

Editorial

15 scholars contributed 11 articles that constitute Volume 53 (2025). There are also, as expected, several book reviews appended to the volume written by Prof G Duncan. Contributing scholars include Johannes N. J. Kritzinger, Pieter Verster, Stephan de Beer, Marcus Grohmann, Johannes Knoetze, Durga Prasad Khanal, Vusi M. Vilakati, Wessel Bentley, Ignatius Ferreira, Daniel Awuah-Gyawu, Peter White, Kelebogile T. Resane, N Mudau, and Christopher Magezi.

Three broad missiological themes have been engaged in this volume, namely a) patterns of mission practice/mission theology and history; b) reflections on South African Pentecostal and Charismatic mission praxis; and c) environmental sustainability and earth healing.

A. Patterns of mission practice/ mission theology and history

There are four contributions discussing patterns of mission practice/mission theology in relation to vulnerability. These contributions are among the select few emanating from the inaugural International Association of Mission Studies conference, which took place in August 2024 at the University of Stellenbosch. Another four discuss patterns of mission in various contexts.

With reference to patterns of mission practice/mission theology and history, Kritzinger, in his contribution entitled “Exploring Transformative Encounters: Developing a praxis-based missiological framework,” suggests some ways to understand “Mission in vulnerability”. This article is an expanded version of the first part of the address at the inaugural International Association of Mission Studies Africa Chapter in August 2024 at Stellenbosch, which outlines an encompassing missiological framework based on a praxis approach, comprising five aspects. These are an ontology (to affirm the reality of *missio Dei*), an epistemology (to recognise and distinguish five elements of God’s mission), a praxeology (to identify seven dimensions of each mission praxis), an encounterology (to explore the nature of the interactions between praxes), and an axiology (to describe the ethos of a mission praxis). These five aspects are presented as essential aspects of a well-rounded and well-grounded missiology.

Verster, in his article “Biblical mission in the context of vulnerability in Africa: 1 Cor. 2:1-11 and vulnerability in Africa,” argues that to understand vulnerability in Africa in a biblical sense, we must turn to the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross is central to understanding how we should relate to this world and its challenges. Vulnerability in Africa is also the vulnerability of the crucified One. This has implications for all people in Africa, meaning that they can look up to the cross of Jesus Christ to understand their vulnerability and how they can live according to the Word of God.

In relation to urban contexts, De Beer, in his contribution entitled “Transforming urban vulnerability: a theological and political priority,” explores vulnerability and resilience, distinguishing between adaptive and transformative resilience, and proposes an approach for praxis. The proposed approach presupposes a theological and political commitment to, and solidarity with, vulnerable people, places, and systems, which is played out in concrete actions aimed at transforming urban vulnerability.

In the article entitled “Vulnerability in Missiological Research: A Challenge for Westerners in Empirical Intercultural Theology”, Grohmann reflects on how an understanding of vulnerability was applied to an ethnographic study of the conceptualisation and practice of post-apartheid reconciliation in a multiethnic South African church.

With reference to the Nepali Church, Knoetze and Khanal, in their contribution entitled: “Western Christian missions’ influence on the public witness of the Nepali Church”, highlight how the divergence in mission objectives between the Western Christian Missions (WCMs) and the local Nepali Church led to separate implementation of the integral gospel. Their article examines how the separate modes and objectives of the WCMs and the local Nepali Church impacted the public Christian witness in society. Thus, this article emphasizes the importance of a meaningful partnership between the WCMs and the local church.

In relation to the Methodist Church of South Africa, Vilakati and Bentley in their contribution: “The price of the call: A missional reflection on the covenantal strain in the relationship between clergy and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa”, invite the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to reimagine covenant as shared stewardship, addressing institutional realities, reimagining a holistic view of clergy wellbeing and being set free ministry, and fostering missional renewal.

Regarding Global Christianity, Ferreira provides a theological and missiological reassessment of the historical decline of Western Christianity into Christendom. Instead of simply recounting history, he uses the framework of the *missio Dei* to critique how political alliances, cultural assimilation, and institutional interests have distorted the Church’s identity and witness. Drawing on missiological insights from Bosch, Walls, Newbigin, and Bediako, he encourages the Western Church to embrace theological humility, intercultural understanding, ecclesial reform, and eschatological hope.

With reference to Ghana, Awuah-Gyawu and White explore Scripture Union’s (SU) leadership development and discipleship approach among senior high school students in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. This research utilizes data from interviews, institutional records, and participant observation, focusing on how SU blends traditional and contemporary strategies to meet the discipleship and leadership development needs of young people in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. Their study sheds light on the strengths and areas of growth within SU’s discipleship initiatives, offering valuable insights for ongoing refinement and enhancement.

B. Reflections on South African Pentecostal and Charismatic mission praxis

In his paper entitled “South African Pentecostal Missions: Parochial or Incarnational?”, Resane aims to explore the historical development of South African classical Pentecostal missions, examining their strategies, methodologies, and options across the epochs of colonialism, apartheid, and democracy. Each of the three classical Pentecostal denominations, i.e., Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel, was referenced throughout the paper to substantiate the research question of whether South African Pentecostalism is parochial or incarnational in its missional focus and activities.

Mudau’s article, “Come to Church; you will receive blessings: Contrasting Prosperity Gospel Teachings with Justification by Faith Alone when Proclaiming the Good News”, investigates the theological conflicts between prosperity gospel teachings and the notion of justification by faith alone, evaluating their differing interpretations of blessing, salvation, and the Christian existence. The study is positioned within the worldwide framework of contemporary Christianity, focusing specifically on areas where prosperity theology has thrived in conjunction with conventional evangelical doctrines.

C. Environmental sustainability and earth healing.

Magezi reflects on the church’s role in addressing the ecological crisis. He acknowledges that there is a dearth of theological research in this area. Yet, in the same vein as Mangayi (2023), he contends that none of the few available studies have successfully developed theologies of mission to challenge the Church and, consequently, Christians to protect the environment, thereby mitigating climate change and environmental degradation. To address this challenge, he proposes biblical stewardship as a nexus for environmental protection.

Finally, we are grateful to all colleagues who served as reviewers for this volume and to Mrs S Coleman for administrative support. We also seize this opportunity to apologise for the inconvenience the delays in publishing this volume might have caused to all interested parties. We had to abruptly change the publisher in the middle of the year.

References

Mangayi, LC., 2023. ‘Reimagining mission and missiology amid global ecological crisis: An oikomiological theoretical and conceptual framework for building a sustainable world.’ *Missionalia*, Vol. 51, pp.196-218.