Jerry M. Ireland (ed.)


*For the Love of God: Principles and Practice in Mission* integrates compassion and evangelism in cross-cultural development and mission work. Some mission organizations emphasize individual/personal salvation without social and developmental activities. On the other hand, some liberal traditions focus on social justice and development work. The book attempts to solve the limitations of these traditions by integrating theory and praxis in evangelism and development activities. The book is divided into two main parts. The first part analyzes the biblical, theological, and practical definitions of mission, development, and compassion. The second part of the book discusses different missional methods and practices by bringing insights from scripture, tradition, and contemporary experiences. The book proposes a way forward for evangelical missionaries and churches to answer, “How should compassion be related to evangelism?” (17) The main argument of the book is that cross-cultural missionaries need to emphasize empowering, nurturing, and equipping without imposing non-indigenous, western, and paternalistic mission definitions and practices on the local churches and communities. The book highlights the importance of using the local churches’ resources for cross-cultural mission and development work.

The authors recommend that cross-cultural mission organizations and evangelical churches participate in holistic care which is grounded in the biblical, theological, and practical understandings of mission and compassion. They show that in the Christian tradition words and deeds are not divided, meaning evangelism cannot be separated from providing for the physical needs of the poor and the oppressed. Moreover, most of the practices are also contextual: community and local church-oriented. In the second part of the book, the authors describe diverse experiences from their mission and ministry work in different parts of the world. Their experiences along with their reflections give authentic voice to their recommendations, missional methods, and approaches. Some of them describe incarnational and contextual models for the Western churches working in partnership with the local churches.

For example, the De-McDonaldization method critiques western missionaries’ approaches as quick-fixes that destroy indigenous practical wisdom. Others use holistic models to integrate justice and evangelism. The holistic approaches which integrate compassion and evangelism propose different approaches to address contemporary struggles with indigenous resources. The authors analyze various contemporary and essential issues that need to be addressed by the
cross-cultural mission organizations and the local churches. Vulnerable young people, female genital mutilation, poverty, health issues such as HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, and disabilities are contemporary risks that the cross-cultural missionaries along with local churches need to address. These models show the importance of empowering and nurturing the local churches to address crises in their own way so that missionaries and the local churches work together as agents of compassion and love of God.

The strength of this book is that it is trying to address how mission organizations could integrate compassion and evangelism by empowering indigenous and local church resources/capacities. At the same time, the book gives clear synthesis of the Western evangelical churches' biblical, theological, and practical understanding of cross-cultural mission and development. The book is also calling Western churches and mission organizations to go beyond their divided approach to mission to have holistic approach to compassionate evangelism. On the other hand, it is limited in scope, definitions, and interpretations. The book does not show the impact of Enlightenment, Westernization, colonization, slavery, and neo-colonialism to non-Western countries. Religion, mission, and colonization were part of the colonial agenda in African countries and other non-Western countries. Now, in the aftermath of slavery and colonization these nations are experiencing poverty, social, economic, political crises, and instabilities. Therefore, I argue that in order to bring a holistic and integrated care model to the poor and the oppressed, the historical and practical causes of these problems should be addressed.

Second, some of the concepts such as development, poverty, and need were interpreted through the Webster dictionary and measured by the Western notions of progress. The question is, how can the mission organizations or evangelical churches in the West empower the non-Western local Christian communities while they are still defining and measuring development through their Western standards? Even though the book is trying to create a cross-cultural mission approach which comes from the grassroots, it lacks contextual definitions for its main themes and concepts. Third, the book relates poverty with non-Christians. It proposes evangelization and development work of the missionaries as the way out of social, economic, physical and spiritual poverty. In fact, there are countries in Africa and other parts of the world which embraced Christianity earlier than most European countries, but are still struggling with social, political, and economic crises.

Finally, using evangelism as a way out of poverty makes Christianity less inclusive. If we cannot provide compassion and love to people who are not willing to be Christians then God's love is limited to people who are willing to be evangelized. Jean Johnson in her chapter, "Counter Intuitive Mission in the