

**Towards a Framework for Integral Ecclesiology in a United
Kingdom City Centre Context**

By

John Neil Risbridger

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree**

MA Global Ecclesiology

All Nations, Hertfordshire

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ABSTRACT

The concept of integral mission as a particular biblical understanding of holistic mission, was developed among Latin American evangelicals and has gained influence globally (especially among mission agencies) through the Lausanne Movement and Micah Global. This research explores the practice of integral mission in the context of a city-centre local church in the United Kingdom. Drawing on personal ministry experience, it considers the strength this framework can bring to churches in the West but also probes the challenges that can arise and the extent to which the missionary ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin can address them. The rationale in bringing these two bodies of thought together is to enable the development of an 'integral ecclesiology' with the motivation of enabling city-centre churches in the United Kingdom to gain the benefits of integral mission in a sustainable way.

My hypothesis is that the framework of integral mission can be applied most effectively and sustainably to city-centre churches in the United Kingdom if it is extended to develop what might be called an 'integral ecclesiology', informed by Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology. The research is predominantly literature-based, focusing initially on my first research question, which explores the relevance of Newbigin to integral mission in a local church. I conclude that his insights on the Church's ontology are an important addition to integral mission's comprehensive understanding of the missionary task. I then reflect autoethnographically on my experience of integral mission in church leadership in city-centre Southampton, as a means of triangulating the conclusions from the literature. Further triangulation, clarification and insight are gained from semi-structured interviews with three major scholars in the field.

I bring the frameworks into conversation to consider how they converge, diverge and complement each other, informed by the interviews with scholars and the autoethnographic reflection. I conclude that there is sufficient convergence for them to be compatible and therefore can be combined to propose a new 'integral ecclesiology' for city-centre churches in the United Kingdom, which is the focus of my second research question.

The proposed new ecclesiology is loosely structured around the four attributes of Nicaean ecclesiology, combining integral mission with a parallel concept of 'integral discipleship' within an overall 'integral ecclesiology', founded on the biblical narrative and the doctrine of election. The result is a simple framework, drawing on Newbigin's insights on the nature of

the Church, to provide a tool for local city-centre churches to embrace the comprehensiveness of integral mission more sustainably and effectively.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Alison, without whose tireless support, inspirational example and unfailing faith this project would not have been possible.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|-------|---|---|
| ABC | – | Above Bar Church |
| COVID | – | Coronavirus Disease |
| CSI | – | Church of South India |
| CTC | – | Cape Town Commitment |
| FLT | – | <i>Fraternidad Teológica Latinamerica</i> |
| IMC | – | World Missionary Council |
| IMP | – | Index of Multiple Deprivation |
| LTWG | – | Lausanne Theology Working Group |
| NGO | – | Non-governmental Organisation |
| SCM | – | Student Christian Movement |
| UK | – | United Kingdom |
| URC | – | United Reformed Church |
| WCC | – | World Council of Churches |

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The origins of this research lie in a challenging experience towards the end of eighteen years of ministry in city-centre Southampton. Influenced by the theology of the Lausanne Movement, and the writing of Christopher J.H. Wright, the church's strategy for local mission reflected the framework of integral mission, which Lausanne's *Cape Town Commitment* defines as follows:

Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, and for society, and for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.¹

Having pursued this approach for several years, cracks were appearing as diverging visions for the church emerged: one centred on discipleship; the other on mission. Sensing that the unity of the church was under pressure, I devoted a day to prayer, which led me to a different view of the problem. It was not that we needed to choose between these apparently competing priorities, but that our understanding of mission and discipleship had diverged. We needed an understanding of both that was rooted in the biblical narrative and could be integrated into a coherent understanding of the church. This began my search for what I am calling an 'integral ecclesiology', which is the focus of this research.

The research begins with a critical evaluation of integral mission, first formulated by the Latin American missiologists, C. Rene Padilla, Samuel Escobar and Orlando E. Costas, then adopted and developed by the Micah Network and Lausanne Movement. To facilitate ecclesiological reflection, I then turn to reflect critically on the missionary ecclesiology of J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, which he developed for a new 'missionary encounter with Western culture.'² The epistemological foundation for Newbigin's work is that 'knowing is an activity of persons in *community*³, which makes ecclesiology central in his theology. The ecclesiology he develops is eschatological and (therefore) missional.

¹ Lausanne Movement 2011: 33.

² Newbigin 1997: 98.

³ Newbigin 1966: 77, italics mine.

The nature of the Church is never to be finally defined in static terms, but only in terms of that to which it is going. It cannot be understood rightly except in a perspective which is at once *missionary* and *eschatological*.⁴

The three perspectives of epistemology, eschatology and missiology combine in what is probably Newbigin's best-known phrase, that 'the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.'⁵ For Newbigin, mission is not only something the church does, but something inherent to its nature. These two approaches, which together form my theoretical framework, are brought into conversation with a view to proposing a framework for an 'integral ecclesiology' for city-centre churches in the United Kingdom (UK).

My hypothesis is that, if it is to be applied effectively and sustainably to a UK city-centre church, the framework of *integral mission* needs to be developed into an '*integral ecclesiology*', by bringing it into dialogue with Newbigin's *missionary ecclesiology*. I explore this hypothesis by seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relevance of Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology for applying integral mission within a local church in the United Kingdom?
 - 1.1 How is the nature of mission and its relationship to ecclesiology understood within integral mission?
 - 1.2 How is the nature of the church and its calling understood within Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology?
2. How can these insights be combined to provide a framework for 'integral ecclesiology' for city-centre churches in the UK?

If, as Stephen Holmes argues, the *missio Dei* begins within the intra-trinitarian relationships⁶, and if it is the case that the *missio ecclesiae* is grounded in the *missio Dei*, it follows that certain things must be objectively true about the Church's mission, even though we apprehend them only partially. My approach is therefore post-positivist⁷, seeking to answer the research questions deductively⁸. However, Stephen B. Bevans' maxim that 'there is no such thing as "theology"; there is only *contextual* theology'⁹ is pertinent to ecclesiology, so the research paradigm includes some constructivist¹⁰ elements. The research methodology,

⁴ Newbigin 1953: 25, italics mine.

⁵ Newbigin 1989: 237.

⁶ Holmes 2006.

⁷ Patel 2015.

⁸ Brotherton 2015:18-19.

⁹ Bevans 2002: 3.

¹⁰ Patel 2015.

whilst primarily literature-based, is supplemented both by semi-structured interviews with Wright, Ruth Padilla Deborst and Michael W. Goheen (carried out with their consent, with ethical approval given¹¹) and by reflection on my own leadership experience (I also exchanged emails with Paul Weston, Rose Dowsett and Melba Padilla Maggay, having been unsuccessful in arranging interviews). My personal reflection draws on autoethnographic principles¹², using my own 'experiences as evidence with which to explore'¹³ my research questions and triangulate conclusions from the literature review, and using my theoretical framework to aid 'reflexivity'¹⁴ and 'analyze these experiences.'¹⁵ Recognising that "relational ethics" are heightened for autoethnographers¹⁶, I focus on telling my own story to avoid implicating others.

Starting from Wright's premise that 'mission is not ours; it is God's'¹⁷, and that the *missio ecclesiae* is therefore a participation in the one *missio Dei*, this research assumes a basic continuity between the calling to local and transnational mission. The rationale for the research, then, is that the insights of integral mission are no less important for the local mission of the Church than for global mission agencies. My hope is that it will make those insights more accessible to local churches and enable them to be applied sustainably and effectively in settings like mine.

¹¹ See Appendix 1.

¹² Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011.

¹³ Poulos 2021: 4.

¹⁴ Adams, Jones and Ellis 2015: 2.

¹⁵ Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011: section 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.: section 4.3.

¹⁷ Wright 2006: 62.

CHAPTER 2 - A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE FRAMEWORK OF INTEGRAL MISSION

In a paper entitled 'Evangelism and the World' prepared for the first Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation in 1974, Latin American missiologist C. René Padilla publicly introduced the Spanish phrase *misión integral* ('comprehensive mission') to the English-speaking world for the first time, to describe a vision of mission that corresponds to a 'comprehensive view of salvation.'¹⁸ For Padilla, salvation entailed 'wholeness'¹⁹ and therefore Christian mission needed to be holistic, with nothing missed out (David C. Kirkpatrick explains 'the Spanish...is used to describe wholemeal bread, or wholeness'²⁰). According to Kirkpatrick, Padilla accomplished a 'radical reshaping of global Evangelical Protestant mission'²¹, a conclusion confirmed by integral mission's acceptance in the *Cape Town Commitment*²² (CTC) in the third Lausanne Congress (2010). This chapter addresses research question 1.1 on integral mission, outlining its historical background and rise to global influence through the Lausanne Movement and Micah Global, evaluating its theological foundations and ecclesiology, and proposing a summary of its insights.

2.1 Historical Development

Ruth Padilla DeBorst outlines the background of 'the *Misión Integral* Movement'²³ among Latin American students in the *Comunidad Internacional de Estudiantes Evangélicos*, and in the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinamerica* (FTL). She highlights three couples – Lily and Samuel Escobar, Emma and Pedro Arana and Caty and René Padilla – who struggled to interpret their spiritual formation in the West, in the context of the 'Latin American evangelical matrix.'²⁴ Kirkpatrick describes their context as one of rapid urbanisation 'with a rise in economic ambitions'²⁵, fuelling an expansion of universities and consequently a desire for

¹⁸ Padilla 1975: 130.

¹⁹ Ibid.: 130.

²⁰ Ibid.: 353.

²¹ Kirkpatrick 2016: 352.

²² Lausanne Movement 2011: 33.

²³ DeBorst 2018: 43.

²⁴ Ibid.: 43.

²⁵ Kirkpatrick 2016: 356.

upward mobility but ‘a dearth of opportunity to achieve it.’²⁶ Returning from studying at Wheaton College in 1959 Padilla wrote, ‘My years of studies in the United States had not prepared me for the sort of theological reflection that was urgently needed in a revolutionary situation.’²⁷ The result was what Kirkpatrick describes as a ‘laboratory for new theologies’²⁸, seeking an understanding of the gospel that addressed social realities rather than one only of ‘*individual*’ salvation.²⁹ Engaging critically with liberation theology, Padilla sought to articulate an appropriate contextual theology, discerning ‘God’s will for the life and witness of God’s people in a specific historical context... in the light of Scripture and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.’³⁰ North American resistance to Escobar’s presentation on social responsibility to the first Latin American Congress on Evangelisation (1969) led³¹ to the formation of the FTL, which accelerated the ‘self-theologizing’³² work of Padilla, Escobar and others, out of which the new missiological framework of *misión integral* emerged. DeBorst defines integral mission as:

A theological-missiological articulation and practice that seeks to engage followers of Jesus in linking the whole gospel to the whole of life under the Lordship of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so that the reign of God and God’s justice may be made visible in particular historical contexts.³³

According to Vinay K. Samuel, Padilla’s paper for the first Lausanne Congress (1974) ‘identified the ‘turn to the world’ that began among evangelicals concerned about relating the gospel to addressing poverty and bringing social change.’³⁴ The resulting *Lausanne Covenant* has been described as ‘one of the most important theological documents in the evangelical movement’³⁵ with its historic affirmation ‘that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty.’³⁶ It was, however, controversial from the start. Addressing the conference Padilla said,

²⁶ Kirkpatrick 2016: 357.

²⁷ Padilla 2009: 97.

²⁸ Kirkpatrick 2016: 361.

²⁹ Padilla 2009: 94-5.

³⁰ Padilla 2009: 101.

³¹ DeBorst 2016: 51.

³² *Ibid.*: 51.

³³ DeBorst 2018: 43.

³⁴ Samuel 2010: 128.

³⁵ Tennent 2014: 45.

³⁶ Lausanne Movement 1975: 45.

I refuse... to drive a wedge between a primary task, namely the proclamation of the Gospel, and a secondary (at best) or even optional (at worst) task of the church'³⁷

Nonetheless, the covenant described 'evangelism as primary'³⁸. In response, a group of delegates published the *Theology [and] Implications of Radical Discipleship*³⁹ which, in Al Tizon's words, 'repudiated the dichotomy between evangelism and social concern, challenged the language of the primacy of evangelism, and broadened the scope of God's salvific work in the world.'⁴⁰ John Stott included their statement in the official papers of the congress. The *Oxford Centre of Mission Studies* (est.1983) and the *International Fellowship for Mission as Transformation* (est.1987) continued the debate outside the structures of Lausanne. In Lausanne's *Manila Manifesto* (1989) 'the socio-ethical obligation is formulated more sharply... than before'⁴¹, writes Tomod Engelsviken, and a responsibility for 'the denunciation of all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural'⁴² is included. However, it still maintains that 'evangelism is primary because our chief concern is with the gospel'⁴³ despite describing the gospel as 'God's salvation from the power of evil, the establishment of his eternal kingdom and his final victory over everything which defies his purpose.'⁴⁴ About a decade later, the Micah Network (now Micah Global) was formed, drawing together a global coalition for integral mission⁴⁵. Its *Declaration on Integral Mission* states:

Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.⁴⁶

Ron Sider reflected, 'At Lausanne III ... the biblical obligation to combine evangelism and social action was assumed by almost everyone.'⁴⁷ The CTC states that the gospel is 'God's glorious good news in Christ, for every dimension of his creation'⁴⁸ and that 'in his death on

³⁷ Padilla 1975: 144.

³⁸ Lausanne Movement 1975: section 6.

³⁹ Douglas 1975: 1294-1296.

⁴⁰ Tizon 2014: 174.

⁴¹ Engelsviken 2014: 42.

⁴² Lausanne Movement 1989: affirmation 9.

⁴³ Ibid.: affirmation 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid.: affirmation 2.

⁴⁵ Micah Network 2001: 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.: 1.

⁴⁷ Sider 2011: 48.

⁴⁸ Lausanne Movement 2011: 14.

the cross, Jesus took our sin upon himself in our place, bearing its full cost, penalty and shame, defeated death and the powers of evil, and accomplished the reconciliation and redemption of all creation.⁴⁹ It gives unreserved support to integral mission:

Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, and for society, and for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.⁵⁰

Its call to 'keep evangelism at the centre of the fully-integrated scope of all our mission'⁵¹ is well-crafted, though arguably describing proclamation as 'paramount'⁵² reintroduces some ambiguity. Catholic writer Robert J. Schreiter, comments affirmingly on Lausanne's movement to a 'more comprehensive theology of mission'⁵³, while Tizon concludes that 'evangelicals now essentially assume a holistic orientation to mission'⁵⁴ but acknowledges ongoing tensions⁵⁵.

2.2 Theological Foundations

Padilla describes integral mission as the Church 'communicating the Gospel through everything it is, does and says.'⁵⁶ Drawing on Escobar's work⁵⁷, DeBorst describes the approach as 'radical, evangelical, trinitarian, and historically committed'⁵⁸ and identifies the kingdom of God as the 'hermeneutical key for the theological-missiological stance of the movement.'⁵⁹ Wright's missional hermeneutic⁶⁰ expounds a holistic soteriology through the whole biblical narrative. These central ideas form the theological foundations of integral mission, which we now explore.

⁴⁹ Lausanne Movement 2011: 24-25.

⁵⁰ Ibid.: 33.

⁵¹ Ibid.: 86.

⁵² Lausanne Movement 2011: 51.

⁵³ Schreiter 2011: 93.

⁵⁴ Tizon 2014: 180.

⁵⁵ Ibid.: 180.

⁵⁶ Padilla 2021: 22.

⁵⁷ Escobar 2012: 42.

⁵⁸ DeBorst 2016: 45.

⁵⁹ DeBorst 2016: 57-58.

⁶⁰ Wright 2006: 47.

2.2.1 Trinitarian Mission

Vinoth Ramachandra says trinitarian mission identifies 'the Triune God as the subject of mission'⁶¹ so that the *missio Dei* (mission of God) is prior to the *missio ecclesia* (mission of the church). Wright explains that 'mission flows from the inner dynamic movement of God in personal relationship.'⁶² The mission for which Christ was sent and anointed was holistic (Luke 4:18-19), so DeBorst explains that 'mission lived as an extension of Jesus's ministry'⁶³ cannot be limited to proclamation but 'involves being, doing and saying... having to do with God's Kingdom, Jesus's life and ministry, and the ever-present work of the Spirit.'⁶⁴

2.2.2 The Biblical Narrative and Holistic Salvation

Wright begins *The Mission of God*:

Mission is what the Bible is all about; we could as meaningfully talk of the missional basis of the Bible as of the biblical basis of mission.⁶⁵

Mark Galpin shows how Genesis 3 portrays human sin as disrupting the relationships between 'God and humanity, between Adam and Eve, between humanity and creation. [...] Adam and Eve's self-perception is also damaged through the fall.'⁶⁶ This holistic disruption (of all four relationships – with God, others, creation and the self) 'needs a holistic or integral solution'⁶⁷, and God's plan to bless the nations (Gen 12:2-3) - modelled in the election of Israel and fulfilled in Christ - brings about the final restoration of 'all the relationships broken at the fall.'⁶⁸ As Maggay wrote,

We are aiming for the length and breadth of **shalom**, for that seamless wholeness in all that makes us fully human as embodied for us by the Son of Man.⁶⁹

⁶¹ Ramachandra n.d.: 6.

⁶² Wright 2006: 63.

⁶³ DeBorst 2016: 44.

⁶⁴ Ibid.: 44.

⁶⁵ Wright 2006: 29.

⁶⁶ Galpin n.d.: 18.

⁶⁷ Ibid.: 49.

⁶⁸ Ibid.: 44.

⁶⁹ Maggay 1996: 60.

This 'four relationships paradigm' is evident in Nicholas Wolterstorff's writing on *shalom* (peace and human flourishing) in the context of the *missio Dei*⁷⁰, Newbigin's soteriology⁷¹, and Francis Schaeffer's call for ecological stewardship⁷². It forms the basis of Tearfund's *Church and Community Transformation*⁷³ programme, used in over 40 countries⁷⁴ and of Bryan L. Myers' understanding of the 'fundamentally relational'⁷⁵ nature of poverty. Ed Stetzer cautions that 'integral mission may... repeat the errors of the past in neglecting evangelism'⁷⁶, a point made more forcibly by Kevin De Young and Greg Gilbert in their wider critique of Wright⁷⁷. Conversely, Valdir Steuernagel alleges that in practice integral mission remains 'micro' and has yet to 'impact society'⁷⁸ and Daniel Clark suggests its focus needs broadening to include a response to corruption and nationalism⁷⁹. In my view the framework would be strengthened by consistently including the need to address what Newbigin calls the 'disharmony within man himself'⁸⁰ within the scope of mission, as the four relationships paradigm suggests. These challenges are a reminder that integral mission must remain holistic in a full biblical sense, but its holistic intent is thoroughly consistent with the call (expounded by Maggay⁸¹) 'to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:8).

2.2.3 The Revelation of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ

Wright explores the background to this theme in the promise of good news for the Jewish exiles in Isaiah 52-53 - that God reigns, will return and will redeem⁸². He shows how this promise is fulfilled in Christ⁸³, who brings 'good news to the poor' (Luke 4:16-21). Orlando

⁷⁰ Wolterstorff 1983: 69.

⁷¹ Newbigin 2009: 11-14.

⁷² Schaeffer and Middlemann 1992: 67. See also Longman 2016: chapter 3.

⁷³ Tearfund 2021.

⁷⁴ Tearfund 2023.

⁷⁵ Myers 2011: 156.

⁷⁶ Stetzer 2016: 168.

⁷⁷ De Young and Gilbert 2011.

⁷⁸ Steuernagel 2014: 315-316.

⁷⁹ Clark 2022: 32-49.

⁸⁰ Newbigin 2009: 21.

⁸¹ Maggay 2007: 12-18.

⁸² Wright 2010: 180-186.

⁸³ Wright 2010: 186-190.

Costas insists that this 'gospel of the kingdom of God [is] the central thrust of the evangelistic message.'⁸⁴ Padilla agrees:

Its [the Church's] purpose is to incarnate the values of the Kingdom of God and bear witness to the love and the justice revealed in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit, for the transformation of human life in all its dimensions.⁸⁵

This kingdom is eschatological but 'has become a present reality in history, in the person and work of Jesus Christ'⁸⁶ so that integral mission includes both a 'socially transformative agenda that is based on a Christological missionary pattern'⁸⁷ and a proclamation of the kingdom that 'evidences and points toward the restoration of all things.'⁸⁸

2.2.4 Ecclesiology

Writing in 1974, Costas speaks of the 'interrelatedness between the church's mission and her nature'⁸⁹, quoting Johannes Blauw:

There is no other Church than the Church sent into the world, and there is no other mission than that of the Church of Christ.⁹⁰

Padilla laments a traditional approach, in which 'the role of the local church was reduced to providing personal, spiritual and economic support for mission.'⁹¹ By contrast, DeBorst offers an ecclesiology of the Church as 'A School of Citizenship'⁹², preparing the people of God to be 'sent into the world in radical followership of Jesus for the sake of God's life-giving, transformative purposes'⁹³, such that the church gathering functions as 'a practice run for citizenship in the broader society.'⁹⁴ In her unpublished PhD thesis, Deborah Merle Hancox highlights the importance of the Church in integral mission and identifies six 'postures of the Church' which 'enable and authenticate its proclamation, service and witness.'⁹⁵ Padilla

⁸⁴ Costas 1975: 676-677.

⁸⁵ Padilla 2021: 22.

⁸⁶ Padilla 2004: 24.

⁸⁷ Escobar 2022: 23.

⁸⁸ DeBorst 2016: 58.

⁸⁹ Costas 1974: 44.

⁹⁰ Blauw 1962: 120.

⁹¹ Padilla 2021: 19.

⁹² Deborst 2018: 46-51.

⁹³ Deborst 2018: 47.

⁹⁴ Ibid.: 49.

⁹⁵ Hancox 2020: 71.

summarises this ecclesiology as the Church purposing to ‘communicate the Gospel through who she is, what she does and what she says.’⁹⁶ He describes the ‘integral church’ as:

A community of faith which gives priority to (1) commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of everything and everyone; (2) Christian discipleship as a missionary lifestyle...; (3) the vision of the church as the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and lives in the light of that confession [as] the inauguration of a new humanity and (4) the use of the gifts and ministries as instruments that the Spirit of God uses to prepare the church and all its members to fulfil their vocation as God’s co-workers in the world.⁹⁷

Despite the common perception that ‘evangelicals... have a weak ecclesiology’⁹⁸, Lausanne’s major documents are replete with references to the Church. The Lausanne Covenant calls the ‘whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world’⁹⁹ and describes the Church as ‘at the very centre of God’s cosmic purpose.’¹⁰⁰ The Manila Manifesto affirms that ‘the local church bears a primary responsibility for the spread of the gospel’¹⁰¹ and ‘is intended by God to be a sign of his kingdom.’¹⁰² The Cape Town Commitment includes at least sixty-four references to the Church and states that ‘the mission of the Church on earth is to serve the mission of God.’¹⁰³

The theological architects of integral mission thus evidence a deep commitment to the Church. Nonetheless, Daniel Clark believes that many of its advocates ‘identify primarily as members of seminaries, mission organisations, and NGOs rather than as members of local churches’¹⁰⁴, though this is by no means universally true. Dewi Hughes suggests Lausanne must guard against an ‘instrumentalist ecclesiology’¹⁰⁵ which treats the Church as a means rather than an end (though Wright clarified that this reflected a concern about the posture of some mission organisations¹⁰⁶). Steuernagel laments integral mission’s limited impact on the churches of Latin America and suggests it needs ‘to deepen and expand the holistic understanding of the mission of the church in order for it to become *integral*.’¹⁰⁷ Responding

⁹⁶ Padilla 2006: 15.

⁹⁷ Padilla 2004: 20.

⁹⁸ Goheen 2000: 227.

⁹⁹ Lausanne 1989: 51.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*: 51.

¹⁰¹ Lausanne 1975: 9.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*: 10.

¹⁰³ Lausanne 2011: 107.

¹⁰⁴ Clark 2022: 40.

¹⁰⁵ Hughes 2010: 46.

¹⁰⁶ Wright 2023: 31:44.

¹⁰⁷ Steuernagel 2014: 316.

to DeBorst's exposition of integral mission, Bevans suggests that the ecclesiology is perhaps 'implicit.'¹⁰⁸ In the lights of these various lines of critique, then, there is scope for further reflection on the relationship between integral mission and the Church.

2.3 Integral Mission – a Summary

The terms 'integral' and 'holistic' are often used synonymously. In this summary, however, I choose the term 'integral'. This is partly to acknowledge integral mission's Latin American provenance, partly to avoid the pantheistic connotations sometimes associated with holism¹⁰⁹, and also because, intrinsic to the Spanish phrase *misión integral*, is the assumption of a definitive model for mission that is truly comprehensive: namely, the *missio Dei* itself. I describe this *missio Dei* as the *source of integral mission*. Reflecting its comprehensive nature, I suggest that the *shape of integral mission* is best described in terms of the four relationships paradigm described by Wolterstorff¹¹⁰ and Galpin¹¹¹, including the need to seek wholeness in the sense of self. Reflecting Padilla's concern¹¹² to acknowledge the social dimensions of the gospel, I adopt the language of the CTC to describe the *scope of integral mission* as addressing the individual, society and creation¹¹³. Finally, reflecting Padilla's concept of the 'integral church'¹¹⁴ and Wright's exposition of the biblical narrative¹¹⁵, I describe the *strategy of integral mission* as centred on the Church, elect and blessed to be a means of blessing to the nations in its nature, actions and words. These key concepts are summarised in the following figure, which provides the basis for engagement with the work of Newbigin in subsequent chapters.

¹⁰⁸ Bevans 2016: 122.

¹⁰⁹ See for example Freeman, Joshua 2005:154-155.

¹¹⁰ Wolterstorff 1983: 69.

¹¹¹ Galpin n.d.: 13 fn 5.

¹¹² See Kirkpatrick 2016: 365.

¹¹³ Lausanne Movement 2011: 33.

¹¹⁴ Padilla 2004: 20.

¹¹⁵ Wright 2006.

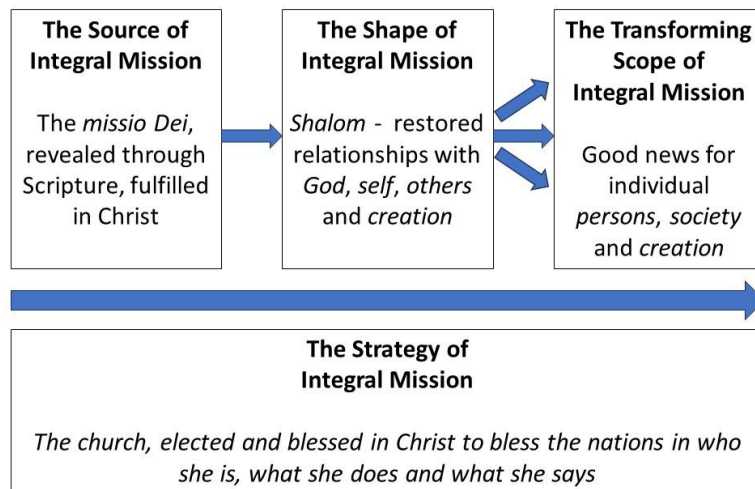


Figure 1: Summary of integral mission

CHAPTER 3 - A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE MISSIONARY ECCLESIOLOGY OF LESSLIE NEWBIGIN.

Andrew F. Walls writes that Lesslie Newbigin was ‘probably the most influential British mission theologian of the twentieth century.’¹¹⁶ Paul Weston describes him as ‘not just a figure of past importance but as a writer of continuing significance’¹¹⁷, a conclusion supported by Goheen and Timothy M. Sheridan who have traced his influence on several contemporary missional church movements¹¹⁸. Though prominent in ‘the international ecumenical scene’¹¹⁹ and in Christian mission within India, Newbigin is perhaps best known for his ‘missionary ecclesiology’¹²⁰, in the context of a ‘missionary encounter with Western culture.’¹²¹ This comes from the latter period of his life but is best understood in the context of his missionary experience and wider theological thought. Addressing research question 1.2 on Newbigin’s thinking, this chapter provides a brief sketch of his life, outlines his thought in epistemology, soteriology and missiology, considers his missionary ecclesiology, and concludes by identifying salient themes for a conversation with integral mission.

3.1 Newbigin’s Life

Newbigin came to faith after his first year at Queen’s College, Cambridge. One night during the summer vacation, while working with unemployed Welsh miners¹²², he was ‘granted a vision of the Cross that reached to the depths of human misery and gave ground for fresh hope’¹²³. and came to believe, ‘this was the clue that I must follow if I were to make any kind of sense of the world.’¹²⁴ Returning to Cambridge, he threw himself into the Student Christian Movement (SCM), ensuring that his new faith was ‘both sensitive to social questions and profoundly ecumenical.’¹²⁵ The following summer he received an ‘unexpected but

¹¹⁶ Walls 2016.

¹¹⁷ Weston 2006: vii.

¹¹⁸ Goheen and Sheridan 2022.

¹¹⁹ Wainwright 2000: 8.

¹²⁰ Goheen 2018.

¹²¹ Newbigin 1997: 98.

¹²² Weston 2006: 2.

¹²³ Wainwright 2000: 4.

¹²⁴ Newbigin 1993b: 11.

¹²⁵ Weston 2006: 3.

inescapable call to the ordained ministry¹²⁶ and trained at Westminster College, Cambridge from 1933 to 1936, emerging 'much more of an evangelical than a liberal.'¹²⁷ In 1936 he married Helen Henderson, with whom he was commissioned by the Church of Scotland for work in India¹²⁸ where they remained for most of the following four decades¹²⁹. Walter R. Shenk suggests that witnessing the missional impact of the rural churches of India clarified Newbigin's understanding that a missionary was to be a 'servant of the church.'¹³⁰ Newbigin's ecumenical interest was initially focused on bringing the South India United Church (Presbyterian and Congregationalist) together with the Methodists and Anglicans to form the 'Church of South India'¹³¹ (CSI), of which he became a bishop in 1947¹³². He went on to serve the International Missionary Council (IMC) for five years from 1959, seeking to 'bring mission and evangelism more fully' into the structures of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 1965 he returned to India as Bishop of Madras, envisioning the churches 'to think less of their own growth and welfare and more of God's purpose for the whole... city.'¹³³

In 1974 Newbigin retired and returned to Britain 'by way of an overland trek.'¹³⁴ During this time the profound changes in Western culture 'really hit home'¹³⁵, observing what he regarded as its sudden and complete loss of 'confidence in its own validity'¹³⁶ and 'the disappearance of hope.'¹³⁷ After five years lecturing at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, Newbigin became the pastor of a 'small [URC] congregation... situated immediately opposite the Winson Green Prison'¹³⁸ in Aston, Birmingham. Answering his own call for 'an authentically missionary approach to "modern" culture'¹³⁹, he went on to pioneer the *Gospel*

¹²⁶ Wainwright 2000: 4.

¹²⁷ Newbigin 1993b: 29.

¹²⁸ Ibid.: 4.

¹²⁹ Weston 2006: vii.

¹³⁰ Shenk 2015: 29.

¹³¹ Wainwright 2000: 6.

¹³² Weston 2006: 8.

¹³³ Newbigin 1993: 203.

¹³⁴ Wainwright 2000: 14.

¹³⁵ Weston 2006: 185.

¹³⁶ Newbigin 1983: 3.

¹³⁷ Ibid.: 1.

¹³⁸ Newbigin 1987b: 356.

¹³⁹ Newbigin 1983: 28.

and *Our Culture* programme (1988), writing extensively¹⁴⁰ around this theme until his death in 1998.

3.2 Newbigin's Thought

3.2.1 Epistemology

Reflection on *epistemology* was crucial to Newbigin's missionary response to modernity in the West, both in its Cartesian form and its modified expressions in late/post-modernity¹⁴¹. Weston shows¹⁴² that many of the seeds of Newbigin's later thinking were already evident in his essay on the doctrine of revelation, written whilst at Westminster. Newbigin begins with the belief that 'the meaning of the world is personal'¹⁴³ – but personal knowledge is possible only if one person 'chooses to reveal himself' and the other 'is sensitive and trustful to respond', so knowledge is both external to us and our own. Second, he asserts that 'the meaning of man's life is in fellowship'¹⁴⁴, so that the revelation, upon which our knowledge of God is contingent, comes to us 'along the chain of a historic community'¹⁴⁵ (the Church). For John Williams, this ecclesial understanding of revelation raises questions about the closure of the canon and the limits of hermeneutical control¹⁴⁶, but clearly ecclesiology is already important in Newbigin's thinking¹⁴⁷. Many of these insights are reflected in *Honest Religion for Secular Man*¹⁴⁸ (1966), which describes biblical knowing as 'the mutual knowledge of persons'¹⁴⁹. Newbigin draws on the Hungarian philosopher of science, Michael Polanyi¹⁵⁰, to extend the application of this epistemological premise: *all* knowing, he argues, is a 'skill'¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁰ Weston 2006: 13.

¹⁴¹ Newbigin 1993a: 230-231.

¹⁴² Weston 2006: 17-18.

¹⁴³ Newbigin 1936: 1.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 1-3.

¹⁴⁶ Williams 1993: 17.

¹⁴⁷ See Sherman 2012: 87.

¹⁴⁸ Newbigin 1966.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 79.

¹⁵⁰ See Polanyi 1958.

¹⁵¹ Newbigin 1966: 80.

which is acquired by 'persons in community'¹⁵² – whether knowledge of God in the community of the Church, or knowledge developed within the 'republic of science.'¹⁵³ He uses Polanyi's analogy of a surgeon learning to use a surgical probe until 'one can almost say that the probe is an extension of his hand... he *indwells* the probe.'¹⁵⁴ The experienced surgeon is 'a-critically' and 'tacitly aware' of the probe but 'focally aware' of what the probe is teaching them about their patient¹⁵⁵, and it is only by using this tacit and a-critical knowledge that they can gain the new knowledge. In a similar (though not identical) way the Church, as it comes to know the Christian story tacitly and a-critically, is able to use this knowledge to interpret and understand the meaning of the world. This insight becomes central to his missionary ecclesiology because the Church is called so to 'indwell the Christian story'¹⁵⁶ – living in and by the story - that others come to see it as plausible and compelling¹⁵⁷. Goheen concurs with this insight but suggests it could have been strengthened by engagement with later philosophers of science¹⁵⁸.

3.2.2 Soteriology

The priority of ecclesiology in Newbigin's soteriology is evident in *Sin and Salvation*¹⁵⁹ (1956) which, in addressing 'how salvation becomes ours'¹⁶⁰, begins with the Church, before moving to faith. He explains, this is:

the order which the non-Christian has to follow when he comes to Christ. What he sees is a visible congregation in his village... Only when he has come within its fellowship does he (usually) come to any deep understanding of its inner source.¹⁶¹

Newbigin's understanding of salvation reflects his reading of the biblical story, with fallen humanity 'full of self-contradiction'¹⁶², which entails 'disharmony within man himself...

¹⁵² Newbigin 1966: 80.

¹⁵³ Goheen 2000: 385.

¹⁵⁴ Newbigin 1989: 41.

¹⁵⁵ Newbigin 1989: 41-42.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 48.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 163, 244.

¹⁵⁸ Goheen 2000: 388.

¹⁵⁹ Newbigin 1956.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 92-114.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 9.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*: 11.

between man and nature... between man and man... between man and God.¹⁶³ Salvation is understood by this fourfold paradigm as 'the summing up of all things in Christ... the restoring of the lost unity between man and God, man and man, man and nature'¹⁶⁴, although Goheen regards his theology of creation and its implications for mission as underdeveloped¹⁶⁵. Again, ecclesiology is central as he argues that 'the sphere of salvation should be a visible fellowship... [in which] there is an earnest and foretaste of the restoration of creation to its true harmony in and for God's glory, and of man to his true relation to the created world.'¹⁶⁶ Newbiggin's theology of atonement is influenced by James Denny's commentary on Romans. He understands 'the cross as both the demonstration of God's patient love and the manifestation of his righteous judgement.'¹⁶⁷ He nonetheless resists reducing his understanding to a single model¹⁶⁸. In his later work, he 'develops the idea that the cross reveals God's 'unmasking' of the spiritual 'principalities and powers''¹⁶⁹ embodied in social and political structures, so that the gospel addresses not only individuals but also societies, governments, and nations¹⁷⁰.

3.2.3 Missiology

Newbiggin's thinking developed in the crucible of missionary practice. He spoke of mission or the missionary dimension to distinguish 'the entire task for which the Church is sent into the world'¹⁷¹ from 'the specific foreign missionary task'¹⁷² which he called missions or the missionary intention. His missiology was trinitarian – something evident as early as 1963¹⁷³ - believing that it was only in the context of the Trinity that the identity of Jesus could be preached¹⁷⁴ and that mission is an action of God in which the Spirit's role is pivotal.

¹⁶³ Newbiggin 195: 21-22.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.: 115.

¹⁶⁵ Goheen 2000: 161.

¹⁶⁶ Newbiggin 1953: 65.

¹⁶⁷ Weston 2006: 29.

¹⁶⁸ Newbiggin 1953: 62.

¹⁶⁹ Weston 2006: 29.

¹⁷⁰ Newbiggin 1989: 210.

¹⁷¹ Newbiggin 1989: 132.

¹⁷² Newbiggin 1960: 911.

¹⁷³ Newbiggin 1963: 31-34.

¹⁷⁴ See also Newbiggin 1995: 19-29.

The Church is not so much the agent of the mission as the locus of the mission. It is God who acts in the power of his Spirit, doing mighty works, creating signs of a new age, working secretly in the hearts of men and women to draw them to Christ.¹⁷⁵

Goheen highlights limitations in Newbigin's theology of the work of the Spirit in the world (as well as the Church)¹⁷⁶ but Amos Yong, writing from a Pentecostal perspective, recognises he 'played a key role in retrieving trinitarian theology for the theology of mission'¹⁷⁷ and displayed prescient 'attentiveness... to a burgeoning Pentecostal movement.'¹⁷⁸ This pneumatological emphasis was central to Newbigin's understanding of the relationship between word and deed in the mission of the Church since, for him, the 'new reality' created by the Spirit was prior to both.

It is impossible to stress too strongly that the beginning of mission is not an action of ours, but the presence of a new reality, the presence of the Spirit of God in power.¹⁷⁹

He points out that in Matthew 10 the call to heal (1) precedes the call to preach (7) and concludes that the 'new reality' of the kingdom, instantiated by the Spirit, is revealed by the healings (deeds) which prompt the question to which the preaching (words) is the answer¹⁸⁰. For Newbigin, then, word and deed must go together, for while 'the words without the deeds lack authority! The deeds without the words are dumb, they lack meaning.'¹⁸¹ Newbigin wrote thoughtfully about contextualisation in mission, believing that the gospel must be 'communicated in the language of those to whom it is addressed and has to be clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them'¹⁸², though Bevans suggests Newbigin over-emphasised the 'counter-cultural' model¹⁸³. In the context of mission in the West, Newbigin emphasised the gospel as 'public truth.'¹⁸⁴ Drawing on Polanyi again, he suggests that, just as a scientist who adopts a new paradigm of understanding 'commits himself to the new vision... with universal intent'¹⁸⁵ as a 'true account of reality'¹⁸⁶, so the Christian holds the

¹⁷⁵ Newbigin 1989: 129.

¹⁷⁶ Goheen 2000: 188, 225.

¹⁷⁷ Yong 2014: 118.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.: 119.

¹⁷⁹ Newbigin 1989: 130.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.: 142.

¹⁸¹ Newbigin 1988: 40.

¹⁸² Newbigin 1989: 152.

¹⁸³ See Goheen 2000: 424.

¹⁸⁴ Newbigin 1991.

¹⁸⁵ Newbigin 1989: 57.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.: 58.

faith 'with universal intent... as the truth which is true for all.'¹⁸⁷ He therefore calls the Church to 'claim the high ground of public truth'¹⁸⁸ – not by coercion since 'assent to the claim of Christ has to be given in freedom'¹⁸⁹ (though there are ambiguities in his attitude to Christendom¹⁹⁰), but by resisting the myth of secular neutrality and representing 'the kingdom of God in the life of society.'¹⁹¹ Weston probes whether Newbigin's dependence on Polanyi weakens this contribution, since the 'appeal to the rationality of the Christian story in the public sphere is always prefaced by the need for faith in both the Trinity and the incarnation. As a result, the two modalities are left too distantly related to each other, or too sharply contrasted.'¹⁹² Similarly, Krish Kandiah¹⁹³ argues that he lacks a developed theology of general revelation, though Goheen believes it was implicit in his thinking¹⁹⁴. Undoubtedly for Newbigin the primary reality 'in seeking for a Christian impact on public life is the Christian congregation'¹⁹⁵, bringing the focus back to ecclesiology.

3.3 Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology

As I have argued previously, 'it would be as true to say that Newbigin's missiology is ecclesial as to say that his ecclesiology is missional: for Newbigin ecclesiology is not so much a part of his theology as the setting for all of his theology.'¹⁹⁶ In his own words, 'the thread which binds the whole Bible story together is emphatically not the history of an idea but the history of a people.'¹⁹⁷ It was in the 1950's, reflecting his own missionary experience and the trends within the ecumenical movement, that this *ecclesiocentric* approach became paramount in Newbigin's theology¹⁹⁸. The foundations of his ecclesiology are essentially ecumenical and reformed, encompassing 'the word, the sacraments and the apostolic

¹⁸⁷ Newbigin 1989: 61.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.: 233.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.: 234.

¹⁹⁰ Goheen 2000: 197.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.: 236.

¹⁹² Weston 2001: 314.

¹⁹³ Kandiah 2005: 144-147.

¹⁹⁴ Goheen 2023: 17:22.

¹⁹⁵ Weston 2001: 236.

¹⁹⁶ Risbridger 2023: 7.

¹⁹⁷ Newbigin 1953: 62.

¹⁹⁸ Goheen 2000: 24-5.

ministry¹⁹⁹ but always with an emphasis on the unity and visibility of the community, which is 'simply humanity in every place re-created in Christ.'²⁰⁰ His thinking encompasses both the Church gathered and the Church scattered²⁰¹, emphasising the importance of the former in preparing believers for the latter²⁰². Mission is at the heart of the Church's existence because Jesus' strategy was not to write a book but to 'to prepare a community chosen to be the bearer of the secret of the kingdom.'²⁰³ This language reflects a missiological understanding of election within Newbigin's thinking. Election means being 'incorporated into his [God's] mission to the world, to be the bearer of God's saving purpose for his whole world'²⁰⁴, so that (reflecting his epistemology²⁰⁵) salvation is received only by means of opening ourselves to God's elect messengers²⁰⁶. Given this 'logic of election'²⁰⁷, 'an unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an un-missionary church.'²⁰⁸

The mission of the Church is to be carried out 'in Christ's way'²⁰⁹ because (John 20:21) 'the Church is a movement launched into the world in the same sense in which Jesus is sent into the world by the Father.'²¹⁰ This entails a willingness to follow Christ in his suffering²¹¹ and in proclaiming the kingdom of God²¹². The emphasis on the kingdom is central for Newbigin, both as a message for the Church to proclaim and a reality for it to embody.

The Church is sign, instrument and foretaste of God's reign for that "place", that segment of the total fabric of humanity, for which it is responsible.²¹³

¹⁹⁹ Goheen 2000: 21.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.: 21.

²⁰¹ Newbigin 1987b: 356.

²⁰² Newbigin 1989: 249.

²⁰³ Newbigin 1989: 144.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.: 96.

²⁰⁵ Newbigin 1936: 1-3.

²⁰⁶ Newbigin 1989: 92.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.: chapter 7.

²⁰⁸ Newbigin 1953: 143.

²⁰⁹ Newbigin 1987a: vii.

²¹⁰ Newbigin 1988: 32.

²¹¹ Ibid.: 34.

²¹² Newbigin 1987a: 10.

²¹³ Newbigin 1988: 37.

The eschatological orientation here is crucial: the Church is constituted around the confident hope of 'a reality which lies beyond history, beyond death'²¹⁴ - the final consummation of the reign of God. The Church's 'life is centred in that reality'²¹⁵, so that it is 'not to be defined by what it is, but by that End to which it moves.'²¹⁶ The mission of the Church is, by the Spirit, to embody this eschatological hope in the middle of time, as the sign, instrument and foretaste of God's reign²¹⁷. This is a high view of the Church, which Williams suggests demands a highly 'associational' ecclesiology which he argues is separatist and self-defeating²¹⁸ (though it is questionable whether all forms of separatism are self-defeating). For Newbigin, the church is a present celebration and experience 'of a greater reality still to come.'²¹⁹ 'Her life is a *real* foretaste of it, a real participation in the life of God himself'²²⁰, ensuring that the Church is an end in itself, not merely a means to an end²²¹, so his ecclesiology avoids instrumentalism²²². Nonetheless *as a foretaste* the Church 'can also be an instrument of the reign of God, an instrument by which its justice is done'²²³ and a sign that points 'people to a reality which is *beyond what we can see*.'²²⁴

We are erecting in this world, here and now, signs – credible signs – that make it possible for people to believe that that is the great reality and, therefore, to join us in going that way.²²⁵

Newbigin's ecclesiology is missional because first it is eschatological.

The pneumatological emphasis is seen in his idea of the 'new reality' brought about by the Spirit in the Church, which overflows in deeds that evidence the kingdom, which are then explained in words that proclaim its truth²²⁶. 'For Newbigin, mission is first of all about being – being the new humanity, being a distinctive community. The doing and the going flow from

²¹⁴ Newbigin 1988: 40.

²¹⁵ Newbigin 1987b: 357.

²¹⁶ Newbigin 1953: 26.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 26.

²¹⁸ Williams 1993: 18-19.

²¹⁹ Newbigin 1988: 38, italics mine.

²²⁰ Newbigin 1953: 147, italics original.

²²¹ *Ibid.*: 147.

²²² *Ibid.*: 148.

²²³ Newbigin 1988: 40.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*: 40, italics mine.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*: 40.

²²⁶ Newbigin 1989: chapters 10-11.

this.²²⁷ This calling, however, cannot be merely abstract; it must be lived out in and for the local community. 'In the New Testament, the Church is always and only designated by reference to two realities: one, God, God in Christ; and the other, the place where the Church is.'²²⁸ The Church 'is the Church of God *for that* "place" because the church does not exist for itself but for God'²²⁹. However, this must be 'defined Christologically... by the sense in which Christ is *for the world*'²³⁰ - which involves both identification with the world and judgement. The Church, then, is '*for the world against the world; ...[and] against the world for the world.*'²³¹

Newbigin's vision of being the Church for the world is most fully encapsulated in what are probably his best-known words:

How is it possible that the gospel should be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, *the only hermeneutic of the gospel*, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.²³²

This concept has its roots in Newbigin's epistemology: attempts to defend the gospel by appeal to autonomous reason is 'a tactical retreat'²³³ which leaves the assumptions of modernity unchallenged. The gospel 'rests on no authority beyond itself.'²³⁴ Conversion is the work of the Spirit, but it is 'in the believing congregation gathered for praise and... scattered throughout the community'²³⁵ that he is present, so that as the congregation indwells the Christian story, it becomes 'the method of the gospel's interpretation'²³⁶ to the world.

Insofar as it is true to its calling, it [the local church] becomes the place where men and women and children find that the gospel gives them the framework of understanding, the "lenses" through which they are able to understand and cope with the world.²³⁷

²²⁷ Goheen 1988: 78.

²²⁸ Newbigin 1988: 28.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*: 30.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*: 31.

²³¹ *Ibid.*: 31.

²³² Newbigin 1989: 238.

²³³ *Ibid.*: 11.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*: 15.

²³⁵ Newbigin 1987b: 356.

²³⁶ Flett 2012: 157.

²³⁷ Newbigin 1989: 238, italics mine.

Such a congregation will be a community of praise, of truth, 'deeply involved in the concerns of its neighbourhood'²³⁸, where people are prepared for their 'priesthood in the world', a community of mutual responsibility and of hope²³⁹.

3.4 Conclusions

The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.²⁴⁰

This statement from *Ad Gentes* parallels Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology, which focuses on the nature of the Church in mission not just its actions. In the 'logic of mission'²⁴¹ it is 'the *ontological* priority of the new reality which the work of Christ has brought into being'²⁴² by the Spirit in the Church, which is paramount. From this trinitarian starting point, several significant ecclesiological themes emerge:

1. The *logic of election* in which the Church is chosen to bear the gospel message in a particular place/culture;
2. The *Christian story*, to which the biblical narrative bears witness, passed 'along the chain of a historic community'²⁴³ to each generation, which the Church is to '*indwell*' in such a way that others come to see its plausibility and power;
3. The *Spirit as the foretaste of the kingdom*, who creates the 'new reality' which is the living Church, making it a *foretaste and therefore an instrument and sign of the Kingdom*.

Bearing the message for which it is chosen, indwelling the story which it has received and demonstrating the coming kingdom of which it is the foretaste, the congregation becomes the *hermeneutic of the gospel* and the *church for the world*. The figure below seeks to represent these salient themes, which inform the conversation with integral mission that is the focus of this research.

²³⁸ Ibid.: 239.

²³⁹ Ibid.: 238-244.

²⁴⁰ Vatican II 1965: 2.

²⁴¹ Newbigin 1989: chapter 10.

²⁴² Ibid.: 148.

²⁴³ Newbigin 1936: 1-3.

| | | | | | |
|-----------|--------|---|--|--|-------|
| | | Being the Church for the world | | | |
| Mission | SAYING | Congregation as hermeneutic of the gospel | | | DOING |
| | | Proclaim the gospel | Interpret the story | Sign and instrument of the kingdom | |
| Community | BEING | Location Calling | Indwell Receive | Foretaste New reality | BEING |
| Trinity | | Father (Logic of election) | Son (Epistemology and the Christian story) | Holy Spirit (<i>Arrabon</i> of kingdom) | |
| | | GOSPEL | KINGDOM | | |

Figure 2: Summary of Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology

CHAPTER 4 - INTEGRAL MISSION AND MISSIONARY ECCLESIOLOGY IN LIVED EXPERIENCE

4.1 Paradigm Shift

Towards the end of 2010 an idea for a sermon series was forming in my mind. I wanted to teach the spiritual disciplines not as duties to fulfil but as pathways to follow to experience the blessing of God. With help from a colleague, I settled (a little apprehensively) on a series title: 'God wants to bless you!' The lead-up to the concluding sermon coincided with a church leadership weekend reviewing global mission. With our thinking freshly expanded by reading *The Mission of God's People* by Christopher J. H. Wright²⁴⁴, we discussed what we had learned: our mission was a participation in the mission of God; we needed to move beyond well-worn mission texts to see mission throughout Scripture; God had blessed us to make us agents of his blessing in the nations; and that blessing impacts all of human existence. Alongside our many conclusions were two unexpected outcomes. First, the concluding sermon needed a different focus: God wants to bless us, but he 'is a God of mission'²⁴⁵ and 'his mission is to make us a blessing in the nations.'²⁴⁶ Second, since mission is a participation in the one *missio Dei*, the church's local mission needed to reflect what we were learning about its global mission. We could only be 'mission-focused'²⁴⁷ if we embraced this holistic vision of mission for our own locality, 'blessing our city'²⁴⁸ (Southampton) as participants in the mission of God. The paradigm shift in our thinking was encapsulated in a new catchphrase: we were 'blessed to be a blessing'.

4.2 Autoethnography

This chapter explores the context identified in research question 2 by autoethnographic reflection. 'Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand

²⁴⁴ Wright 2010.

²⁴⁵ Risbridger 2011: 3a.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.: 3a.

²⁴⁷ Above Bar Church 2022.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.: 3b

cultural experience (*ethno*).²⁴⁹ It uses ‘deep and careful self-reflection — typically referred to as “reflexivity” — to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general.’²⁵⁰ The term was first used in the 1970s but a significant body of academic literature began to emerge in the 1990s²⁵¹. Autoethnography is partly a response to the postmodern crisis of confidence in the social sciences²⁵², questioning the ideas of objectivity and universal truth. It probes the role of the ‘ethnographic self’²⁵³, recognises it as a resource, and addresses the colonial connotations around writing about a culture for personal gain²⁵⁴, since people can speak for themselves as cultural ‘insiders.’²⁵⁵ Elliot Marlen Harrison describes autoethnography as ‘a method of qualitative inquiry that unites autobiography... and ethnography... by utilizing lived experience as evidence with which to explore cultural phenomena.’²⁵⁶ The autobiography may entail evocative ‘tales’²⁵⁷ and ‘epiphany’²⁵⁸ moments, but autoethnography seeks to combine them with reflective analysis. It recognises the impact of the author’s involvement in what they write about - on themselves (therapeutically²⁵⁹) and on others who may be implicated²⁶⁰ in what is written – necessitating heightened attention to relational ethics²⁶¹. In writing as my ‘present self’ about experiences of my ‘past self’ I recognise that I draw on ‘autonoetic memory’ of experience more than ‘semantic memory’ of facts²⁶², so I have used written sources from this time, such as policy papers and sermon transcripts, to triangulate my own reflections in the light of my theoretical framework.

²⁴⁹ Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011: section 1.

²⁵⁰ Adams, Jones and Ellis 2015: 2.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 17.

²⁵² Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011: section 1.

²⁵³ Collins and Gallinat 2013: chapter 1.

²⁵⁴ Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011: section 1.

²⁵⁵ Collins and Gallinat 2013: chapter 1.

²⁵⁶ Harrison 2022.

²⁵⁷ Poulos 2021: 5.

²⁵⁸ Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011: section 2.

²⁵⁹ Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011: section 4.1.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: section 4.1.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*: section 4.1.

²⁶² Collins and Gallinat 2013: chapter 1.

4.3 Narrative

I served as Minister and Team Leader of Above Bar Church (ABC) from 2004 until 2022. The church is congregational in polity, with an emphasis on shared leadership and teamworking. Having been the Team Leader, I write from the perspective of a powerful position, so will focus on my own experiences more than those of others. ABC's building is on the central street of Southampton, drawing its congregation from across the city, and would be considered a large church by UK standards. Southampton is a port city with a population of 249,000²⁶³. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMP 2019) ranks it 55 out of 317 local authorities, making it a 'relatively deprived city'²⁶⁴, with below-average incomes believed to drive 'crime and poor health outcomes.'²⁶⁵ Levels of homelessness are above the national average²⁶⁶ and in the decade from 2011, there was 'a 44.3% increase in the number of people born outside the UK in Southampton.'²⁶⁷ The city's universities, hospitals, maritime and technology sectors are large employers, enabling many to sustain higher standards of living. This diversity is common in 21st Century cities which, according to the United Nations, 'combine...paradoxical extremes of wealth and poverty.'²⁶⁸

In this context, integral mission's understanding of poverty²⁶⁹ gave the church a strong tool for analysis, enabling us to see the many forms it takes. The diverse realities of the community were literally outside the door of ABC's building and, inspired by our new understanding, we were eager to engage. In 2011 we were asked to host the local foodbank, and willingly agreed. A small team started a breakfast club for homeless and vulnerably housed people, regularly attended by the Council's homelessness prevention team. A colleague partnered with Christians Against Poverty to set up a debt centre in 2014. In 2015 I wrote an integral mission policy paper²⁷⁰ to shape to our local practice. A Language Café was also established for people wanting to learn English. People from these initiatives joined Alpha courses and Bible studies, and started attending Sunday services, which had to adapt accordingly. Such ministries already existed in many other churches, of course, but for ABC

²⁶³ Office for National Statistics 2022.

²⁶⁴ Southampton City Council 2022a: 3.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.: 4.

²⁶⁶ Southampton City Council 2018: 9.

²⁶⁷ Southampton City Council 2022b: 4.

²⁶⁸ United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2005: 10.

²⁶⁹ See Myers 2011.

²⁷⁰ See Appendix 1.

integral mission helped us learn from the experience of others, and to start developing multi-layered ministries for different groups, addressing material, spiritual, emotional and social poverty. I participated personally in some of these ministries, prioritised involvement in Alpha courses and evangelistic work with individuals and adapted my preaching style to be more accessible.

It was an exciting journey, which transformed ABC's reputation in the city and reframed my understanding of church and ministry. However, tensions which were already emerging before the COVID-19 pandemic were exacerbated under the strains of lockdown. Some felt (perhaps fairly) that serving the city was being prioritised over care of the church; some felt accessibility had compromised the depth of biblical teaching; others wanted a more expansive vision for the city. The differences crystallised around the relative priority of mission and discipleship in the church, with a sense of frustration and disappointment all round. For myself, as a pastor I was troubled about people feeling neglected and by the questioning of my preaching, but I also aspired to go further in mission and worried that progress could be lost.

4.4 Reflection

I found it difficult to work within the tensions, so inevitably there is a therapeutic element in my reflections. However, I will seek to maintain an analytical perspective by using my theoretical framework to guide my reflection. The framework emphasises that the mission of the Church is a participation in the mission of God. I taught this regularly²⁷¹, but on reflection our conversation focused too much on what we could do, and too little on considering how the mission of God shaped our priorities. Also, despite embracing the four-relationships paradigm, it was not applied systematically enough to be embedded in our culture. Similarly, an *ecclesiocentric* view was implicit in our 'blessed to be a blessing' catchphrase, but our thinking focused more on our actions and words than on the being and relationships of the church. Undoubtedly some felt neglected as a result. Looking back, I think I interpreted apparent lack of resistance to integral mission as indicating acceptance, and so paid inadequate attention to laying strong theological foundations for deep ecclesiological change. Investing time and energy in theological reflection (perhaps using Laurie Green's 'Doing Theology Spiral'²⁷²) could have enhanced understanding of integral mission and hearing of

²⁷¹ Risbridger 2011: 1a-2b.

²⁷² Green 2009: 19.

dissenting voices. There were many insights in my theoretical framework which could have been part of such theological reflection. However, my conclusion is that we particularly lacked Newbigin's thinking about the ontology of the Church in mission, his understanding of what it is *called to be* as a missional presence in the community. We did not have a developed understanding of the Church 'indwelling'²⁷³ the Christian story as a 'hermeneutic for the gospel'²⁷⁴ in its community. Newbigin's insight that the Church can only be an instrument and sign of the kingdom of God if its own life is a foretaste of the kingdom, would have addressed the tensions directly. His approach establishes a profound continuity between what the Church is in its inner life (when consistent with its true nature) and what the Church is in mission. Perhaps then, with this understanding, the perceived dichotomy between mission and discipleship could have been overcome.

Feeling considerable turmoil as I tried to navigate these tensions, I took a day out to reflect, coming back to the ideas of integral mission. Why was I so convinced of this understanding of mission as holistic and integral? The answer was obvious: our mission had to reflect the holistic gospel of the biblical narrative. However, there was another question: if the gospel is holistic and integral how could our *discipleship* not also be holistic and integral? I am still reflecting on the implications of that question but have concluded that tensions on the relative priority of mission and discipleship were missing the real problem, which was that we had allowed our understanding of both to diverge. The idea of integral mission could only be embedded in the church with a parallel vision of discipleship which was ecclesial in nature and which moved beyond pietistic and therapeutic categories to embrace the holistic and integral scope of the gospel²⁷⁵. Integral mission needed to be brought together with 'integral discipleship' and both woven into an 'integral ecclesiology' of what the Church is called to be, do and say.

²⁷³ See Fig. 2.

²⁷⁴ Newbigin 1989: 237.

²⁷⁵ Risbridger 2022: 4.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION: INTEGRAL MISSION AND MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY IN CONVERSATION

Having explored the integral mission and Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology and reflected on my city-centre context, this chapter brings them together to consider the relevance of Newbigin's thought for applying integral mission in a local church (research question 1). It explores areas of convergence, divergence and complementarity between integral mission and Newbigin and concludes with key insights from each, to contribute to an 'integral ecclesiology'. It also brings in material from my interviews with three scholars, each of whom were supportive of the research. Wright²⁷⁶ suggested links with Michael J. Gorman's work²⁷⁷. Deborst agreed²⁷⁸ that the focus on the ontology of the Church in Newbigin's ecclesiology fitted well with integral mission, noting Padilla's emphasis on discipleship and the Church. Goheen stressed Newbigin's emphasis on the 'being' of the Church²⁷⁹ and argued that Newbigin's theology of mission was itself comprehensive²⁸⁰.

5.1 Convergence

5.1.1 Theological Framework

Walls describes Newbigin as 'an atheist in youth and theologically liberal as a young Christian.'²⁸¹ He was part of the ecumenical movement and, although he had personal friendships with Fergus Macdonald and Andrew Walls²⁸² from Lausanne, neither the literature nor my interviews suggest significant links with the movement. Nonetheless, Newbigin described himself as 'much more of an evangelical than a liberal'²⁸³ when he left Cambridge in 1936. This, together with his soteriology²⁸⁴, his strong Trinitarianism²⁸⁵, and the

²⁷⁶ Wright 2013.

²⁷⁷ Gorman 2015.

²⁷⁸ Deborst 2023: 2:00.

²⁷⁹ Goheen 2023: 1:17:00.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.: 1:13:30.

²⁸¹ Walls 2016.

²⁸² Dowsett 2023.

²⁸³ Newbigin 1993b: 29.

²⁸⁴ See section 3.2.2; Newbigin 1956.

²⁸⁵ Newbigin 1963: 31-4.

importance he attached to Scripture²⁸⁶, all suggest significant alignment with evangelicalism, described by David Bebbington's quadrilateral as Biblicism, Crucicentrism, Conversionism and Activism²⁸⁷. Integral mission is the work of people from a variety of theological persuasions, but is nonetheless a missiology of evangelicalism, of which Lausanne's core documents would be generally considered representative, and these reflect Bebbington's themes. Their accounts of biblical authority differ somewhat, but they share a strong emphasis on the biblical narrative²⁸⁸ ('For Newbigin... the Christian faith is a story fulfilled in Jesus'²⁸⁹; 'This is the story of God's action in God's world... we are storied into God's story'²⁹⁰). This leads to a holistic view of salvation, set out by Newbigin in 1956²⁹¹ and shared by Lausanne²⁹².

5.1.2 Missiology

Newbigin and integral mission both subscribe²⁹³ to what Goheen calls a *Christocentric-Trinitarian*²⁹⁴ model (emphasising evangelism and conversion) more than the *cosmocentric*²⁹⁵ model of Konrad Raiser²⁹⁶ (highlighting the Church's contribution to society²⁹⁷). This leads to a shared emphasis on divine initiative in mission ('everything we do should be governed by what God is about in the world'²⁹⁸), with the *missio Dei* being prior to the *missio ecclesiae* (though both emphasise the centrality of the Church in *missio Dei*²⁹⁹). Reflecting their holistic soteriology, both frameworks affirm the importance of evangelism and social responsibility, though sometimes with differences in how the two are related. Maggay³⁰⁰, with the Latin

²⁸⁶ Newbigin 1988: 27; and Newbigin 1989: 165.

²⁸⁷ Bebbington: 2-19.

²⁸⁸ See Newbigin 1989: chapter 9; Lausanne Movement 2011: 29-30.

²⁸⁹ Goheen 2023: 12:43; see also Williams 1993: 16.

²⁹⁰ Deborst 2023: 4:30.

²⁹¹ Newbigin 1956.

²⁹² Lausanne Movement 1989: 2 and Lausanne Movement 2011: 33 and 57.

²⁹³ See sections 2.2.1 and 3.2.3.

²⁹⁴ Goheen 2000: 119.

²⁹⁵ Goheen 2000: 158.

²⁹⁶ Raiser 1991.

²⁹⁷ Bosch 1991: 381.

²⁹⁸ Wright 2023: 22:25.

²⁹⁹ See Newbiggin 1989: 146 and Wright 2006: 63.

³⁰⁰ Maggay 2007: 9-10.

American pioneers of integral mission³⁰¹, emphasises the kingdom of God, in language similar to Newbigin's³⁰², a theme also in the Lausanne documents. There is also a common concern for the public square, with CTC speaking of defending biblical truth in the 'public arena'³⁰³ and Newbigin urging the church to 'claim the high ground of public truth.'³⁰⁴

5.1.3 Ecclesiology

Lausanne consistently says, 'God is calling the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.'³⁰⁵ Newbigin writes, "'As the Father has sent me, so I send you" defines the very being of the Church as mission.'³⁰⁶ Both approaches also emphasise the missiological thrust of election and George Hunsberger argues that election provides Newbigin with 'the clue for understanding mission'³⁰⁷. Newbigin links election with the scandal of historical particularity³⁰⁸ - the 'logic of election'³⁰⁹ implying that 'to receive God's saving revelation, we have to open the door to the neighbor whom he sends as his appointed messenger.'³¹⁰ Wright makes a strong link between election, ethical living and mission³¹¹, based on his reading of Genesis 18:18-19, Exodus 19:4-6, Deuteronomy 4 and 1 Peter 2:9-12, so that as the people of God walk in his ways, the unbelieving nations are drawn into his blessing.

³⁰¹ Padilla 2021: 22.

³⁰² Newbigin 1988: 37.

³⁰³ Lausanne Movement 2011: 57.

³⁰⁴ Newbigin 1989: 233.

³⁰⁵ Lausanne Movement 1989: affirmation 21.

³⁰⁶ Newbigin 1978: 242.

³⁰⁷ Hunsberger 1998: 45.

³⁰⁸ Newbigin 1989: 97.

³⁰⁹ Newbigin 1989: chapter 7.

³¹⁰ Ibid.: 91.

³¹¹ Wright 2006: 358-392.

5.2 Divergence

5.2.1 Theological Framework

Kandiah identifies a 'tension in Newbigin's theology between classic reformed doctrine and Barthianism'³¹² in his doctrine of revelation. The Barthian influence is evident in his caution on general revelation³¹³, external grounds for belief³¹⁴ and the possibility of connecting points with culture³¹⁵. However, what Kandiah calls Newbigin's 'coherentist epistemology'³¹⁶ overlaps with reformed presuppositionalism³¹⁷ (Goheen clarifies that Newbigin's presuppositions arise from the Christian story not systematic theology³¹⁸). On Scripture, Newbigin seeks a 'middle way' (which Williams suggests 'does not exist'³¹⁹) between fundamentalism and liberalism, wanting to 'speak with confidence about biblical authority' while warning against seeing Scripture as 'a compendium of factually inerrant propositions.'³²⁰ Lausanne seems to reflect a reformed/Kuyperian³²¹ tradition, stressing the universal Lordship of Christ³²², and affirms the 'divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of the... Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms.'³²³ However, Goheen argues the differences are more polemical and linguistic³²⁴ but that 'for Newbigin ultimately reliable truth is not found in ideas but in events.'³²⁵

³¹² Kandiah 2005: 332.

³¹³ Ibid.: 199.

³¹⁴ Ibid.: 57.

³¹⁵ Ibid.: 138 and 198.

³¹⁶ Ibid.: 58-59.

³¹⁷ Ibid.: 203.

³¹⁸ Goheen 2023: 30:27.

³¹⁹ Williams 1993: 20.

³²⁰ Newbigin 1989: 107.

³²¹ Henderson 2008: 12-14.

³²² Lausanne Movement 1989: 6.

³²³ Lausanne Movement 1975: 27.

³²⁴ Goheen 2023: 46:10; 52:20.

³²⁵ Ibid.: 42:05.

5.2.2 Missiology

Newbigin is critical of the prioritisation of church growth by Donald McGavran, who participated in the first Lausanne Congress³²⁶. He also resists prioritising evangelism³²⁷, in contrast to Lausanne's earlier positions³²⁸. However, many of the pioneers of integral mission shared these concerns³²⁹ and their influence is reflected in CTC. Both frameworks agree on the holistic shape of mission, though neither follows through consistently on the four relationships paradigm implicit in Newbigin's soteriology³³⁰. Goheen acknowledges that Newbigin rarely makes implications for creation and ecology explicit³³¹, where Wright states it was 'quite deliberately added'³³² within the CTC. Weston believes that Newbigin's over-dependence on Polanyi leaves him without adequate common ground for dialogue³³³ in pursuing public truth, and Kandiah argues similarly that his underdeveloped view of general revelation³³⁴ leads to a largely countercultural³³⁵ posture ('against culture' in Richard Niebuhr's categories³³⁶). Integral mission is not built on a specific epistemology, but its emphasis on the Lordship of Christ provides a basis for apologetics and intellectual engagement in the public arena³³⁷. For Newbigin 'the sense of apologetic would be organically interwoven into embodying the gospel and speaking the gospel'³³⁸ with the congregation as its 'hermeneutic.'³³⁹ However, he could have accepted some features of Calvin's understanding of general revelation (*sensus Divinitatis*, conscience, providence and creation³⁴⁰) without accepting a rationalist view, and Kandiah suggests his framework would benefit from this³⁴¹ – it is hard to see how any coherentist epistemology can be sustained

³²⁶ Newbigin 1987a: 35-36.

³²⁷ Newbigin 1989: 141-142.

³²⁸ Lausanne Movement 1975: 51 and 1989: 6.

³²⁹ See section 2.1.

³³⁰ See section 3.2.2.

³³¹ Goheen 2000: 176.

³³² Wright 2023: 29:15.

³³³ Weston 2001: 314-315.

³³⁴ Kandiah 2005: 207.

³³⁵ See Goheen 2000: 424 and Kandiah 2005: 133-139.

³³⁶ Niebuhr 1951: 45-82.

³³⁷ Lausanne Movement 1989: 4 and 2011: 57.

³³⁸ Goheen 2023: 35:02.

³³⁹ Newbigin 1987: 356 and 1989: 244.

³⁴⁰ See Kandiah 2005: 153-166.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 193-198.

otherwise. For Newbigin, engagement with society also requires an understanding of human power structures as embodiments³⁴² of the 'principalities and powers' in Pauline thinking (Colossians 2:8-15) which have been 'disarmed'³⁴³ and 'unmasked'³⁴⁴ by the cross and which we are to confront, not as anarchists but as 'patient revolutionaries'³⁴⁵ confidently anticipating new creation. Spiritual warfare is part of mission for Lausanne, but there is no detailed engagement with Colossians 2. However, Christopher J. Pappalardo argues³⁴⁶ that Newbigin's thinking is compatible with a more Kuyperian outlook and that 'both of these approaches are necessary.'³⁴⁷

5.2.3 Ecclesiology

Newbigin often refers to the ecclesiological themes of the word, sacraments, apostolic ministry, prayer, and fellowship³⁴⁸. Sacramental elements are absent from the core Lausanne documents, but this maybe a difference more of emphasis than conviction. Church unity is important for Newbigin, reflecting his deep commitment to the ecumenical movement³⁴⁹ and this was not just about dialogue and cooperation but 'organic unity'³⁵⁰ such as he pursued in the CSI. Church unity is also significant for Lausanne, but while there is a breadth of generosity³⁵¹, its focus is on evangelical and congregational unity.

5.3 Complementarity

5.3.1 Theological Framework

There is, then, potential to see several areas of apparent divergence between Newbigin and integral mission as complementary. Similarly, although Newbigin's epistemology influences

³⁴² Newbigin 1989: 218.

³⁴³ Ibid.: 249.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.: 219.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.: 219-220.

³⁴⁶ Pappalardo 2015: 599-614.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.: 614.

³⁴⁸ See for example Newbigin 1953: 14 and 21; 1989: 158; 1956: 94.

³⁴⁹ See for example Newbigin 1993b: 239.

³⁵⁰ Goheen 2000: 225.

³⁵¹ Ibid.: 9.

his doctrine of revelation to encompass the revelatory nature of evangelism³⁵² and the ecclesial mediation through which the message is received³⁵³, this could be understood as complementing Lausanne's high view of Scripture with a high view of preaching and the Church.

5.3.2 Missiology

The 'shape' and 'scope' of integral mission³⁵⁴ dovetails closely with the holistic soteriology of Newbigin and Lausanne. Lausanne's approach, initially framed around the dichotomy between evangelism and social responsibility³⁵⁵, broadened to encompass creation care in the CTC (paralleling Roman Catholic moves to 'locate the ecological at the very heart of Christian Mission'³⁵⁶), and Tearfund has adopted the 'four relationships' approach³⁵⁷. This account of mission transcends the earlier dichotomy within Lausanne and seems more systematically comprehensive than is typical in Newbigin. Newbigin's exposition of the Church as the sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God³⁵⁸ is more developed than in the Lausanne documents but is consistent with them. By beginning with the Church (by the Spirit) as the foretaste of the kingdom³⁵⁹, *before* it is the sign and instrument of the kingdom³⁶⁰, Newbigin locates the beginning of mission within the ontology of the Church, thus avoiding the charge of instrumentalism³⁶¹.

5.3.3 Ecclesiology

Newbigin's reflection on the nature of the Church in mission³⁶² is particularly powerful in complementing integral mission, which is so clear on the comprehensive shape and scope of

³⁵² Kandiah 2005: 28-29.

³⁵³ Newbigin 1936: 1-3.

³⁵⁴ See Figure 1.

³⁵⁵ Lausanne Movement 1975: 45.

³⁵⁶ Edwards 2013: 206.

³⁵⁷ Tear Fund 2021.

³⁵⁸ Newbigin 1988: 37-40.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 37-38.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 39-40.

³⁶¹ Newbigin 1953: 148.

³⁶² Section 3.3.

mission³⁶³. In a cursory reading of the CTC, I identified nine references to the nature and ontology of the Church compared with fifty-five to its role and calling. This is understandable, given that the document is a ‘confession of faith and a call to action’³⁶⁴ not a systematic theology. Nonetheless, it illustrates the potential for integral mission to benefit from Newbigin’s missionary ecclesiology – though Deborst (echoing Padilla) also emphasises mission is about ‘who we *are*... as a distinct alternative community but in the world.’³⁶⁵ In Newbigin’s language, they concur that the Church’s mission involves its being (he speaks of ‘new being’³⁶⁶ and ‘new reality’³⁶⁷), its actions and its words³⁶⁸, but while integral mission brings a comprehensive account of the Church’s actions and words, Newbigin brings a rich understanding of the new being / new reality³⁶⁹. This new reality is eschatological, since the Church is a ‘*real* foretaste’³⁷⁰ of the kingdom, and to live this ‘new reality’ is to ‘indwell’³⁷¹ the Christian story, such that the story becomes the lens³⁷² (the ‘plausibility structure’³⁷³) through which we navigate the particularities of our culture, as a discipleship community. Through this ‘indwelling of the story’, the local congregation becomes the means which bridges the epistemological impasse with unbelief, so that the foolishness³⁷⁴ of the gospel becomes credible³⁷⁵ to a sceptical world, interpreted through the witness of the congregation as the ‘hermeneutic of the gospel.’³⁷⁶ The story the Church lives and the story to which the Church witnesses are the same story. Newbigin’s understanding is echoed in Gorman’s interpretation of Paul, who ‘wanted the church communities he addressed not merely to believe the gospel but to become the gospel, and in so doing to participate in the very life and mission of God.’³⁷⁷ In Weston’s words, it:

³⁶³ Section 2.2.

³⁶⁴ Lausanne Movement 2011: 9.

³⁶⁵ Deborst 2023: 5:40, italics added.

³⁶⁶ Newbigin 1989: Chapter 11.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 146.

³⁶⁸ DeBorst 2016: 44.

³⁶⁹ See also Newbigin 1988: 38.

³⁷⁰ Newbigin 1989: 147.

³⁷¹ Newbigin 1989: 163.

³⁷² *Ibid.*: 238.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*: 244.

³⁷⁴ Newbigin 1986.

³⁷⁵ Newbigin 1989: 236.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 238.

³⁷⁷ Gorman 2015: 9.

...enables him to combine the corporate witness of the local believing community with the need for ongoing discipleship and faith. It represents perhaps Newbigin's most constructive contribution to the Church's ongoing life, creating an intrinsic and necessary connection between the concept of evangelism and witness as a 'function' of the Church's activity with the notion of witness as an integral part of a proper ecclesiological 'ontology'.³⁷⁸

5.4 Conclusions

This discussion has demonstrated significant convergence and complementarity between Newbigin and integral mission, clarified by secondary scholarship. I conclude that they are sufficiently compatible to be combined to develop an 'integral ecclesiology', which embeds integral mission and 'integral discipleship' (a concept I develop further in 6.1.3) in an ecclesial context. In outlining an 'integral ecclesiology, I therefore build on the shared *christocentric*-trinitarian understanding of the *missio Dei*, which is outworked in the biblical narrative in terms of holistic salvation. Using Kandiah's work I assume an epistemology that combines Newbigin's Polanyian insights with those of a Kuyperian view of general revelation as a basis for a missionary encounter with the culture, affirming both thoughtful engagement and the congregation indwelling the Christian story. Such engagement requires confidence in the reliability of the Scriptures and an awareness of the spiritual realities embodied in societal structures of power. The calling of the Church to mission arises from its election to bring blessing to the world, mediating the story in its witness and embodying it in its ethics. This understanding of the story will encourage the Church to indwell the same story in its discipleship that it proclaims in its mission, so as to be the 'hermeneutic of the gospel'³⁷⁹ and therefore 'the Church for the world.'³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Weston 2001: 317.

³⁷⁹ Newbigin 1989: 238.

³⁸⁰ Newbigin 1988.

CHAPTER 6 - TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR AN INTEGRAL ECCLESIOLOGY

Returning to my own experience³⁸¹, I have demonstrated the value of integral mission but suggested the parallel need for a concept of 'integral discipleship' with both embedded in an 'integral ecclesiology'.³⁸² In this chapter I combine insights from Newbigin with integral mission to propose an outline for this 'integral ecclesiology' and offer three models for integrating it within the theology, vision and practice of local city-centre churches.

6.1 Four Attributes of the Integral Church

Reflection on the Church has a long history in Christian theology. The Nicene Creed (as revised at Constantinople in 381) states that 'we believe... in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.'³⁸³ The reformers 'continued to affirm these attributes of the Church from the Nicene Creed'³⁸⁴ but added three 'marks' to identify a true church: 'true preaching of the word; proper observance of the sacraments; and faithful exercise of church discipline.'³⁸⁵ What follows is not an alternative to these but an attempt to contextualise them for the setting of this research. My proposals are based loosely on the Nicaean attributes, but they do not claim to encompass the full range of meaning implicit within the Creed.

6.1.1 The ONE Foundation of the Integral Church: Salvation - the Story by which the Church Exists

I have suggested that we needed to lay stronger theological foundations to deepen understanding of integral mission at ABC. Both frameworks suggest that this begins with the biblical narrative. Wright develops this as a 'missional hermeneutic'³⁸⁶ and 'for Newbigin the Christian Faith *is* the story'³⁸⁷ of God's actions in history, focused on Christ and oriented

³⁸¹ See chapter 4.

³⁸² Section 4.4.

³⁸³ Schaff 1877: 28-29.

³⁸⁴ Clowney 1995: 101.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: 101.

³⁸⁶ Wright 2006: 29-70.

³⁸⁷ Goheen 2023.

towards the hope of the kingdom of God. The story flows from the eternal intra-Trinitarian relationships³⁸⁸, the 'inner dynamic movement of God in personal relationship'³⁸⁹ and reflects a 'Trinitarian Model'³⁹⁰, built around the saving work of the Father, Son and Spirit in the *missio Dei*, focused on Christ³⁹¹. It is in this story that the triune God has revealed himself and through it (building on Kandiah³⁹²) that he continues to reveal himself by the witness of Scripture and by its contextualisation in the Church's preaching, so that it reaches us along 'the chain of a historic community.'³⁹³ It is by means of this revelation that the story becomes the story of the Church as a community of salvation, thus establishing the Church's identity and undergirding its unity. The holistic nature of the salvation portrayed in the story is perhaps best configured by Newbigin's four 'disharmonies'³⁹⁴ which are restored in the gospel³⁹⁵, bringing good news, as CTC puts it, 'for individual persons, and for society, and for creation.'³⁹⁶ The Church's mission is a participation in the story, so that the story defines the shape and scope of its mission³⁹⁷, providing a uniquely Christian matrix within which to understand the breadth³⁹⁸ of human need encountered in the city-centre context and a basis for human hope. The story is foundational to the integral church because it brings the Church into existence, is the basis of its unity, is the means of God's self-revelation to it and defines the setting, shape and scope of its mission in the world. To apprehend our identity, comprehend our calling and protect our unity at ABC, we needed to explore the story more deeply, resolving to remember, understand, appropriate, and encounter it in preaching and sacrament.

³⁸⁸ Holmes 2006.

³⁸⁹ Wright 2006: 63.

³⁹⁰ Newbigin 1989: 129.

³⁹¹ Goheen 2000: 161.

³⁹² Kandiah 2005: 26-34.

³⁹³ Newbigin 1936: 1-3.

³⁹⁴ Newbigin 1956: 21-22.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.: 115.

³⁹⁶ Lausanne Movement 2011: 33.

³⁹⁷ See Figure 1.

³⁹⁸ Myers 2011.

6.1.2 The HOLY Vocation of the Integral Church: Election – Called into the Story

Cities in the West breathe the air of individualism and consumerism. Discussion of church vision can therefore focus on personal preference and consumer choice. Both Wright and Newbigin demonstrate the power of the doctrine of election to transcend such discussions by understanding the Church's mission within the divine purpose. Wright and Newbigin apply this in slightly different ways, but their approaches are complementary. However, by placing mission within the context of election, both emphasise divine initiative in mission before human ingenuity, thus rescuing missionary thinking from Pelagianism³⁹⁹. They also concur that election cannot be understood only in terms of salvific privilege⁴⁰⁰, but also of missional and ethical responsibility⁴⁰¹. In election God calls us into his story both to receive his blessing and take up the holy calling to be agents of his blessing⁴⁰², living models of the new humanity⁴⁰³, and 'bearers of his salvation.'⁴⁰⁴ To resist individualism and consumerism, the integral Church in the urban West needs this missiological understanding of election: it frames mission as an ecclesial calling not as optional; it defines mission as the vocation of the whole Church; it liberates mission from pragmatism and individualism, stressing divine initiative; it moves the Church away from pietistic or therapeutic views of discipleship; and it links the Church's mission to its inner life and integrity.

6.1.3 The CATHOLIC Life of the Integral Church: Integral Discipleship – Indwelling the Story

According to the Lausanne Theology Working Group (LTWG), 'the word 'catholic' in the creed speaks of the universal Church, or the Church 'as a whole.'⁴⁰⁵ This is undeniably the dominant interpretation, reinforced by Clowney: 'The Greek term *katholikos* means that which is universal or general, having to do with the whole.'⁴⁰⁶ However, Herman Bavinck delineates three basic meanings of catholicity in the Church fathers: the Church as a 'unified

³⁹⁹ Newbigin 1989: 235.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.: 93.

⁴⁰¹ Wright 2006: 369.

⁴⁰² Wright 2006: 369.

⁴⁰³ Newbigin 1953: 110-111.

⁴⁰⁴ Newbigin 1989: 91.

⁴⁰⁵ Lausanne TWG 2010: 4.

⁴⁰⁶ Clowney 1995: 91.

whole'; the Church as the unity of all believers from all nations across all time; the Church as it 'embraces the whole of human experience.'⁴⁰⁷ Bavinck derives this third sense from Cyril of Jerusalem, whose Catechetical Lectures were delivered between the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. Cyril describes the Church as bringing into 'religious obedience every sort of men... [providing] cure for every kind of sin... possessing within it every form of virtue.'⁴⁰⁸ All of Bavinck's meanings of catholicity are included within 'integral discipleship' but this third sense is particularly strong. Deborst points out⁴⁰⁹ that following the first Lausanne Congress, Padilla expressed his concerns in a statement on 'radical *discipleship*'⁴¹⁰, so discipleship was clearly central to his understanding of integral mission. However, in the literature, the language of mission dominates, and the term 'integral discipleship' is rare. Newbigin's concept of the Church "'indwelling" the gospel story'⁴¹¹ only makes sense if it is first a framework for discipleship because the Church can only be the 'hermeneutic of the gospel' if it lives the story it proclaims. ('If the Church is to be effective in advocating and achieving a new social order in the nation, *it must itself be a new social order.*'⁴¹²) If integral discipleship *is* indwelling the Christian story, it must be defined by that story. We can thus use the four relationships paradigm to propose the shape of integral discipleship just as we used it to outline the shape of integral mission⁴¹³. Integral discipleship then is a shared journey towards restored relationships with God (spirituality), each other (community), creation (stewardship and justice) and oneself (wholeness). The journey is 'catholic' both in that it is made in fellowship with the local church and solidarity with the universal Church, and in the sense that it encompasses the whole of human experience. This broader vision of catholicity requires that the Church is both gathered and scattered in the community, pursuing a range of vocations and 'deeply involved in the concerns of its neighborhood.'⁴¹⁴ Newbigin is criticised as 'inconsistent'⁴¹⁵ on this point, but shares with Lausanne⁴¹⁶ a commitment to training the whole congregation to 'indwell the story' in their daily vocations⁴¹⁷. Integral

⁴⁰⁷ Bavinck 1992: 221-222.

⁴⁰⁸ Quoted in Telfer 1955: 186.

⁴⁰⁹ Deborst 2023.

⁴¹⁰ Douglas 1975: 1294-1296, italics mine.

⁴¹¹ Newbigin 1989: 244.

⁴¹² Ibid.: 243, italics mine.

⁴¹³ See Figure 1.

⁴¹⁴ Newbigin 1989: 240.

⁴¹⁵ Goheen 2000: 328-329.

⁴¹⁶ Lausanne Movement 2011: 57-60.

⁴¹⁷ Newbigin 1989: 240-242.

discipleship means being the new humanity – a reality at the heart of Newbigin’s project⁴¹⁸. A church that embraces integral discipleship, can make the journey only in dependence on the Spirit, because integral discipleship is deeply eschatological: it is a shared anticipation of the kingdom of God and a ‘foretaste’ of that kingdom⁴¹⁹. The integral church, then, intentionally embraces this truly ‘catholic’ vision of integral discipleship, resisting pietism and individualism to develop pathways to model, teach, train and support the whole congregation to grow in the four relationships in every sphere of life. Thus, the Church is truly ‘humanity in every place re-created in Christ.’⁴²⁰ Among the difficulties with mission language identified by Michael W. Stroope⁴²¹ is the tendency to associate mission with a professional class⁴²² of missionaries, distinct from other church members. In a similar way in local mission, the language of integral *mission* can become associated with a group in a church, rather than indicating a way of being for the whole church. The concept of integral discipleship, then, is needed to embed the worldview which informs integral mission into the life of the whole church. Its holistic shape and its application to daily life in the scattered church, enables a city-centre church to have a city-wide impact, across its sectors and needs.

6.1.4 The APOSTOLIC Charge of the Integral Church: Integral Mission – Witnessing to the Story.

Reflecting on the fourth attribute of the Nicene Creed, the LTWG suggests that the word ‘apostolic’ can refer to ‘our historical roots, our doctrinal faithfulness, and our missional mandate.’⁴²³ All of these meanings are implicit in the idea of integral mission, but the emphasis is on the third meaning, based on the verb *apostello*, meaning ‘send... send away, chase away, send off.’⁴²⁴ Having already explored the nature⁴²⁵ and impact⁴²⁶ of integral mission, I focus here on how its shape is derived from the Christian story, so that the Church is sent into the world to address the consequences of human sin which has broken the four

⁴¹⁸ Goheen 2023.

⁴¹⁹ Newbigin 1988: 38.

⁴²⁰ Newbigin 1953: 14.

⁴²¹ Stroope 2017.

⁴²² Ibid.: 89.

⁴²³ Lausanne TWG 2010: 11.

⁴²⁴ Eicken and Lindner 1986: 126.

⁴²⁵ See chapter 2.

⁴²⁶ See chapter 4.

relationships⁴²⁷. Integral mission, then, addresses what Myer describes as 'physical causes of poverty... social causes of poverty... mental causes of poverty... [and] spiritual causes of poverty'⁴²⁸, leading people to salvation in its fullest sense. Integral mission closely parallels integral discipleship because both are shaped by the same story. The Church's verbal witness to the Christian story is strengthened by a more Kuyperian view of general revelation and the Lordship of Christ, and its active witness by Newbigin's Polanyian epistemology. Integral mission, then, is practical and intellectual, but also spiritual, because it recognises that the structures of society, which it must sometimes challenge, may embody sinister spiritual realities⁴²⁹. There is a logical sense in which integral discipleship must precede integral mission (the Church can only witness to the story if it first indwells it), but it is better to conceptualise a porous and symbiotic relationship between them. To use Newbigin's language, it is by indwelling the story (integral discipleship) that the congregation becomes the 'hermeneutic of the gospel'⁴³⁰ within its community (integral mission), or to change the metaphor, it is exactly because the Church is a foretaste of the kingdom in its life, that it can be a sign and instrument of the kingdom in its community⁴³¹. The integral church, therefore, sees no dichotomy between mission and discipleship, but 'combine[s] the corporate witness of the local believing community with the need for ongoing discipleship and faith.'⁴³²

6.2 Three Models for the Integral Church

Working out the full practical implications of this integral ecclesiology is beyond the scope of this research, but I offer the following models as starting points, which could be used as part of a wider process of theological reflection, such as that developed by Green⁴³³.

⁴²⁷ See section 2.2.2.

⁴²⁸ Myers 2011: 149-157.

⁴²⁹ Newbigin 1989: chapter 16.

⁴³⁰ Newbigin 1989: 238.

⁴³¹ Newbigin 1988: 39-40.

⁴³² Weston 2001: 317.

⁴³³ Green 2009: 17-38.

6.2.1 Integral Ecclesiology

This model expresses the four attributes diagrammatically to aid understanding, teaching and exploration of integral ecclesiology. It could be used by a church leadership team to evaluate the framework for their context and could be developed as a teaching or small group discussion series for the congregation.

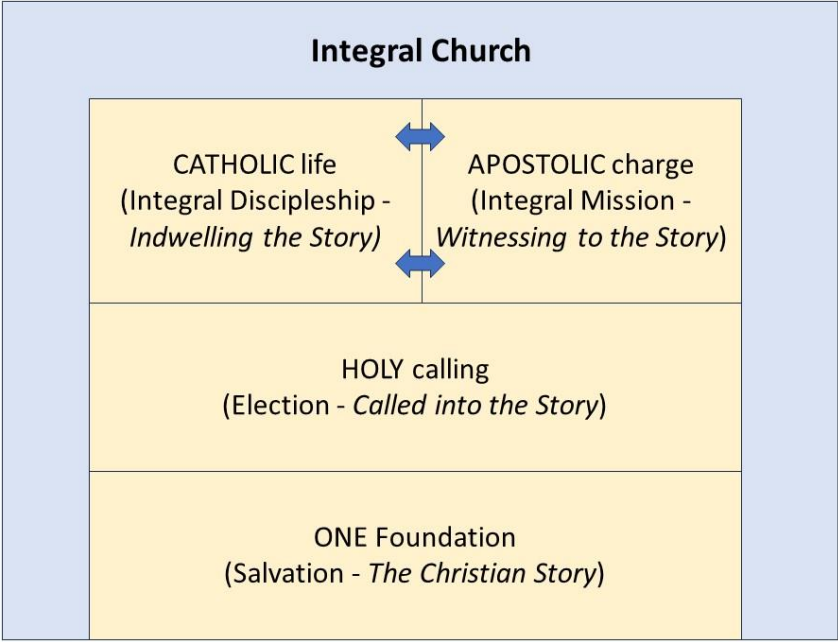


Figure 3: Model of integral ecclesiology

6.2.2 Integral Vision

This model expresses integral ecclesiology as (to use Timothy Keller’s language) a simple ‘theological vision.’⁴³⁴ Four faces around the cube reflect the four relationships paradigm from the biblical narrative, shaping all the Church is, says and does. One remaining face approaches the story through the lens of integral discipleship, which entails indwelling the story by living and growing in the four relationships. The other approaches the story through the lens of integral mission, which involves addressing the four dimensions of poverty arising from human sin and proclaiming the story of holistic salvation. The cube emphasises that integral mission and integral discipleship belong together because both are shaped by the same story – a point most easily grasped using a physical cube. It could be used alongside a teaching series, to help a whole congregation grasp the vision kinaesthetically. It could also

⁴³⁴ Keller 2012: 13-25.

help a team, focused on mission with a particular group/demographic, to evaluate itself as a missional community, to understand the shape of poverty within the group they are reaching, to develop strategies to address that poverty holistically and to consider how those they reach can be integrated into the missional community so that the impact multiplies.

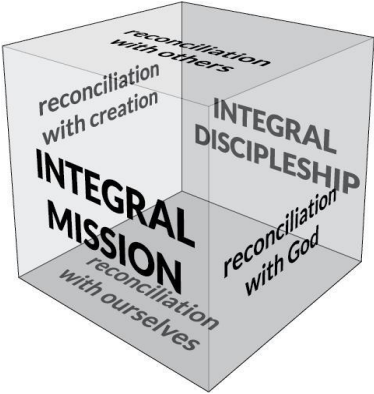


Figure 4: Summary of integral vision⁴³⁵

6.2.3 Integral Practice

This model aims to build the dynamic of ‘being, doing and saying’ into each ministry in a church, by establishing a cycle (or spiral) of serving people practically, reaching them with the gospel story, helping them grow as disciples and releasing them to take their place alongside others in the mission of God. It could be used to evaluate and restructure ministry for young people, homeless people, older people or any other group.

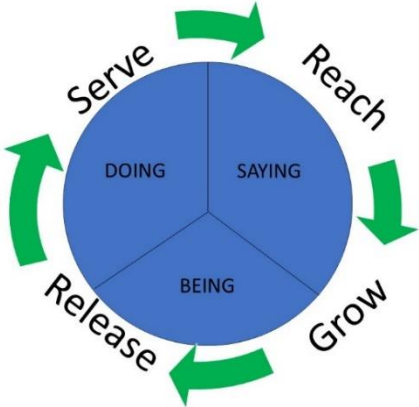


Figure 5: Summary of integral practice.

⁴³⁵ I am grateful to Tony Watkins for drawing this figure for me. It is used with his permission.

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSIONS

This research considered the hypotheses that the missionary ecclesiology of Newbigin could enable an effective and sustainable application of integral mission in a city-centre church in the UK, by combining the two approaches to develop an 'integral ecclesiology'. Beginning with literature-based explorations of integral mission and its links to ecclesiology (research question 1.1) and Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology (research question 1.2), I highlighted the historical development and theological characteristics of each and engaged with some critique in secondary literature. My first conclusion was that integral mission provides a rich and comprehensive understanding of the nature of mission, founded in a trinitarian and missiological reading of the biblical narrative, shaped by a holistic understanding of salvation and with transformative implications for the individual, society and creation. My second conclusion was that, while in integral mission the Church has a central *role*, Newbigin's thought has much to contribute on the *nature* of the missionary Church. His thinking builds on Polanyian epistemology and is developed in an exposition of the Church as a sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God and in his concept of the local congregation indwelling the Christian story as a 'hermeneutic of the gospel.'⁴³⁶ To my surprise, both frameworks emphasised a missiological understanding of election, which shaped integral ecclesiology in a way I had not anticipated. I used principles of autoethnography to narrate my ministry experience in a UK city-centre context (research question 2) and to reflect on that experience using my theoretical framework. To assess the relevance of Newbigin's thinking for integral mission in the local church (research question 1) I brought the two approaches into conversation, discovering many areas of convergence and some of apparent divergence. However, with nuancing from other scholars, many of the differences could be understood as complementary, leading to the conclusion that they were sufficiently compatible to be combined to provide the basis for an integral ecclesiology for a UK city-centre context, thus supporting my hypothesis. By contextualising the four attributes of Nicaean ecclesiology, I drew on the framework to outline four proposals as the starting point for an 'integral ecclesiology': that the biblical 'story' of holistic salvation provides the ONE foundation for the integral church; that the doctrine of election is central in understanding its HOLY vocation to participate in that story; that the holistic framework of integral mission and Newbigin's idea of the Church 'indwelling the gospel story' can combine to develop an understanding of 'integral discipleship' as the CATHOLIC life of the integral church; that integral mission, informed by Newbigin's proposal of the congregation as the hermeneutic of

⁴³⁶ Newbigin 1989: 237.

the gospel, provides a compelling account of the APOSTOLIC charge of the integral church. The research finished with three models to stress the integrated nature of this proposed ecclesiology and help local churches appropriate it for themselves. Central to my conclusions is the insight that this approach integrates the life of the local church with its witness in the community, so that the perceived dichotomy between mission and discipleship, which in my experience was problematic, is dissolved.

The idea of integral discipleship is central to the proposals of this research, but further research could develop this concept, and provide resources to explore it in the local church. Newbigin emphasises the training of the whole congregation for mission, but is criticised for lack of consistency on this point⁴³⁷, suggesting the need for theological reflection on how to understand the Church's gathered and scattered modes, and for the development of pathways of integral discipleship which are holistic and ecclesial in nature. There is scope to consider whether integral ecclesiology could be adapted for other contexts, including those of persecution and of rural settings in the UK (given the difficulty of building community among dispersed populations and the particular 'shapes' of rural poverty). Nonetheless, this research has strengthened my appreciation of the value and strength of integral mission. My hope and prayer is that, by developing an integral ecclesiology to embed it in the local church, this research may enable more churches in the urban West to benefit from its insights.

⁴³⁷ Goheen 2000: 328.

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Appendix One: Participant Information Sheet and Privacy Notice

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| RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET/PRIVACY NOTICE | |
| M21 Dissertation on the search for an integral ecclesiology based on exploration of the frameworks of integral mission and the missionary ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin. | |
| John Risbridger | |
| <p>Thank you for considering participating in a research exercise run by a student or member of staff of All Nations Christian College. This sheet seeks you to provide with all the information you might wish to know regarding participating in the research. Since the College is committed to protecting your privacy and to meeting our data protection obligations, this notice is also intended to give you an understanding of how and why we use the information you provide.</p> | |
| <p>What is the purpose of this research?</p> <p>The purpose of this research is to bring together the insights of two distinct but overlapping theological frameworks of relevance to missional ecclesiology. The first is the framework of integral mission – particularly as articulated by Latin American evangelicals and developed within the Lausanne Movement; the second is the missionary ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin. The aim of this conversation is to enable the outline of proposals for what I am calling an ‘Integral Ecclesiology’, which enables the insights of both frameworks to be integrated into the life of local churches in city centre contexts in the UK.</p> <p>This Postgraduate Assignment forms part of an Open University validated MA programme in Global Ecclesiology</p> | |
| <p>How will the information be used?</p> <p>Information provided will be analysed and used by the researcher as additional sources to triangulate and develop insights developed through literature review and autoethnographic reflection, strengthening the final conclusions of the research.</p> | |
| <p>What is involved?</p> | |
| <p>1. What am I being asked to do?</p> | <p>To be interviewed by the researcher for up to an hour on [Date] at [location]</p> |
| <p>2. What will it involve?</p> | <p>The interview will cover your understanding of the frameworks of integral mission and Newbigin’s ecclesiology and explore possible connections between the two.</p> |
| <p>3. What do I need to do beforehand?</p> | <p>Nothing</p> |
| <p>4. What do I need to bring?</p> | <p>Nothing</p> |

What happens if I do not want to answer all the questions?

You are totally at liberty not to answer any questions and do not have to provide information if you do not wish to do so.

After I have agreed to participate in the research can I change my mind?

After we have supplied you with this information about this research exercise and before taking part in it, you will be asked to give written or verbal consent saying that you understand what is involved and are happy to participate in the research.

If at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study you may do so, without giving a reason. In this case, please contact the researcher at the earliest opportunity so that they can exclude you from the study.

Are there any risks in participating?

This study has received ethical clearance from All Nations and any potential risks have been considered along with how those risks will be managed.

The risks identified with this research are those associated with ensuring accuracy of data collection and protection. These risks will be mitigated by audio recordings of the conversations (to ensure accuracy) and ensuring the recordings are deleted within three years.

Will anyone know my identity?

Your right to anonymity will be totally respected. The researcher's findings will appear in a report/paper/dissertation but no one individual could be identified from such a paper without their explicit consent. Whilst your words may be quoted, your identity or any organisation you represent will not be disclosed without your explicit consent.

What personal information does the researcher collect and why?

Only information that you choose to provide will be used, and only within the confines of this particular study. It will not be passed onto any third parties.

This information will include your age, gender, role and nationality and will be recorded by the researcher only for the purposes above or to follow up any of your responses.

What will happen to the completed report?

All assignments for assessment are generally made available only to markers and external examiners, however Dissertations are made available in the College library. Extracts or articles based on the research may be posted on the College website for a limited period

How will the information I provide be recorded?

The information will be collected by an audio-recorded interview. A written summary of the interview will be made but it will not be fully transcribed as text.

Who will have access to the information that I provide?

The researcher will generally be the only person who has access to the information you choose to share with them. No information that you share (personal or otherwise) will be kept on any All Nations database, network or computer. Research undertaken by an All Nations employee in the context of their employment is likely to store data on the College network/computer. In this case IT support staff would technically be

able to access the information in addition to the researcher but they are legally bound not to breach anyone's privacy in performing their duties.

How will the data be protected?

Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that all information is recorded and stored securely, either in a lockable filing cabinet or room or electronically using appropriate security mechanisms such as encryption.

If for some reason a breach in the security of information is suspected, we will be informed. For data provided in the context of official All Nations' research projects i.e. undertaken by an employee of the College (see above) we will fulfil our legal obligation to inform the data protection supervisory authority, The UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) within 72 hours.

For how long will the research data be kept?

The data will be retained for any legally specified period and otherwise for the following number of years from the end of the project: 3.

After that, the data will be destroyed completely. Paper documents will be shredded and digital copies deleted.

What are your rights?

You have the right to :

- refuse to take part in the research and/or to withdraw at any point from the project
- retract information provided at any point
- obtain a copy of any recording of an interview in which you participate, or interview transcript
- access and obtain a copy of the personal information held by the researcher, on request;
- require the researcher to change incorrect or incomplete data;
- require the researcher to delete or stop processing your data

Who should I contact if I have more questions or wish to make a complaint?

In the first instance please contact:

John Risbridger

jnriskbridger@gmail.com

If you have questions regarding All Nations' research policies and practices or you are not happy with how the research is being or was conducted, please contact:

Vice Principal (Academic)

All Nations

Easneye

WARE

Herts

SG12 8LX

Tel +44 1920 443500

Appendix Two: Integral Mission in and around Southampton

(A draft position paper written for Above Bar Church (final draft November 2015))

Summary:

Loving God, following Jesus and sharing hope are the central priorities of our church, encapsulating the motivation, central focus and driving ambition of our mission together. There is *one* mission of God, in which all his people are called to participate both *globally* and *locally*. The concept of *Integral Mission* helps us to understand some of what it means to participate in that mission.

Integral Mission involves the *whole church*, reaching out to the *whole person* (addressing spiritual, social, emotional and physical needs) with the love and truth of Christ, locally and across the *whole world*.

In summary this means:

1. Everyone in the church is called to be involved in mission where they are and to support those who are sent to other places in mission
2. Mission involves a commitment to speak of and live out faith in Jesus in every aspect of life
3. Our mission is to witness to Christ in word and action so as to make disciples of Jesus, who fulfil God's purposes for humanity as they act as agents of justice, love, righteousness and truth and so seek the flourishing of all creation
4. In reaching out to people we seek to care for the whole person in an integrated way, seeking to meet their spiritual, social, emotional and physical needs

This position paper aims to unpack the principles that govern our understanding of what it means to participate in the mission of God. It seeks both to show the basis for those principles within scripture and to guide our approach to applying them practically to our local context here in Southampton. A summary of implications is included in the concluding section.

1. Introduction

1.1. *Above Bar's vision and 'Integral Mission'*

Two principles undergird much of our approach to mission as set out in our *World Mission Policy*:

- First, that our understanding of the *church's mission* is set in the context of the *mission of God*, as set out in the entire biblical narrativeⁱ
- Second, that there is *one* mission of God, in which all his people are called to participate both *globally* and *locally*

An additional key principle is that we desire the mission of our church to be shaped by the priorities of loving God (motivation), following Jesus (central focus) and sharing hope (driving ambition).

The aim of this paper is to tease out the implications of these principles for our shared approach to mission locally, in and around Southampton. We use the term '*integral mission*' to encompass the breadth of our missional vision.

The expression "integral mission" is borrowed from the Spanish, *misión integral*, which Latin American missiologists first coined in the 1990's. Just as '*pan integral*' was bread with all the goodness still in it, so '*misión integral*' was mission with all the goodness still in it. That is to say, integral mission describes an approach to Christian mission, rooted in the mission of God, in which *the whole church is sent into the whole world to speak of and live out its faith in Jesus Christ in an undivided way in every aspect of life*. Our current *World Mission Policy* document reflects this approach closely.

Some characteristics of integral mission include:

- It seeks to care for the whole person in an integrated way, contributing to the meeting of their spiritual, social, emotional and physical needs, believing that both verbal explanation of the gospel and social action are integral to the church's mission
- It maintains the centrality of the atoning death, victorious resurrection and enthroning ascension of Christ, whilst insisting that these central gospel events bring about the reconciliation to God not only of the individual but ultimately of the whole of creation
- It understands authentic repentance as encompassing personal, economic and social dimensions and therefore sees discipleship as being worked out in all of life
- It recognises God as both Creator and Redeemer and so seeks to make a Christian contribution to all spheres of society
- Its scope is both local and global, embracing *both* the sending and receiving of people in cross-cultural mission *and* the calling of all Christians to live and speak for Jesus in the places where God has placed them
- It recognises the biblical principle that godly living and compassionate action commends the gospel in a sceptical world (1 Pet 2:11-12)

1.2. *Our local context for Integral Mission*

The population of [Southampton currently stands at](#) 245,300ⁱⁱ. It ranks in the top twenty of European container ports, has been described as the ‘cruise capital’ of Northern Europe, is the strongest retail centre on the South Coast of Englandⁱⁱⁱ and has over 35,000 students studying in its two universities (of which approximately 8000 are international students, coming from 135 countries). Southampton is located within the affluent South-East of England and is ranked highly for the quality of life it offers its citizens^{iv}. Nonetheless it has a wide range of social issues which may not always be obvious and which statutory agencies are increasingly struggling to address in the light of downward pressure on budgets. These include:

- Since 2010 the number of Southampton neighbourhoods ranked in the 10% most deprived in England, has increased by 90%. Southampton now has 19 LSOAs (previously 10) within the 10% most deprived in England^v
- Nearly a quarter of children (9,830) live in poverty in the city and this figure rises to almost 40% in one of our most deprived wards^{vi}
- The proportion of working age Housing Benefit claimants has increased from 13% in April 2009 to 18% in April 2015^{vii}
- In the last four years the number of children who have been referred to Southampton City Council for help has doubled^{viii}
- There are higher unemployment rates amongst over 50s in Southampton (4.3%) compared to England and the South East (3.5% and 3% respectively)^{ix}
- Benefit Sanctions for Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) claimants are particularly prevalent in Southampton. The local job centre is in the top three in the UK for highest use of sanctions with 11.9 sanctions per 100 claimants in March 2014^x
- There was a 22% rise in domestic violent crimes reported in 2014/15, with an 8.5% increase in the number of high risk MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) referrals. Southampton has the second highest MARAC referral rate amongst comparator areas and over twice the national average^{xi}

According to the 2011 census, just over 50% of the population in Southampton identifies itself as ‘Christian’, though only a fraction of these attend church regularly. There are significant Muslim, Sikh and Hindu populations too, but over 30% of the population describe themselves as having no religion.

2. The nature and dimensions of Integral mission in the Bible

2.1. *Integral mission and the biblical narrative*

At its best, integral mission recognises the central importance of the classic biblical texts for defining the church’s mission (eg Matt 28:19-2, *the great commission*; Matt 22:37-39, *the great commandment*; John 20:21-23; Luke 24:45-8; Acts 1:8) but insists that they are not to be understood in isolation, but interpreted within the whole narrative of scripture. The following brief overview illustrates how such an approach can be followed:

Creation – blessing given

As the Creator of all that exists (physical and spiritual), God cares for creation and provides for its flourishing, so that it may bring him glory. He does this by creating human beings in his own image to represent him and rule creation on his behalf (Gen

1:26-27). Human beings are blessed by God and commissioned to work for the flourishing of creation (Gen 1:28): we are blessed and called to be a blessing in the whole of creation.

De-creation (fall) – blessing removed

However, human beings rejected the God-centred life and chose the self-centred life, thus dethroning God and forfeiting his blessing. As a result, rather than leading creation to flourish under the blessing of God, we brought it, with us, under his curse. Just as his blessing had brought flourishing to the whole of creation, so his curse brought damage to the whole of creation, alienating us from God (Gen 3:8, 23), from each other (Gen 3:15), from creation (Gen 3:14-19) and from a true sense of ourselves (Gen 3:10).

Re-creation (redemption) – blessing restored

Against this background, it is clear that God's promise to Abram (that he would 'bless' him and that 'all peoples on earth' would be 'blessed through' him (Gen 12:2-3)) was a promise to restore the original pattern of creation, in which those who were blessed by God were commissioned^{xiii} to bless creation on his behalf. This principle provides the basic 'compass bearing' which orientates our understanding of the mission of God (in which we participate as his people) throughout the rest of the biblical narrative.

As that narrative moves on several things become clear:

1. The blessing of God's people is a gift of God's grace, received by faith (Gen 15:1-6) in response to his initiative in redemption
2. As in the creation narrative, so in the narrative of salvation: God blesses his people to make them a blessing in every aspect of life (Gen 39:2-6; 50:20)
3. God's people bless the nations by seeking to do what is 'right and just' as they live obediently 'in the way of the LORD' (Gen 18:18-19)
4. Israel's pattern of life in the Promised Land (set out in the law) was intended to be a paradigm for the nations as to how God intended human beings to live in creation (Deut 4:5-8). Within this pattern of life, it becomes clear that God attaches great importance to neighbour love (Lev 9:18), care for the poor (Lev 9:10), justice for the oppressed (Psa 10:17-18) and the foreigner (Gen 22:21), and the limitation of inequality (Lev 25)

The person of Jesus stands at the heart of this unfolding narrative. He is the truly blessed one (Luke 1:42, 19:38, Matt 21:9) and he blesses the poor, the mourning, the persecuted (Luke 6:20-22) and the children (Mark 10:16). It is through his death and resurrection that the curse of God's judgement is lifted and the blessing promised to Abram is ultimately given to the whole people of God (both Jewish and gentile), by the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:6-14). Blessed in Christ, all whole people of God are sent to be a blessing in the world, calling others to discipleship and teaching them practically to live out the transformative values of his Kingdom, in obedience to his word (Matt 28:19-20, 22:37-40, 5:1-18; 10:5-10; 25:31-45; Luke 24:45-51).

New creation – blessing completed

The people of God now enjoy the blessing of God, while living in the world of the fall and the curse. The fullness of blessing that is (in principle) already ours in Christ will be ours in glorious, untarnished experience when Christ returns and makes all of creation new (Rev 19:9, 20:6; 22:14). Unhindered by sin, the people of God (now doubly blessed through creation and redemption) will be a blessing in the new creation as they reign with him (Rev 22:5) and lead creation into its glorious freedom (Rom 8:21).

The risen Christ commissioned his people to proclaim the message of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through the cross and resurrection, calling men and women to repentance and faith such that they become his disciples. This great task remains at the heart of our mission. However, interpreted in the light of the wider biblical narrative, the commission to 'make disciples of all nations' who 'obey everything I have commanded them' should not be reduced to the categories only of personal salvation and personal purity. Jesus comes as the fulfilment of the saving purpose of God to restore the whole of the created order and reconcile it to himself. The repentance and discipleship to which he calls us, therefore, impacts the whole of life as we turn from a self-centred life of rebellion against him and embrace the God-centred life for which we were made. The mission of the church, then, is to witness to Christ in word and deed so as to make disciples of Jesus who fulfil God's purposes for humanity, seeking the flourishing of all creation as agents of justice, love, righteousness and truth. Both the challenges and opportunities implicit in pursuing this vision, appear to be increasing in much of the Western world, where a changing economic and political climate, an ageing population and a growing refugee crisis combine to place huge strain on a shrinking welfare state.

2.2. *Integral mission and the gospel*

We often use the term 'gospel' as if it were a technical term, tied to a very specific and consistent definition in the gospel. The actual NT usage of the term, however, is more flexible. Sometimes it refers to a broad understanding of God's purpose to restore all things through the cross (eg Col. 1:23 'This is the gospel' in the context of the reconciliation of *all things* in Christ, see v20) – we might call this the 'wide angle view'. At other times the term 'gospel' refers more narrowly of the message of the cross, such that Christ becomes for us our righteousness, holiness and redemption (1 Cor. 1:17, 18, 30) – we might call this the 'zoom lens view'^{xiii}. An integral mission perspective stresses the importance of looking at the gospel through both 'lenses' – and maintains that they are both (in the end) perspectives on the one gospel, which centres on Jesus as he is revealed in the central gospel events. Integral mission, then, should not be seen as an *alternative* to evangelism; it is rather a vision of mission in which both evangelism and social action are highly valued and deeply interwoven. The implication is that, in all the dimensions of our mission, our ultimate aim is not simply to enhance human welfare as conceived by secular society, but to bring glory to Jesus by being his disciples who live out the values of his Kingdom.

2.3. *Integral mission and care for the poor*

Care for the poor and vulnerable is a theme throughout Scripture. The Mosaic Law insisted that farmers make provision for the poor (Lev 19:10 and 23:22) and put limits on the growth of material inequality (Lev 25); the prophets chastised the people for their failure to care for the

poor (Isa 1:15-17; Amos 5:11), promised God's blessing when they did (Isa 58) and foresaw a coming Messiah who would preach good news to the poor (Isa 61:1-3); Jesus came in fulfilment of that expectation (Luke 4:18) and challenged his disciples to open their homes to the poor (Luke 14:12-14); Paul's gentile mission was characterised by his eagerness to 'remember the poor' (Gal 2:10) and James insisted that the church should not discriminate against the poor (Jas 2:1-7). Integral mission therefore entails a glad commitment to serve, help and lift the poor, feeding the hungry, supporting the homeless and helping to release those who are trapped in debt. It pursues this vision both by engaging practically with peoples' needs and praying with people and for people that the restoring power of God may be seen in their lives. In its care for the poor, integral mission recognises that material poverty is not the only kind of poverty and that the gospel is also good news for those who are materially affluent but need to know the ultimate riches of the Kingdom of God.

2.4. *Integral mission and the pursuit of justice*

God's heart to bring justice to oppressed, marginalised and displaced peoples is also clear throughout Scripture. The Exodus narrative is, without doubt, one of the great Old Testament foreshadowings of redemption but it is also seen in Scripture as indicative of God's commitment to bring justice to the oppressed and of the obligation of his people to reflect his heart in this (Exod 22:21). The wisdom literature specifically calls the people of God to exercise a voice on behalf of the voiceless and oppressed (Prov. 31:8-9). Again, the prophets both warn of the judgement that will fall on Israel if they fail to seek justice for the oppressed (Isa 1:17; Amos 5:12-24) and call the people of God to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with their God (Mic 6:8). Daniel even warns pagan Nebuchadnezzar of his duty to be 'kind to the oppressed' (Dan 4:27). Jesus comes to release the oppressed (Luke 4:18) and underlines the importance he attaches to 'justice, mercy and faithfulness' in his challenge to the religious hypocrites of his day (Matt 23:23). James confirms that the concern for justice remains an important challenge for the Christian church (Jas 5:1-6). Integral mission therefore entails a continuing commitment to care for the oppressed and to be a voice that seeks justice for them. At the same time, we will be wary of our assumptions both as to who is to be considered 'oppressed' (eg elderly people who are lonely and vulnerable to fraud of various kinds may often be oppressed, even if they are not materially poor) and as to the nature of 'justice' (which in scripture is not limited to notions of material equality but concerns things being 'put right' in the eyes of God).

2.5. *Integral mission and 'the welfare of the city'*

We have already seen God's commission to human beings to work for human flourishing as his image bearers within creation. Some of the most striking examples of this being put into practice occur when God's people are away from the Promised Land and working in alien cities. Within Genesis itself, Joseph provides the most obvious example. Later, in the exilic literature Jeremiah outlines a principle which Daniel exemplifies in his outstanding public service in the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires: namely that God's people in exile should play a full part in the life of the city to which they have been sent and actively seek its welfare (shalom) (Jer 29:4-7)^{xiv}. Jeremiah points out that this will be to the benefit of God's covenant people, but this does not negate the calling for them to work for the good of Babylon (reflecting

the original creation mandate of Gen 1:28), as Daniel's working life demonstrated so strikingly. In a similar manner the New Testament commands Christians to pray for the welfare of those who exercise authority in public life (1 Tim 2:1-7) and to be responsible citizens (1 Pet 2:13-17), recognising that this will also be for the good of the Christians themselves. The biblical narrative concludes with the glories of the nations being brought into the New Jerusalem – the ultimate city (Rev 21:26). Cities, then, clearly have an important place in Scripture. In ancient civilisations, however, cities were sometimes states in their own right or imperial centres with widespread influence. Reflecting this important thread in the biblical narrative, integral mission entails a commitment to work positively for the good of the city in which we are now placed (Southampton) and for our wider society, even though we are exiles here whose true citizenship is in the New Jerusalem.

2.6. *Integral mission and the care of creation*

The beginning (Creation) and ending (New Creation) of the biblical narrative both testify to God's interest in the material world. Since the Bible does not divide creation into 'sacred' and 'secular' spheres, Christians should not regard the material world with disdain and focus only on what they perceive as 'spiritual', but should recognise God's sovereign care over all of life. The responsibility for human beings to steward creation on God's behalf is built into the Bible's creation narrative (Gen 1:26-29). The command to 'rule' in creation must be seen in the context of bearing God's image (for he is creation's ultimate Ruler who has compassion on all he has made (Psa 145:9)). It follows that our mandate is not to exploit creation for mere self-interest but to represent God's own rule of righteousness, justice and compassion, such that creation is able to flourish. Sustainable development, conservation of biodiversity, the equitable distribution of resources and the concern to cap excessive consumption in the developed world are all areas of legitimate Christian concern, therefore. The disordering of the relationship between human beings and creation was one of the central consequences of the fall (Gen 3:16-19; Hos 4:3) and the reordering of those relationships is (not surprisingly therefore) a significant concern of the gospel (Col 1:19-20; Rom 8:18-21; Psa 96:11-13). The description of the New Creation includes the promise that a restored humanity will reign there (Rev 5:10; 22:5), echoing, fulfilling and exceeding the original creation mandate of Genesis. Christian contribution to creation care will go far beyond church-based projects. As they contribute to the glory of God in their workplaces (and so bring order and flourishing to the resources of creation) and as they use creation's resources wisely and sustainably in their everyday lives, Christians are participating in the mission of God.

2.7. *Integral mission and welcoming the stranger*

God's ideal for humanity is not that we are 'strangers' to each other. Adam and Eve were 'both naked and they felt no shame' (Gen 2:25). One of the consequences of the fall is the disordering of human relationships introducing distance, shame, distrust and conflict (Gen 3:12-16). Human rebellion at Babel was the cause of a deeper dividing and scattering of the human race (Gen 11:1-9). However, the promise to Abram includes a blessing that will embrace all the nations (Gen 12:3). The story of salvation comes to a slave people who are aliens in a foreign land (Gen. 15:13; Exod 1-3) so that God redeems them, makes them a nation and gives them a land to live in (Exod 6:2-8). This experience is both the founding experience of salvation for Israel *and* an evidence to them of God's heart for all peoples who are oppressed as aliens in a foreign land (Exod 22:21, 23:9; Lev 19:33-34). The story of Ruth

gives a powerful, worked example of a faithful Israelite (Boaz) welcoming a vulnerable foreigner (Ruth) into the faith and life of Israel. The prophets envisage the nations coming to Israel and sharing its blessings (Isa 2:1-5, 49:6). The infant Jesus is worshipped by foreign magi who have travelled to Bethlehem (Matt 2:1-12) and himself becomes a refugee in Egypt (Matt 2:13-15). The impact of Pentecost is felt by people from 'every nation under heaven' (Acts 2:5) and the mission of the early church swiftly reaches beyond the bounds of Israel to the gentile nations (Acts 1:8; Acts 10) – often being received most readily (Acts 8:26ff) and spread most effectively (Acts 8:4) by those who are away from home. The gospel breaks down barriers between different people groups (Eph 2:11-22; Gal 3:28), uniting them within the one family of God. The New Creation is enriched by 'the glories of the nations' gathered into the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:26). A readiness to cross cultural, linguistic and ethnic barriers, to appreciate the richness of cultural diversity and to care for the stranger thus lies at the heart of Christian mission. We therefore look for opportunities to welcome, befriend, give practical help and linguistic support to refugees, international students and immigrants and rejoice to share the good news of Jesus with them.

3. The practical implications of our commitment to Integral Mission

3.1. *Integral mission and evangelism*

Too often Integral Mission is spoken of as if it were an alternative to evangelism. This is a profound mistake. Integral Mission is a vision of mission in which evangelism and social action are both valued and worked out in a deeply interwoven way. In the words of the *Micah Declaration*^{xv},

“...in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world, we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world.”

As a church with a vision for integral mission, then, we remain committed *both* to the central importance of evangelism as the verbal explanation of the message of the gospel *and* to the outworking of our discipleship in practical acts of love, justice, righteousness and compassion. Both matter to God and both should matter to us and should shape our understanding of our mission. Christian action of this kind should preserve, purify, beautify and bless society (Deut 4:6-8; Matt 5:13-16) and commend the gospel which we proclaim in words (1 Pet 2:11-12). Such action includes both the ministries initiated by the body of the church and the wider contribution to human flourishing made by Christians in their day to day lives (eg in their workplaces) as part of their continuing discipleship. This is hardly controversial, but the nuances need to be drawn out a little further:

1. Integral mission seeks to care for the *whole person*, addressing their spiritual, social, emotional and physical poverty. Our ultimate desire for *all* those touched by the church's mission will therefore be that they should understand and embrace the gospel, be integrated into the Christian community and receive the help they need to flourish

in the whole of their lives. It is important that all who exercise significant missional leadership in the church embrace this truly integrated vision

2. Nonetheless, it is appropriate that different ministries of the church are weighted towards one or other of four dimensions (spiritual, social, emotional and physical). For example, ministries like Alpha, CE, Poppin Church, our Sunday ministries and More to Life are weighted towards meeting spiritual needs; Poppin is weighted towards meeting social needs; our pastoral ministries include help for people with emotional needs; Basics Bank is weighted towards meeting physical needs. Ministries like Big Breakfast, Crossover, CAP and home groups give weight to more than one of these dimensions simultaneously. These ministries each need to be valued and to thrive as they make their particular contribution so that, for example, we rejoice *both* when CAP clients become 'debt free' *and* when they become Christians. One simple set of 'success criteria' will not suffice for evaluating each individual ministry within the breadth of the mission to which the church is called. Such evaluation of effectiveness should rather be calibrated both by our shared commitment to care for the whole person and by a shared understanding of the particular contribution of each ministry
3. Integral mission is based on a strong theology of *both* creation *and* salvation. An act (such as an act of generosity or justice, or doing good work in the workplace) which reflects God's purpose for human flourishing in creation is 'good' and 'valuable', whether or not it has a knock-on effect in terms of evangelism (in terms of classic reformed theology: that which is good in the sphere of *common grace* is good whether or not it serves an immediate purpose in the sphere of *special grace*). On this basis we can rightly celebrate the impact of the breadth of our ministries across all four of the dimensions (spiritual, social, emotional, physical) in which we seek to work – and rejoice in the wider contribution Christians are making in the cause of human flourishing in their everyday lives and work
4. At the same time, we need to be vigilant against the dampening of our fervour for people to be saved eternally from the just judgement of God, and we dare not overlook the numerous biblical texts which express this passion (eg Luke 24:45-49; John 3:13-18 & 35-36; Acts 17:29-31; Rom 3:21-31; 10:1; 2 Cor 5:11-6:2; 1 Thess 1:8-10). In the context of a society that will often welcome our work to address social and physical needs, but will rarely thank us for bringing the gospel to peoples' spiritual needs, we need to maintain a deep intentionality to remain faithful in evangelism. We do not truly love people as whole people if we do not long, pray and work for their eternal salvation, just as we do not truly love them as whole people if we treat them simply as evangelistic projects!

3.2. Integral mission and the church

It is important to understand and accept that our commitment to integral mission has profound implications for the kind of church we will be. A serious commitment to welcoming the stranger should make us an increasingly international church; a serious commitment to caring for the poor should make us an increasingly diverse church in terms of socioeconomic background; a serious commitment to evangelism should make us increasingly a church in which new believers can be grounded in the faith as well as long-standing believers be built up and stretched. Embracing such diversity is likely to be both deeply enriching and profoundly challenging, requiring a generosity of spirit from us all and a diversity of learning opportunities within our programmes. Ministries that are focused on 'welcome' of various kinds (e.g. First

Impressions, Big Breakfast, Crossover, More to Life) have a key role to play in meeting these challenges, but all of us share in the responsibility.

3.3. Leadership in integral mission

As we have seen, the vision of integral mission is to care for the whole person – spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically. It follows that those who exercise overall leadership in any project within the breadth of the church’s local mission should be able, in full conscience, to embrace the whole breadth of this vision. Therefore the overall leaders of our mission projects (whichever dimension that project is ‘weighted’ towards) should be fully supportive of the beliefs, vision and ethos of the church, meeting the criteria set out for Ministry Leaders. Such leaders will normally function under the leadership of the Minister with responsibility for blessing the city (supported as appropriate by the Social Action Coordinator), under the overall direction of the trustees of the church.

3.4. Working with others in integral mission

The church is in a unique position to contribute to human flourishing with the diversity of its make-up and the richness of its community. Furthermore, we believe that life to the full is only found in Jesus Christ and are therefore convinced that our contribution is uniquely significant. Nonetheless, it is important that we recognise that the church has neither the expertise nor the resources to deal with all the challenges of the community. Our default stance in mission is to partner most actively with those who are in substantial agreement with our beliefs and vision – this is especially important in ministries weighted towards gospel proclamation. However, if we are engaged with the life of our city, we will frequently find ourselves working with statutory and other third sector agencies as we seek to care for the whole person. This should not trouble us, however, for in his common grace^{xvi}, God uses a wide range of people with a vast variety of expertise to bring about a measure of human flourishing (and we should welcome the fact that such agencies often have many Christians working within them). We should be ready, then, to recognise and value the expertise and contribution of agencies outside the church and seek to work constructively alongside them. This observation also gives us a measure of freedom to find appropriate ways of including within the teams that run our ministries (though not as overall leaders) people who share many of our aims but may not be fully persuaded of our beliefs, praying that God will use this experience to bring them to living faith in Christ.

4. Conclusions

Having considered the biblical basis for our vision of Integral Mission and worked through its implications in our context, we can identify the following key implications for our church:

- We want all the ministries of our church to share this integrated view of mission that seeks to minister to spiritual, social, emotional and physical needs
- We also recognise that individual ministries may legitimately be weighted towards one or other of these four dimensions of spiritual, social, emotional and physical need
- Since our mission is to be worked out in the whole of life, it embraces evangelism, care for the poor, the pursuit of justice, care for the environment, welcoming the stranger

and seeking to work for the welfare of our city / society as we learn from and follow Christ in every aspect of life

- Church based mission projects serving in and around Southampton are usually developed under the leadership of the Minister with responsibility for ‘Blessing the City’ and are accountable to the Leadership Team of the church
- In the western world, mass people movements and shrinking welfare state budgets have combined to create a transformed context for mission, in which the nations have come to us and the church is well-placed to make a unique and significant contribution
- We recognise that many agencies - whether Christian or not – contribute to human flourishing in our city and we thank God for the breadth of expertise they bring. We seek appropriate levels of cooperation and partnership with others as we make our own contribution. We also value the contribution of Christians who are seeking to influence these agencies and the policy framework within which they operate, recognising such work as an important expression of Christian discipleship
- Within our commitment to Integral Mission we recognise that our vision for human flourishing is ultimately to be shaped not by the expectations of a secular society but by our desire to live for the glory of Christ

Written by John Risbridger, with extensive input from other members of ABC, November 2015

[Note: These endnotes are recorded exactly as in the original paper and are included only to represent the paper accurately. They therefore do not follow the citation conventions of the dissertation itself and do not form part of its argument]

ⁱ See the approach of Christopher J.H. Wright *The mission of God* (Intervarsity Press Academic, Illinois 2006) and *The Mission of God's people* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids MI; 2010)

ⁱⁱ Office for National Statistics, Mid-year population estimates 2014 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-uk--england-and-wales--scotland-and-northern-ireland/mid-2014/index.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ These observations are drawn from the website of Southampton City Council, see <https://www.southampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/emerging-plans/citywide-local-plan/strong-economy-vibrant-city.aspx>

^{iv} See the Good Growth for Cities report 2015 published by PWC and Demos www.pwc.co.uk/industries/government-public-sector/good-growth/good-growth-for-cities-our-report-on-economic-wellbeing-in-uk-urban-areas.html

^v Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

^{vi} Children in Low Income Families. (2014) HMRC. Data from Snapshot August 2012. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/personal-tax-credits-children-in-low-income-families-localmeasure-2012-snapshot-as-at-31-august-2012>.

^{vii} Southampton Welfare Reforms Monitoring Group (2015). Local Impact of Welfare Reforms 2014-2015

^{viii} Southampton City Council budget background, <http://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/have-your-say/budget-2016-2017/two-sides-to-city.aspx>

^{ix} Annual Population Survey (2015) Data from April 2014 – March 2015. [Online]. Available from: www.nomisweb.co.uk

^x Beaty, C. et al (March 2015). Benefit Sanctions and Homelessness: A Scoping Report. Available from: www.crisis.org.uk

^{xi} Southampton Safe City Strategic Assessment 2014/15 <http://www.publichealth.southampton.gov.uk/Images/Safe-City-Strategic-Assessment-2014-15-FINAL.pdf>

^{xii} In Hebrew, ‘*you will be a blessing*’ is in fact an imperative (See Wright, *Mission of God*, p.211) so that the most natural reading of the text appears to be that, having received the blessing of God, Abram and his offspring are then commissioned to be a blessing among the nations. This has been

recently been challenged (see Kevin Deyoung and Greg Gilbert *What is the mission of the church* (Crossway: Illinois, 2010), pp.30-34) on the basis that in Hebrew the second of a pair of twin imperatives is sometimes translated as a result clause and they think this should be the case in Gen 12:2. However, Deyoung and Gilbert both acknowledge that they are not Hebrew scholars and that their position does probably not represent the scholarly consensus, though much of the rest of their critique of Wright rests on this rather uncertain observation. Tom Schreiner takes the opposite view, "The command given to Adam to be fruitful and multiply (1:28) is now a promise given to Abraham and his offspring (17:2, 5, 6: 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27, 48:4). Contrary to many English translations, Abraham is *commanded* to be a blessing in 12:2 so that, like Adam, he was enjoined to bring blessing to the world." (Tom Schreiner *The King in his beauty* (Inter-varsity Press, Nottingham. 2013), p.17.

^{xiii} See Deyoung and Gilbert *What is the mission of the church*, p94ff

^{xiv} See Timothy Keller *Generous Justice* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2010), pp.170-189.

^{xv} See <http://www.micahnetwork.org/integral-mission>

^{xvi} See Timothy Keller *Every good endeavour* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2012), pp.186-192

