among other articles and essays including: “Wesley and Fletcher—Dayton and Wood”; “Sanctification, Science, and the Spirit”; and “Heart Strangely Warmed.”

28. See the opening paragraphs in ch. 11 within; I will say here only that my evangelical critics have formulated their criticisms based on an incomplete reading of my work even as they appear incapable of appreciating how my pentecostal and pneumatological approach is helpful for sustaining Christian mission in a postmodern, postcolonial, and postsecular world.

in the twenty-first-century global and pluralistic context and suggests how contemporary Christian theology can and should be missionally shaped. The movement is from Spirit to Trinity and mission, on the one hand, and from mission praxis to Trinitarian theology on the other hand. Again, the performative dimension of pneumatological and Trinitarian theology is explicated both from theory to practice and vice versa. The Spirit's outpouring upon all flesh (Acts 2:17) is understood not only (if not less) as a descriptive comment about what happened on the Day of Pentecost but (perhaps more so) as anticipating Christian response to and empowering messianic participation in the *missio Spiritus* to bear witness to the God of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth and the end of the age.

Three subthemes coalesce around one major argument in the following pages. First, with regard to theology of mission, Christian mission practice is performatively multifaceted; in this book, I suggest viewing mission as kerygmatic or proclamatory, as shalomic or socially transformational, and as relational or mutually dialogical vis-à-vis the world. Second, with regard to the missiological framework more generally, Christian mission unfolds contextually; in the twenty-first century such mission will be attentive to local particularities (and their opportunities and challenges) as they interface with global dynamics (related to our postmodern, postcolonial, and postsecular world) in a pluralistic world (in regard at least to cultural, ethnic, and religious pluralism). Third, Christian mission praxis must be fundamentally theological in order to avoid being coopted by the ideologies of any era; the goal of Christian mission is the reconciliation of the world in all of its complexity to God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The central thesis and major argument of this book, then, is that only a pneumatological imagination can secure the Trinitarian vision that empowers missional performance amidst the many tongues of the many missionary contexts. The concluding chapter of the volume will present a synoptic articulation of this pneumatologically shaped mission theology. The previous twelve chapters orient us toward that end.