

A missiology of life: Engaging Nelus Niemandt's missiology

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Dates:

Received: 30 Nov. 2024

Accepted: 19 Feb. 2025

Published: 31 Mar. 2025

How to cite this article:

Verster, P., 2025, 'A missiology of life: Engaging Nelus Niemandt's missiology', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 46(4), a3403.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v46i4.3403>

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Respected missiologist Nelus Niemandt pays a great deal of attention to present-day life in his missiology. Although the 'not yet' plays an important role in missiology, Niemandt emphatically concentrates on the implications of the *missio Dei* for this life, or the 'yet'. For Niemandt, aspects such as deep contextualisation and deep incarnation are extremely important tools necessary to engage the world in God's involvement in the 'yet' or present world. Niemandt shows great regard for the World Council of Churches' policy document titled *Together Towards Life*. Reading his work related to this article leads to a great appreciation of his understanding of mission as involvement in the needs and challenges of the marginalised, especially in Africa. His missiology is also interdisciplinary, as he engages in economic, social and political aspects of this life.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: In this article, I argue that seen through the lens of Niemandt's work on missiology, more attention should be paid to the mission as the ministry of reconciliation to obtain a clear picture of mission from the perspective of the atonement and to emphasise the future and the 'not yet'. In addition, the salience of evangelism in this broader discussion also warrants investigation.

Keywords: *missio Dei*; deep contextualisation; deep incarnation; Africa; WCC; life.

Introduction

In this article, I engage in dialogue with the most prominent aspects of nationally and internationally renowned missiologist Nelus Niemandt's missiology. Niemandt presents his missiology by departing from the most recent aspects of theology, and the challenges of these theologies are clearly engaged in his missiology. He also presents new perspectives on missiology and calls for dialogue on existing practices and beliefs. Taking his cue from the *missio Dei*, Niemandt develops a missiology for the present day. He deeply engages the World Council of Churches (WCC) policy document *Together Towards Life* and shows how the mission should be regarded as relevant today. Aspects such as deep contextualisation and deep incarnation are central to Niemandt's writing. He also engages the challenges of post-colonialism. My aim with this article is to engage in dialogue with Niemandt to engage with aspects of his missiology such as his views on reconciliation and evangelism. However, before I present this dialogue, I will first provide an overview of Niemandt's views on the *missio Dei*, deep contextualisation and deep incarnation, the WCC policy document and post-colonial theology.

Missio Dei

The concept of *missio Dei* is integral to Niemandt's missiology (2019a:2ff.) from a very early stage. It is clear that he commits himself to Bosch's (1991:389–393) view of the *missio Dei* regarding it as essentially *missio Trinitatis*. From this flows the *missio ecclesiae*. Bosch (1991) clearly states:

Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people. (p. 392)

The concept of *missio Dei* was further developed by Bevans and Schroeder (2006:295ff.), Wright (2008:357ff.) and Skreslet (2012:31ff.).

Niemandt (2019a:2) is clear that the theology of mission should be Trinitarian and that the involvement of the divinity engages other aspects of missiology, such as contextualisation, inculturation, dialogue, etc. With the *missio Trinitatis* as foundation, Niemandt explores and

Note: The manuscript is a contribution to the themed collection titled 'Festschrift Nelus Niemandt' under the expert guidance of guest editors Prof. Johannes J. Knoetze and Dr Yolande Steenkamp.

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engages with several aspects related to current missional theologies, including 're-appropriation of and understanding of ecclesiology', the missional nature of God and the connection between mission and the 'divine history of the church' (Niemandt 2019a:2). He emphasises the importance of the missional church in his missiology and posits that, to achieve a real missional church, mobility is essential (Niemandt 2023:5ff.). This means that the church should reach out to the margins and the marginalised. It is important that this is a movement of the church crossing borders. Pastors should rather be traders than gatekeepers – 'eerder handelaars as hekwagters' – who move people instead of separating them (Niemandt 2023:5).

Niemandt (2019a) writes:

The *missio Dei* defines the essence and substance of the church. *Missio Dei* is God's plan to save the world. Mission is an eternal reality rooted in God's sending of the son and the procession of the Spirit from the Godhead. It is not only a case of God doing the sending, but also God in his very essence being a sending or missional God. Life in the Trinity is a dynamic life of sending and being sent, of interdependence and the outpouring of love. Mission begins in the heart of the triune God and the unifying love which binds together the Holy Trinity which overflows to all humanity and creation. (p. 2)

The *missio Dei* includes special reference to the Spirit. Niemandt (2012) continues:

One of the important arguments in this research is that life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission. [...] The Spirit is transforming God's creation so that God's new dispensation and kingdom can continue to break through. The missional church is about congregations in this transformational field of power created by the Spirit. (p. 2)

There is no doubt that Niemandt has great regard for the Trinity. The mission should also always be *missio Trinitatis*. To reiterate Bosch (1991), the mission comes from the heart of God and has implications for all humanity and creation (Niemandt 2012:2).

It is important to note that Niemandt (2019a:2) holds strong views concerning the relationship between the mission today and the mission of outreach in the world. It is evident that he engages with these aspects from the very perspective of the *missio Dei*. Missiology, in this sense, is commonly understood from this perspective. Niemandt (2019a:2ff.) understands the *missio Dei* as the engagement of God through his church in the world currently in a different way than in the past. Evangelism's strong emphasis on the past is not rejected; however, Niemandt shifts the emphasis to God's work in the current world concerning the renewal of the world and the church. In this regard, it is crucial to clarify that Niemandt emphasises the perspective of the Triune God in this renewal and how the latter engages this world through the glory of Christ. As such, engaging the world in mission from this perspective, the emphasis should be on the church.

The importance of the church in missiology cannot be overestimated. The concept of the missional church, as defined by Niemandt, implies that the church is present in this world for regeneration, especially for those on the margins. In this regard, Niemandt (2012:2) refers to the 'Emerging Church Movement'. It has been described as 'an ecclesiological and missiological response to postmodern culture' (Mackenzie 2012:315). Gibbs and Bolger (2005:28) further explain the movement as 'missional communities arising from within postmodern culture and consisting of followers of Jesus who are seeking to be faithful in their place and time'. These definitions indicate that the church should not be a cocoon in this world, but should be present. However, the difference between dualism and engagement should be understood so as not to conflate the various teachings within emerging churches, which comprise 'relevants, reconstructionists, and revisionists' (Stetzer 2006:30) and this conflation has led to criticism that these churches are '[embracing] postmodern culture [to an extent that it] has distorted the gospel' (Mackenzie 2012:317). The fact remains that emerging churches are recognised for 'building bridges between faith and contemporary culture' as well as for 'innovative forms of mission' with a focus on conversation, dialogue, journey and community (Mackenzie 2012:315, 317).

However, the church should not be a spiritual entity only but should also be involved in the community and in the world. Similarly, a dualistic understanding of the work of the church, where the church is also only referred to as the congregation on Sunday and is not involved in the realities of the current world, should be disregarded. The difference between the spiritual and the physical and the holy and the secular should be bridged to enable a novel understanding of how one should live in the world today. The church and its mission, including that of the emerging church, should, therefore, include being a church of new relations and understanding. The modernist movement has led to the understanding of the secular world as one where the spiritual is rejected. In the secular space created in the modernist world, the spiritual realm is often marginalised; those within it are similarly marginalised (Niemandt 2008:145ff.). The mission of both the church and the emerging church, however, is to be involved in the current world and to reintroduce and renew spirituality in the everyday lives of people. Both also reject the hierarchical view of the church and posit that a missional church should be one where the laity is involved in the lives of those who have become marginalised by moving out among them. This type of mission could bring about a new reality for people in many different situations by becoming politically, economically, socially and spiritually involved in the world. To achieve this, the church should be the church – present in the world, changing the world, bringing about new situations and not turning away from the challenges of the day. The church service should thus also not be a one-man show, but be typified by the involvement of the whole congregation in relation to other people, bringing about a new situation. The church should be the Church of the

people and not, in the hierarchical sense, a church from above, but a church from below that changes modernist perceptions that God is involved from above alone (Niemandt 2007:542ff, 2008:145ff.).

Niemandt (2010) also mentions that it is essential for the church to be an active listener by listening to the voices of people as it heeds the word of God. The latter is what enables the true understanding of the church's task. Concerning the issue of *missio Dei* as it relates to listening, Niemandt shows due consideration and comprehension of Bosch's (1991) work on the topic. Niemandt reiterates that mission is also a process of listening. He refers to aspects such as listening originating with the wisdom of ages, listening being empowered by inspiration, being a process, being about discernment and finally blooming into a life of good works.

Niemandt (2016:86) concludes his discussion on the *missio Dei* by saying: 'Missional leadership is understood as the transformation of people and institutions to participate, through meaningful relations and in the power of the Spirit, in God's mission'.

Deep contextualisation

Regarding the previously mentioned new direction in missiology, which includes engaging the marginalised and those outside the spiritual community, Niemandt (2017c) suggests making use of deep contextualisation. The latter is a concept within which the community is contextualised from a very clear perspective to enter into dialogue with the most needy or marginalised. However, such contextualisation in the current world includes more than a human effort – it needs to engage the whole of creation.

Concerning deep contextualisation, Niemandt's (2017c) emphasis is clearly on the marginalised and those on the fringes of the community. He argues that to engage these individuals in deep contextualisation relative to their culture and their predicament, it is necessary to proclaim a gospel that engages people on the fringes of the community. Deep contextualisation means to influence the lives of the people; influencing people's lives from this perspective opens new ways of understanding contextualisation. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship between deep contextualisation and influencing lives through deep contextualisation is evident. Through this type of contextualisation, the mission is no longer a brief visitation to the problems of the world. Instead, it becomes a deep engagement with the people of the world that enables an enhanced understanding of how they live and should be regarded. It is God being present among us.

Niemandt (2017c) elaborates on deep contextualisation as follows:

Deep contextualization might represent a way to include a post-anthropomorphic discourse in Missiology. It can assist with the reorientation of the history of mission on the whole of history and, thus, also deep history. (p. 5)

He (Niemandt 2011) further explains:

It must go beyond just listening, looking, helping people on the fringes of humanity, but to engage those structures that dehumanize and destroy other people's dignity to engage in their whole predicament. (p. 6)

As such, one can conclude that engaging the world from the perspective of deep contextualisation is a necessity. To engage the world in this way is also a novel situation for the church.

Deep incarnation

Concerning deep incarnation, Gregersen (2016) writes as follows:

Yet, as the proposal of deep incarnation argues, a genuine or 'perfect' union only is possible if Christ embraces the entire mishmash of created existence, and not only its ideal forms. The condescending move of the eternal Word or Wisdom thus is an expression of the divine election of humanity and of the world that God so loved that God gave God's only Son (Jn 3:16). Divine perfection here does not mean staying aloof in simplicity but entering into the complex realities of creation in order to bring the manifold world back to God. (p. 259)

Important for the present discussion, our attention should be on the fact that God in Jesus Christ came to this world deeply and radically in Jesus Christ's incarnation. Jesus' incarnation is, therefore, very important for regarding how the world should be embraced. This is not only a human incarnation but has implications for the whole creation it enters into a relationship with. This deep incarnation should not be seen in isolation of these aspects.

Consequently, Niemandt (2017a) writes:

Deep incarnation takes incarnation further and states that – in and through the process of incarnation – God the creator and the world of the flesh are conjoined in such depth that God links up with all vulnerable creatures. (p. 250)

He concludes (Niemandt 2017a) by saying:

In summary, deep incarnation can be described as the presence of God in the past, present and future of the whole cosmos; the co-existence of the embodied Logos with the divinity of God. It underscores Jesus Christ, God incarnate, as the ecological centre of all creation, and facilitates all things interconnected to find their unity and wholeness in relationship to God. (p. 252)

For Niemandt, therefore, it is extremely important that deep incarnation be understood as the incarnation of the son of God in every aspect of this world, that the son of God is engaged where people live and where they stand, but also where creation is regarded, and that, in creation, a new way of engagement is necessary and new understanding is possible from the view of God's engagement. Therefore, deep incarnation is an incarnation into the holistic understanding of the world and the universe by acknowledging that Christ is not only the Christ of those who need salvation but the Christ, after creation, of the whole creation. As such, the whole of creation should be regarded by the church and engaged. Deep incarnation is

an incarnation of the Son of God in the most profound way possible.

It is also clear that the kingdom of God is central to Niemandt's missional theology. The aspect of the kingdom of God – involving the whole community and the whole creation of God – is far larger than a few aspects of humanity in bringing the whole kingdom of God to all people and all of God's creation.

World Council of Church policy document *Together Towards Life*

To understand Niemandt's missiology (2015a:82), one must turn to his essential engagement with the WCC policy document titled *Together Toward Life* (TTL) accepted by the WCCs at its 10th assembly in Busan, South Korea, in October 2013.

Ross (2017) refers to the essential aspects of this policy document by saying:

In fact, we have a fresh and compelling statement that places mission and evangelism at the heart of the church's self-understanding. It frankly acknowledges the human error that has caused mission to be misunderstood or misused, on occasion, in the past. It finds new direction and energy for mission by tracing it back to its origins in the triune life of God and, in particular, to the engagement of the Spirit of God with the life of the world. Rather than mission being about the aggrandizement of any community or interest group, its true nature is understood in terms of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which brings the transforming love of God into the life of the world. Our calling is to discern where and how the Holy Spirit is working – and to join in. (p. 90)

Three questions are posed by Niemandt (2015a:82) in relation to this document, namely "'Where do we come from?'" "What is happening now?" and "What could the future look like?".

Regarding the first question, Niemandt (2015a:85ff.) refers to documents from earlier conferences of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC. Theologians such as Karl Barth, Lesslie Newbiggin, Hans Hoekendijk and David Bosch are pertinently mentioned in his discussions. He emphasises salient points, such as the Trinitarian origin and *missio Dei*, Barth's Trinitarian theology, how the *missio Dei* led to the *missio ecclesiae* and how the *missio Dei* was revisited to claim its origin from God.

With the second question – related to what is currently happening – the same theologians (Barth, Newbiggin, Hoekendijk and Bosch) are engaged. Once again, Niemandt (88ff.) makes reference to the Trinitarian foundation, God as creator and sustainer, and the *missio Dei* as world renewal with the Trinity as its fundamental truth. He further emphasises the importance of these aspects in terms of the search for reconciliation and peace. Niemandt ponders the centrality of God's word in the church and mission, which

led to Hoekendijk's critique on ecclesiocentrism in mission theology, noting that the emphasis should be on the world and not on the church in mission. Niemandt (2015a:93) explains: 'TTL addresses the relationship between church and mission, stating that "it is not the church that has a mission but rather the mission that has a church"'.

Finally, Niemandt (2015a) asks what the future could look like, and explains:

The very act of reflecting on an ecumenical document reminds us that we are collectively engaged in the *missio Dei* through the strength of the Spirit, and that we are doing it within diverse contexts. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth. (p. 94)

His position is that creation is at the core of mission and that missional ecclesiology and missional leadership relate to, '[m]issional ecclesiology as grounded in the *missio Trinitatis*' and that it is 'impossible to separate church and mission' (Niemandt 2015a:96). He concludes his musings on the question as follows:

My conviction is that the TTL document provides mission and Missiology with a dialogue partner that reminds the church, and those who practise theology – especially Missiology – that we are together on a journey towards life. (p. 100)

From the foregoing review, it seems clear that Niemandt holds the World Council of Churches' missiological perspectives as comprised in the document *Together Towards Life* in high regard. He is very clear that the perspectives and findings contained in the document have implications for missiology and for all areas of life. He refers to the new missiologies, now relevant because of the importance of contextualisation. The sacrifice of Jesus was also made for those on the fringes of humanity; missiology should, therefore, strive to include the same.

It is, therefore, important to understand that Niemandt's missiology is essentially a missiology of life. It is a comprehensive missiology, but the emphasis is always on life in its entirety. Life is extremely relevant to his explanation of the *missio Dei*. God is the God of life. Through the Spirit, God engages all. This life is, however, not only the spiritual life of the human but also the fullness of life of the whole creation. The Spirit is the Spirit of life flowing through all and enlightening all. One must note that life is essentially the life in Christ and that the Spirit glorifies him. The wonder of new life is, therefore, possible in the glorious recreation of the Father, the salvation of the Son and the regeneration of the Spirit. It has implications for the whole of eschatology in the way in which God in mission glorifies himself through the *missio Dei*, and therein lies the hope for creation. Life is a reality in God. Mission relates to this life by being a comprehensive engagement of all life and by magnifying the Triune God. Niemandt regards the WCC policy document as key, and the call is for all to be together on the way towards life. It is a journey with God and all should be involved. It has

implications for the future. A future with God is the future of true life. The *missio Dei* is, therefore, not only the truth of past missions but also for future missions. The mission is life. All different aspects of the mission come together in the confession of God as God of life.

Engaging Africa

Africa's challenges are well-known and often seem overwhelming. There are, however, new theological engagements, such as post-colonial theology and decolonial theology, that refer to aspects of relations with the challenges of Africa. The deep problems of Africa need full engagement.

Monye (2016) explains some of these challenges in the following way:

Today, corruption in African manifests itself in almost all aspects of human life. It epitomizes a breakdown of the rule of law and the loss of state legitimacy. It perverts human relations and leads to increased personalization of political power. Consequently, corruption has paved way for nepotism and tribalism. It has also led to abuse of public office and funds. Corruption has been generally described as any form of deviant behaviour associated with a particular motivation, namely that of private gain at public expense. In this case, corrupt behaviour involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit. (p. 104)

Niemandt (2015c), in turn, fully engages many of Africa's challenges and asks:

What can we as Western theologians learn from African theology? The answer to this question is not easy, keeping in mind that there is neither the Western theologian nor the African theologian. However, there are differences between Western and African ways of doing theology, which can stimulate and eventually even change our ways of theologising. (p. 8)

Engaging African theology through the concept of economy is important. As Niemandt (2015b:7) explains, 'Christian ethics is not predetermined by traditional cultural roles, but is motivated by the kerygma about the divine kingdom rather than by enslavement by the law of nature'.

This leads to the question of how to engage in the challenging situation of most Africans. Some turn to the prosperity gospel. Although Niemandt (2017b) warns against the colonial aspects of this approach, he also regards it in some ways as decolonial theology. To elucidate, he writes:

The prosperity gospel represents one of the most interesting challenges to missiologists. The discourses on the Africanisation of theology and, more specifically, Missiology, will have to attend to the paradoxical influence of the prosperity gospel. On the one hand, it represents much of the global Eurocentric (and especially North American) influences attacked by the decolonial discourse. This researched showed how the prosperity gospel abducted the missionary imagination of many churches in Africa and replaced it with a materialistic and consumerist orientation. On the other hand, local expressions of prosperity churches, and the way in which these churches embrace marginalised peoples and are contextually sensitive. (p. 216)

Essentially, Niemandt wants to suggest in his missiology how to alleviate the source of poverty by alluding to the essential role the church can play: by basing the *missio ecclesiae* on the *missio Dei* and becoming involved in this way. Niemandt (2017b:216) explains that churches need to change the 'outlook of members towards economic challenges, and [assist] in empowering its membership to take responsibility for their own lives and future'. (Niemandt 2019b:1ff; Niemandt 2015d:336ff).

Dialogue

When entering into dialogue with Niemandt, it is necessary to explain that his views on mission are both knowledgeable and challenging. Deep contextualisation and deep incarnation are complex aspects of theology; his missiology allows for varied readings and framings of these concepts along with a new understanding of mission in light of the TTL. In this regard, it is crucial to understand the more positive view of the incarnation that has implications for the whole of creation. However, one must be careful not to temporally decontextualise or disregard the implications of the resurrection of the incarnation of Christ for human beings. Deep incarnation has implications for the entire creation. One should guard against challenging the whole incarnation of Christ in the human being and should always consider that the incarnation in Christ is in the human being.

The ministry of reconciliation in Christ is embodied in him as the one who serves others as a human being. In this context, one must also consider whether Niemandt gives sufficient attention to mission as the ministry of reconciliation.

This ministry essentially emphasises God's redemption in Christ. God takes the initiative. Verster (2020) explains that the atonement is at the centre of the reconciliation with God:

An aspect that also needs attention in this regard is the atonement. Atonement and the way that the crucified Christ achieved reconciliation of humans with God remains essential. The question of penal substitution remains very relevant. Anselm's question: Why did God become human? remains an essential question. Rightly understood, penal substitution opens the curtain to God's substitutionary love in Christ. (p. 7)

To regard the mission as the ministry of reconciliation is important for our view of atonement, which should be central to the mission. As Yeary (2010) notes:

The good news Paul proclaimed of a God who has acted definitively in Christ to remove the barriers of sinfulness separating the world from God is the same good news that produces faith in all who call themselves Christians today. (p. 279)

According to Bosch (1991:368ff.), a mission comprises many different aspects. One also must proclaim the essential role of the Son in the ministry of reconciliation's mission. Reaction to the ministry of reconciliation is, therefore, essential. It is, however, always God who takes the initiative.

Nwachukwu (2009) writes in this regard:

Reconciliation is a process that begins with a positive response from the offended party. It is God who took the initiative to reconcile us through the death of his Son. Expressed in this way, Paul meant to underscore the initiative and gracious character of God's reconciling activity. Other phrases that underscore the gracious character of God's action are found in 2 Cor 5:19 'not counting their trespasses' and Rom 5:10 'while we were enemies'. (p. 292)

The apostle Paul, I believe, proclaimed the essential role of the ministry of reconciliation and mission as the ministry of reconciliation calls for the church to go out into the world to call people to reconciliation with God. Paul says, in his second letter to the Corinthians:

²⁰We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. I plead with you accept the reconciliation and the atonement.

These verses emphasise that Jesus, as the one who is for the others, is central in the reconciliation. Turner (1989) explains further that:

Second Corinthians 5:14–15 has stressed Christ's death as a representative act and as an act of renewal. Due to Christ's representative death, Christ-centered rather than self-centred living is required of those who would identify with the gospel. Paul next in 5:16–17 describes two consequences of Christ's death. First, Christ's death means that from now on a radically different way of viewing reality is present. (p. 81)

In this sense, the incarnation always has to do with Jesus as the one who is for others, the one who takes the place of others and the one who brings about the whole redemption. The implications for the church are relevant: the church responds to the reconciliation and lives it in the world.

Newland (2013) provides the following commentary on this aspect:

Paul in this letter was, as usual with that community, trying to help them with their divisions and conflicts. In the midst of their wrangling he always pointed them to Jesus Christ. He said that if you are in Christ, if I am in Christ, then the old has passed away and everything has become new. In this new person there is a new understanding, a new relationship with God, a new purpose and a new self. Paul affirms that all this is made possible through Christ who reconciled the world to God and has given his followers this ministry of reconciliation. (p. 81)

In light of Newland's commentary, Niemandt's view of evangelism, or the salvation of the individual is noteworthy and can be read in relation to Bosch's (1991:409–420) view on evangelism. Bosch has a very important view on evangelism as part of the missionary outreach, which is greatly impactful in Niemandt's work.

Reconciliation in mission is also emphasised by Cornwall (1995), who writes:

The church's primary calling is to be an agent of reconciliation. This ministry, which Paul believed God entrusted to the church, is rooted in the church's affirmation that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (II Corinthians 5:19). I believe, therefore, that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) must take stock of its understanding of global ministry in the light of this calling to be ambassadors of God's work of reconciliation. (p. 1)

One cannot say that Niemandt has no regard for this, as he often refers to the implications of evangelism and the new way in which evangelism can be regarded. He acknowledges and proposes innovative ways of evangelising while also being cognisant of the implications of novel means and methods of evangelism.

Okure (2006:111–112) notes that 'the divine ministry' in which the world is reconciled with 'the divine self' comprises of 'what God did in and through Christ and in God's entrusting of that ministry to believers, especially the preachers'. Okure's observation signals an awareness that the core of evangelism is the ministry of reconciliation. I would suggest that Niemandt enlarge his views on deep contextualisation, deep incarnation and post-colonial theology to also consider that in all these aspects, the mission as a ministry of reconciliation remains foundational and crucial. It should be one of the most essential aspects of the mission and should be regarded as such.

All of this should be achieved in brokenness. The church should never be conceited but must follow Christ humbly, as emphasised by Verster (2016):

The ministry of reconciliation should be a ministry in brokenness. From Romans it is essential to emphasise God's bold love for us to be humble before Him but also bold in living with Christ. It is clear from Romans that humans are under the wrath of God. Only through the love of God in Christ can change come about is change brings new hope in a deep and profound way. Real salvation is possible and a new life and future with God is present. (p. 640)

Nessan (2013:102–105) similarly engages the core Christian practices to guide the life of the church, noting that the ministry of reconciliation refers to: (1) prayer for peace; (2) kindness; (3) forgiveness; (4) resisting violence; and (5) advocating non-violence.

Reconciliation with God is necessary. The radical aspects of the atonement should be recognised, and even considered as vital, in this reconciliation, which means that hope is possible in this life in the light of Christ's death and resurrection. Tennent (2010:491) explains that the incarnation reverses the curse of death so that the sinner may become a new creation in Christ and that this new situation is possible in him. The ministry of reconciliation should therefore always be the centre of the mission. From this essential point of reference, all missions should be regarded.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that Niemandt opens the field of missiology to new and challenging aspects. There should be high regard for his views. Engaging them leads to new perspectives and provides fertile soil for future discussions.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Author's contributions

P.V. is the sole author of this research article.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was submitted to the General/Human Research Ethics Committee, and consent was received on 03 December 2024. The ethics waiver number is UFS-HSD2024/2661. The committee granted an ethics waiver for the study because it does not involve human participation beyond the study team and does not include the collection or processing of data other than that available in the public domain.

Data availability

The author declares that all data that support this research article and findings are available in the article and its references.

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