Editorial

Misión integral, a term coined by the Ecuadorian theologian C. René Padilla and elaborated upon by many missiologists and theologians over the last two decades in different contexts, argues that Christian mission, in its articulation and pursuit, is integral of and attentive to its social, cultural, religious, and political contexts. As such, it is able to open up to new scholarly fields and embrace missionaries’ engagements with concrete and diverse local realities. The current issue of Mission Studies offers us some prospects within such a horizon. On the one hand, it brings to our attention the developing field of Children in Missiology, and on the other, it offers us novel probes within the familiar field of Mission and Healing.

David H. Scott surveys the literature on Mission and Children in recent English-language publications and analyzes it in relation to other trends to better understand and engage with children and young people in the church, in the world, and in the academy. It observes that the number and quality of missiological research and writing related to children and mission in academic journals has greatly expanded over the past decades. Cara L. Pfeiffer’s article is a contribution to this evolving field. She alerts us to the situation of many children growing up in contexts of toxic stress, which makes them face a cascade of deleterious realities impacting their being on many levels. Vis-à-vis such contexts, she suggests the need of healthy and supportive relationships, which can be both protective and transformative for those young people. Reminding us of the frequent biblical reference to the metaphor of family to describe the church, her paper proposes ecclesial communities to operate as “healthy families”, thereby creating missiologically significant spaces of healing and transformation for the children in their midst. Here, Child Theology and studies of early Christian community, catechesis, and worship are put into conversation with one another.

Extending this concern for new realms of integral mission, the second pair of articles allow us to explore distinct cross-cultural realities surrounding the theme of healing in particular mission fields. Columban father Francis Hoare offers a reflection of integral mission, drawing on his pastoral experiences with spirit possessions within the two major cultures of Fiji. His paper examines different types of spirit possession from the perspectives of social anthropology, psychology, and theology, which all play important roles in a missional dealing
with cases of spirit possession. Sensibility for local cosmology in pastoral discernment is emphasized, especially in cases of ancestor possession, which are common in the indigenous Fijian culture. He stresses that the character of the pastoral worker and relationship with “the patient” are also of great importance in the healing process, as well as the healing power of religious ritual and symbol. To achieve as accurate a diagnosis as possible, he suggests a mixture of spirituality, psychology, and socio-cultural analysis as necessary for missions of healing. In their article, TORMOD KLEIVEN et al., investigate the power dynamics at play in open and announced healing practices in Norway and Madagascar. They analyze empirical material of healing practices from two different ecclesial and cultural contexts through a power theoretical lens. Their article reveals concerns of (il)legality of exercising “power over” in healing practices, how the “power from” concept can be misused to justify a “power over” attitude, and how crucial it is to practice a relational, mutual interdependence in an integral mission of healing.

This outreach to interdisciplinary study and into novel fields in integral mission is complemented by a number of book reviews, for which we thank our steady book reviewers and book review editors: Atola Longkumer (Imphal, India) and Jean-Luc Enyegue SJ (Nairobi, Kenya).

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