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Group 5 Mission and Evangelism**

“To Serve the present age, our calling to fulfill”

What is the meaning of evangelization in a globalized World?

By Fernando H. Suárez

Present currents that are shaping our world

“I consider the entire world as my parish, I mean to say that wherever I am in it I think it is fair and my duty to declare the good news of salvation to all those wanting to hear. This is What God has called me to do. I am sure that his blessing accompanies it”¹

In this way did John Wesley describe his pastoral vocation and responsibility when the Anglican Church hierarchy questioned his ministry of preaching in “other parishes”. Although he was an Anglican minister without a parish under his charge, Wesley served as a pastor to many groups that responded to his evangelical preaching, calling to repentance and faith. It should be noted how Wesley defined his pastoral responsibility beyond the parishioners’ community. That is to say that to him the world, beside the community of faith was a ministering place.

But a deeper analysis makes us see something that goes beyond an ecclesiastical dispute over a territory, it is that the core of God’s calling for Wesley is the preaching of salvation for all. This is the feature characterizing the identity of the Methodist movement of all times.

This approach of Wesley’s ministerial vocation outlines the fundamental characteristics of the mission’s biblical theology. And at the same time it represents one of the most important legacies of the pietist evangelical movement of the XVIIIth century left to the Latin American evangelists. This legacy recovers the world as object of the Church’s calling, since it is towards it that God’s redeeming mission is oriented.

“Thus Wesley introduces a tension in the classical Catholic and Protestant ecclesiological patterns, by placing the whole of the Church at the evangelical mission’s service “Wesley in a sense proclaims in practice the church’s instrumentality to the mission”.²

This Wesleyan perspective will be taken into account in our way of considering the mission.

Regarding our Latin American approach, which is part of our way of dealing with theology, (to see, judge, do and celebrate), it is characterized by its constant reference to reality motivated by an ethical indignation resulting from our faith before the reigning injustice. It is a double reference, to its origin and its objective. All reflection stems from reality and goes back to reality to transform it and return again from that transformed reality in a new cyclical process around it.

¹ Juan Wesley Letter to James Harvey 28-03-1739

² Miguez Bonino José, “*Hacia una Eclesiología Evangelizadora*” *Una perspectiva Wesleyana*, Editeo-Ciemal 2003 pag 49ssg.

In this sense Latin American theology is based on a methodology that makes use of science in general with an emphasis on social sciences in order to carry out an analysis, reflection and work on the ever-changing reality.³

A reality that is presented as very complex and we understand it as described by Jung Mo Sung :

“To recognize the complexity of social reality is to acknowledge the human limits. The human being is incapable of getting to know reality fully, as well as incapable of controlling all the effects of his actions and to produce a society according to his projects and desires. But at the same time, to recognize the human being’s complexity in itself, is to recognize also that we are able to desire a world beyond the existing one, of creating symbols, of nominating and indicating that desired world, of making up utopias that will express more systematically our horizons of hope, of committing ourselves to worthy and fair causes that give a more human sense to our existence”⁴

In the conferences we will surely debate about the present currents shaping and changing our world, our society and the particular features they assume in our countries and how our churches are carrying out their evangelizing mission in the present modern or postmodern times, characterized by the globalizing pressure in the economic, political, cultural and social aspects.

We anticipate that the debate will be very fruitful in the systematic attempt to reflect on these issues. It will be like putting an intricate puzzle of many pieces together due to the complexity of the subject and the several approaches there exist to it. In doing it we should bear in mind that we and our churches are immersed in this complex and changing context of the globalization processes which affect all walks of life and will surely influence our way of understanding our evangelizing mission.

To start with, the mission concept, including the evangelization aspect, is different from the globalization, culture, economy, and politics concepts, among others. Because it is an action arising from within the church and not from processes external to it. Christians wish to communicate God’s salvation plan in Jesus Christ, (life, death and resurrection) under the guide of the Holy Spirit, (trinitary mission). The character of this message and its interpretation, (hermeneutics), will affect in turn the way churches perceive globalization processes and the ways of relating to their culture and society. This will in turn affect their concept of the evangelizing mission. There is a circularity of the globalization, culture and society relation on one hand and evangelizing mission on the other.

We said that when we talk about globalization we are putting forward a puzzle of approaches and definitions: What is globalization? What does it comprise? From what point of view is it defined? In general everyone concurs that globalization is an extremely complex process which includes not yet fully analyzed paradigms composed

³ “If we associate theological reflection to historical tasks by means of the social sciences it is to avoid the danger of a “pure” theology that would inevitably end up being a gratuitous superproduction of meanings, in other words, a “hemorrhage of meaning” due to the “infinity of words” of its incontinence”. Cfr C. Boff, “Teología de lo político. Sus mediaciones”. *Sígueme Publishers*, Salamanca 1980, pag. 44

⁴ Jung Mo Sung, “Sujeto y Sociedades complejas, Repensar los horizontes utópicos”, Ed. Vozes, Petrópolis 2002, Pag 11

of several dimensions conforming a new social phenomenon which has several variants according to the aspect it considers a priority in the development of its process. In this sense globalization is the process by which closed spaces open, economic, political and cultural forms intertwine with the arising of regional and global relations networks. Macrosocial data shows that globalization is historically identified as from mid XXth century, in which the convergence of economic, financial, communication, transport, migration processes among others emphasize the interdependence of huge sectors of numerous societies thus generating new flows and interconnection structures beyond the national spheres. Globalization stands for a perceptible opening of the boundaries of daily activities in all aspects of life. Capitals, goods, information, violence, legal and illegal migrations, drugs, technologies, ideologies, religions, trespass boundaries as if they did not exist. We are all influenced by wanted or unwanted transnational ways of life, either covered or not of a world “separated” in countries, regions or continents.

For Zygmunt Bauman

“Globalization divides in the proportion it joins: the causes of division are the same that promote the globe’s uniformity. Together with the planetary dimensions emerging from business, finance, trade and the information flow, a space fixing localizing process is started. These closely interlinked processes introduce a strict divide between the life conditions of entire population centres...” “...what for some appears as globalization for others is localization; what for some is a signal of a new found freedom, for many others it is a cruel and unexpected fate. The ascending mobility to the first place among coveted values, freedom of movement, an always scarce and unequally distributed merchandise, quickly becomes a stratification factor of our late modern and post-modern times” “...to be local in a globalized world is a signal of need and social degradation.” “Globalizing processes include a progressive social segregation, separation and marginalization. The neotribal and fundamentalist tendencies that show and articulate the globalization beneficiaries’ living, are their legitimate children as much as the celebrated “hybridation” of the higher culture, globalized summit...”⁵

Thus Bauman points out a concern for the progressive interruption of communications between more and more global and extraterritorial elites and the rest of the localized population. He denounces that at present the values and meaning production centres are extraterritorial and free from local restrictions.

In brief, globalization stresses the world population stratification between the globalized wealthy sector that dominate space and time and the localized poor sector, immobilized in space and time. The rest of the population, the new middle class carries the burden of these problems and therefore suffers uncertainty, anxiety and fear.

This globalizing process has contributed to consolidate the world market’s absolute power to the detriment of the pluridimensionality of the globalizing process itself, by stressing only one dimension: the economic one. This dimension rules above all others by means of the neoliberal ideology (political, cultural, social, aesthetic, ecological, etc) bringing about a phenomenon called Globalism.

⁵ Barman Zygmunt, *“La Globalización, Consecuencias humanas”*, Ed Fondo de Cultura Económica Argentina, 1999 pag 8 ssb

This world domination project is closely linked with the communicational power with the aim of colonizing subjectivity, subordinating peoples' consciences in order to replace them by another more adaptable to the absolute model of consumption markets. Its objective is to uniform thinking by obliterating critical capacities, subjects' denial and differentiation in order to consolidate the late financial and industrial capitalism imperial Whole ⁶. As Argentine philosopher Pablo Feinmann describes:

“The third millennium globalization seeks to chain not only bodies, but the subjects as well. Hold on the subjects. Its main weapons are not tanks, or missiles, or neutrons. They are television, the cinema, journalism, magazines, radios, cable channels and formidably Internet, where some naively believed that “the transparent society” proclaimed by Gianni Vattimo at the beginning of the 90’s was just starting. Internet is nowadays the realm of trash, of idiotizing goods, of compulsive shopping and sales, of sex goods, of pornography. It is growing, (these times’ rapid pace is its feature and also the degradation of temporality) and gradually more obscenely” “...the communicational power lies in everyone thinking the same as the ruling power.

Power imposes the “it is said”. (“Man” in Heidegger, “On dit” in Sartre) to fall under the “it is said” power is to fall under someone else’s dominion,(Being and Time, paragraph 27). Whoever thus falls, “is not the same”, the others have taken his being/out of him. In subduing my subjectivity power does away with my projects, my own future, what I would have liked to have done with my life, my possibilities of falling under the “it is said” dominion, are the Other’s, the power’s, those coming from the outside. It is no longer I who decides, someone decides over me. Heidegger writes “We enjoy and enjoy how one enjoys; we read, see and judge literature and art how it is seen and judged, we find unnerving what is found unnerving. Everything loses its mystery. Doesn’t this concept define the explicitness, the obscenity of communicational power? Everything is direct, trivial explicit. The mystery, what is suggested, what drives one to

⁶ We understand “Empire” as Richard A Horsley sets it out so well in his book, *“Jesus and Empire; The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder”*, Fortress Press, USA, 2003 . (Roman globalization was political. Military conquests enabled the economic exploitation of the subjected peoples. The American imperial modern power is mainly economic, legal and cultural, but conditioned by the transnational corporations’ power. The American government has only a slight advantage over them. The power relationships between governments and transnational corporations has been reverted, now governments carry out the vast corporations’ mandates. The globalized economy capital’s power determines political relations. The American Empire touched its pinnacle of power after the second world war, has been transformed by its own globalization. The Empire is globalized capitalism or, with the US government and its militarism as its executing arm. But of course while decentralization grows global capital and its active instruments, (IMF and World Bank, etc) still have their bases in the USA and the culture they sell to the world is mainly American. Those that attacked the Twin Towers on 11th September, 2001, knew of the symbolism of the real imperial power centre: The World Trade Center and the United States Pentagon).

think, revise, go beyond, what is not immediately seen, what calls for research is dead)”.⁷

Philosophical concepts central to what is been called Modernity have been questioned lately. Many deaths have been decreed: history's, the subject's, ideologies'. The dismantling of the modern rationalism scaffolding was the task undertaken by postmodern philosophies.

But to dismantle reason was to dismantle who possessed it: man. Hence the deconstruction. There is no longer a centralized subject from whom the world becomes understandable intelligible. Thus, Foucault proclaims the death of man. Barthes the author's, Derrida the subject's. We know of which subject they talk about: the centralized constructed subject. Deconstruct then, is to de-centralize. It is to deny conscience's philosophies, ranging from Descartes to Husserl and Sartre. There is no longer a subject, there is a huge plurality of subjects: the subjects of an open, democratic society. There is no longer a history, a history having a sense, the famous sense of history dies – that had so exalted Hegel and Marx–, history is no longer a totalizing concept but a series of fragments. There is no longer a man, humanism is over. We no longer start from man to understand reality but from language, that epistemologically precedes conscience.

In this way postmodernism became the philosophical basis of the capitalism of market absolutism. Market is free and plural. It is fragmented. Democracy rejects all centres. All centres are totalitarian. All centres are state- owned. The idea of subject is parallel to the idea of State. The State is also deconstructed. In Argentina the State was atomized and handed over to differentiated, free subjects, as free as the market is. The globalization concept comes up. What does it mean? It means the brazen confession that there really is a subject that totalizes, a centralized subject or a subject that denies diversities, that abominates fragmentation and transparent societies. It is the mass-media subject. Revolutions had died, but they speak of a communication revolution. And this communicational revolution is at the Power's subjectivity's service. There is only one The globalization subject. The Power's subject. Meanwhile we are defenceless. We have been told that the subject has died, that man has died, that history has died, that totality is always state-owned and totalitarian, but they globalize. They told us that we are going through the post-revolutionary era, that revolutions have died, but they make their own revolution. They have taken possession of the dominating, instrumental reason. They have centralized the “logos” in Warner, American Online – the main Internet provider – and CNN.⁸

Perhaps going back to the classics may help us understand the complexity of our globalized world. Our times are ruled by the culture and society unease where there occur alterations in the forms of subjectivity construction and where narrative weakness plays an essential role. The word's evanescent value is a strong indication of this narrative capacity weakening. The supremacy of image over concept is notable, of emotion to the detriment of reason. Nowadays one of the most popular narratives is film discourse. In this sense we have chosen a classic to describe the reality of our modern or

⁷ Pablo Feinmann, La colonización de la subjetividad, Pagina 12, 23-02-04. <http://www.pagina12web.com.ar>

⁸ Feinmann Pablo “*En busca del Sujeto Crítico*”.Página 12, 06-05-00 <http://www.pagina12web.com.ar>

postmodern times, contextualizing this look with examples of what happens in Argentina.

In 1936, Charlie Chaplin composed his look about Modernity in Great Britain. Seventy one years have passed since this film, an unmissable classic of one of the current discourses of present times: the cinema.

A crowd of men and women can be seen getting out of the underground when the film starts; automatically, they become a herd of swine. It is the same “film” that any passenger in the transport media goes through daily in Buenos Aires in Argentina nowadays.

Then we see images of men frantically working in a factory, the owner accelerates the conveyor belt so that the workers are compelled to quicken their work pace. (Taylorism and Fordism constituted an economic approach of capitalist exploitation that attempted to improve the workers’ performance by accelerating work timing), nowadays that timing has been quickened with the new technologies.

In another scene the protagonist fastens nuts more and more frantically. He ignores what for, or the final outcome of that action. He shows us an image of derangement: the subject has become the object that creates without knowing what the object is.

Charlie is trapped inside the machine, but, as it is break-time, it stops and the protagonist remains trapped there for the break period. The man has become a gearing of a system where the subject is a mere link in the great production machinery. (Nowadays we could say that the subject is a compulsive consumer in the great chain of compulsive consumption of the global market).

Our worker Charlie can’t stop working compulsively, adjusting bolts, its mental derangement continues. Then he sees a woman wearing a dress with two decorative buttons in her chest and leaving his work post he starts to chase her to press them. He has gone mad so he is taken to an asylum. After being discharged from the hospital he is advised to go to the harbour for a walk but just then a truck goes by and a piece of red cloth falls from it, Charlie picks it up and waves it to let the driver know that he has lost that cloth without realizing that behind him there is a demonstration of unemployed workers. The police appears to stop the demonstration (this sounds very familiar for the Argentines, forms of making social protests visible: horn-blowing, pan-beating protests, blackouts, pickets, street and road cuts, marches, strikes, railway stations, trains, police stations, municipalities, town council fires, factory, university, schools, state offices seizures and police repression where there may be victims, (the last of them, Carlos Fuentealba’s death in a teachers’ demonstration in Neuquén detained because he was taken for a “communist”). Our hero is discharged from the asylum and goes to jail. Social protests have been criminalized in Argentina and there are several political detainees despite being in democracy as well as people killed by the police as a consequence of social protests.

When he comes out of prison, Charlie meets his girlfriend (Paulette Goddard in the film), another excluded and miserable character like him and so many others. Scenes of the characters’ misfortune, disgrace and marginalization take place one after the other.

But the film's essence is modern man and woman's tragedy, deported from the world; in a globalized universe. However, the film has not lost its humour and hope for a different future. The film shows a tragedy in a tone of comedy because it is a parody.

"Modern times" is a real anticipatory story, a premonitory film, full of meaning as valid in 1936 as now. It is not a dated story, but a classic, due to its strong value nowadays and for dealing with themes which outlive the passing of time. Charles Chaplin speaks of the human being's tragedy but in a tone of parody. Chaplin shows the capitalist world, mirrors derangement, the capitalist culture's unease, how this unease may lead to the people and societies' mental and spiritual illness. (Neurosis and psychotic behaviours have increased and manifest themselves in cases of anxiety derived from the feelings of insecurity that the population suffers as a result of "liquid relationships at work, feelings, street violence among others"). The present pathologies of our modern society show a permanent conflict between subject and object. They are the end result of Modern Times' restlessness.

But there is the last scene of the film, the most telling. Charlie and his girlfriend, thrown out of the city, go walking embraced along a country road, giving their backs to a present space and time that deports them to an uncertain future, but without losing hope for a happiness that shared love brings".

Doesn't the open and uncertain future of this last scene foreshadow the potential birth of new modalities of subjectivity? Talking about new subjectivity constructions, don't we Christians have the wisdom of love manifested in a reborn Jesus Christ to contribute to this undertaking?

Although these questions survive hidden behind their responses, Modern Times, anticipates the possibilities of its finding: it is a hopeful exile where we can return to a concept of conscience and reason, of knowledge as a rupture, a divide. As a denial of Power, of domination, of the Others' omnipresent discourse. The questioning subject, the new creature needs to be built, or be searched for. Because their subject, the Power's subject, the domination's subject is centralized, it makes history, a history that denies us, that excludes us, a history he confuses with total clarity and impunity, with the market absolutism or idolatry. And that subject, theirs, knows nothing of Derrida or Lyotard, it not only is not thinking of deconstructing himself but it is alive and kicking.

The people of our country, just like Charlie and his girlfriend of the film, march along a hopeful exile through many forms of joined struggle: working, learning, forming cooperative associations, small undertakings, banks for the needy, soup kitchens, literacy campaigns, as well as strikes, pickets, marches, seizures, civil disobedience, boycott, injunctions, representatives and senators' harrassment, protests at military personnel houses, responsible of crimes against humanity, the recovery of Justice, (the Supreme Court dictates the abolition of the exoneration to those responsible for State terrorism acts suffered by Argentina), that range from personal interviews, e-mails, graffiti, sudden agitations, in churches whose mission has a prophetic role, meetings, demonstrations, and ecumenical and interreligious processions, participation in thousands of NGOs,(Non Governmental Organizations), popular festivities, such as carnivals or music festivals and dances, the theatre, and art in general...

The Argentines' Faith

Neoliberalism starts in Argentina at the time of the Doctrine of National Security, which laid the basis for the cruel military coup committed in 1976⁹

This produced an external usurious indebtedness that has mortgaged our economic sovereignty, destroyed our national industry and its regional economies, privatized public companies corruptly thus enabling the existence of real oligopolies, introduced foreign capitals in the banking system and opened the market to the voracity of the world financial markets devoted to obtain enormous profits by means of purely speculative and extremely volatile investments. Federal Judge J. Ballesteros' sentence evidences the close complicity between creditors and the *de facto* authorities of the regime that governed from 1976 to 1983. It must be noted that it was during the dictatorship that the most horrible crimes against humanity were committed. Due to this and to the fact that there was a close relationship between international creditors and the military dictatorship, the latter's responsibility may be legally invoked on the basis of international penal law. This situation opens the way to claims and compensations, as well as penal actions against the creditors' entities' leaders by complicity in crimes against humanity.

Nowadays in Argentina there are 10,3 million poor people, of which 3,3 million are destitutes. These figures arise from the data published by the INDEC, (National Statistics & Census Institute), on the evolution of poverty and the needy in the second term of the year 2006.

The social correlation of this economic and political disaster provoked by neoliberalism was the impoverishment of the middle class, imposing an unprecedented concentration of wealth and brought about a scandalous spread of poverty (elements typical of a dual society), apart from indebting the country.

In spite of this context of injustice and suffering the Argentine people maintain their faith and beliefs alive. In the last 16 years approximately one thousand new religions were registered in the National Register of Religions, of which 75% are evangelical. The three Evangelical Churches Federations estimate the quantity of believers in 5 million. This shows that the search for a transcendent sense runs throughout the social tissue. According to a survey carried out in 2005 by the Gallup Consulting Group¹⁰, only 2 of each 100 of Argentines declared not being believers in God. Beyond its secular appearance in our country there is a very important and diverse religious life

⁹ The National Security Doctrine, practically implemented in all Latin America, proclaimed that the State was in an internal war situation against "communist and terrorist infiltration". This could not be a conventional war since it was not against an external aggressor or a regular armed force; therefore, all those intellectually and ideologically opposing the neoliberal system (teachers, union leaders, students, journalists, political, social, and religious activists) were qualified as "subversive enemies". The military, the armed forces and the paramilitary groups were supported by the upper classes and the Catholic religious hierarchy and many evangelical leaders' indifference as well as a minor sector of society led to the repression of the leading political class, a flagrant violation of human rights, which the Military State called "Dirty War", an euphemistic expression of the "State terrorism" that tortured and made about 30.000 people disappear, apart from resulting in thousands of exiles.

¹⁰ Consultora Gallup, Consulta religiosa, Diario La Nación 20 Noviembre 2005

There is a great mobility among the different cults and many have grown considerably. Nowadays there is a great variety of religious groups and multiple ways of believing. Since the return of democracy there is more freedom to exhibit beliefs and that has helped foster diversity. Specialists in the subject contend that people seek more emotional understanding and support in minority beliefs, because they want a more direct relationship with God with less intermediaries. People seek in faith what they have always sought for, that God with its supernatural dimension and the community may help them lead their life in the everyday world.

Nowadays the groups that grow more rapidly are those which emphasize a personal contact with the spiritual world and those in which faith considers daily life with all its emotional implications, those having a firm identity and where the intellectual activity does not appear distant or cold. And those others that maintain functional theologies to the system, (magical theologies bordering the pathological, prosperity, and spiritual war). The charismatic groups are the ones which are growing faster because they carry out a pastoral duty of taking care of people's health and spiritual liberation rites.

In Argentina the recurrent political and economic crises have motivated a deep cultural change in religious beliefs and practices. People live their faith from their own needs and interests and thus build their own search. In the experience of this religious individuation process there is like a myriad of identities in the same individual.

For example, a person considering herself a Catholic, sometimes may attend mass or processions, but listens to an evangelical pastor on the radio or television, and may sporadically go to an evangelical church for help, as well as the area quack, does yoga following the doctor's advice and attends conferences on philosophy about daily themes. This syncretism in beliefs and practices is the novel sign of the new forms of religion. This personal appropriation of religion provokes a rejection to everything resembling an institutional. People make up their own symbolic system of beliefs because they do not want to be tied to belonging to classical religions with their norms and practices, thus evidencing another way of living their faith. The different surveys show that women are more prone to cultivate faith. We have also been told that there are more believers in the interior of the country than in the great cities. And that there is a relation among education, economic income and religion. In general those having a high level of income and education believe less.

Argentine philosopher Santiago Kovadloff holds that:

“the present offer of religions stresses the consolation and group identity gained at the expense of personal identity...” “These religious expressions, encourage the mass dissolution of subjective and individual responsibility and, in this sense, act like an equivalent compensatory force to that of totalitarian doctrines”¹¹.

What is certain is that on one hand we observe a strong return of religious search, related with "the inconsistency of social and political values, which encourages the search of security in a transcendent area". But in a more and more secularized, globalized and dual society, where liquid relationships and idolatry reign.

¹¹ Kovadloff S., *“Cada vez más personas se declaran religiosas”* La Nación newspaper, 20-10-05 Argentina.

The Argentine Evangelical Methodist Church

The year 1836 is considered as the arrival date of Methodism to Argentina. After a period of settling down and organization, the Methodist Church in Argentina expanded through different locations in the country growing with the impulse of a strong missionary and evangelizing dynamic. So much so that in a period of 40 years 33 congregations were founded in 7 provinces and 63 churches. It is estimated that in the first years of the XXth century the Methodist Church had 3000 members. The Methodist Church was pioneer, together with others coming afterwards, as baptists, or “missions of faith” (Free brothers, pentecostal...), in daring to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in a Roman Catholic context. Thus the country’s evangelical movement that nowadays advances quickly far and wide was the exclusive result of European and American evangelical missionaries’ work that arrived to the country in the 1830 decade and devoted their work to evangelize and set up churches.

The missionary dynamics of the Argentine Methodism became a transforming evangelical force in the country’s reality. For example, before a State that supported Catholicism as the official religion and a markedly clerical society, Methodism assumed a protagonic role in the struggle for religious freedom and for a non-religious and gratuitous public education. Moreover it made distinct efforts in health, education, children and women areas.

The Methodist Church growth lay in conjunction with its opening to the challenges posed by society, in a clear missionary call, in a resolute disposition to give witness of the Gospel as well as call for conversion and to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. This was carried out by a committed layman, active, trained ministry accompanied by missionary pastors.

Its missionary strategy was that of confrontation with the clerical and obscurantist catholicism. This zeal for differentiating themselves from everything catholic led Methodism, as was the case of other evangelical churches of the time, to have a defensive attitude with the rest of the mainly Catholic population. This social differentiation was emphasized by its moral puritanism which encouraged people to be different citizens. On the other hand, its rational, modern non-conservative message had an impact on minor sectors of the lower classes of Spanish, Italian migrants and natives that sought a social move in order to belong to a middle class characterized by its social progress at that time. But this type of message and behaviour were in turn misunderstood by the rest of the population. And the minor sector that embraced the gospel once it had achieved its move to the middle sectors renounced their lower origins and stopped the evangelizing mission in those sectors. (It is the case of Methodism with a few exceptions).

The clear Methodist evangelical identity was built on the bases of defense, confrontation, differentiation and controversy against the Roman Catholic Church hegemony.

With time the “Methodist evangelical identity” was weakened by the problem of the duality of life tendencies in the lives of congregations: civilize or evangelize, fundamentalism or modernism, liberal or Conservative, these tendencies found a fertile ground in our church due to the dual influence of our culture throughout history. An alien liturgy based on repetition oblivious of the latin soul’s spontaneity and joy. The services, as a centralizing activity of the church’s life and mission showed a degree of repression and domesticity (vertical, dualist, out of context), which responded more to features of the American culture than to the cultural forms of our people. All this made

the construction of an autonomous and local evangelical identity difficult (to value the positive aspects of the local culture).

The crisis of the church's historical identity worsened as from the sixties at the same time as the continental crisis emerging through the ideologies in conflict. In this sense the church assumed a commitment with social justice in its discourse, but turning it into an ideology, since the practice of justice was reduced to assistance duties, (pseudoideology of change). Others not accepting this situation ended up leaving the church to assume a militant anti-capitalist ideology that took them to commit themselves with social revolution in the search of a structural transformation. As regards this there is an ambivalence or localizing deficiency in the history of Methodism that characterizes the mission, the lack of connection between the message proclaimed and the life of those announcing it. Christ is preached but not lived. The message of good news is announced within the walls of the church, but not outside, it is accompanied with goodwill gestures in the social sphere but without specifying the gospel. All this takes us to the last dimension of the crisis, the problem of a theological reflection without praxis and a praxis without a theological reflection. The theology carried out has been more in the academic cloisters than in the churches' life and mission. Missionary action, with rare exceptions, has been nearly always in hands where there has been little theological reflection.

In due course the Methodist church went through a logical institutionalization process. A missionary strategy which implicitly prioritized action in the big cities and capitals of provinces was carried out. Unfortunately both tendencies (institutionalization and concentration) gradually contributed to stop missionary dynamism and the evangelizing expansion movement, therefore the growing rhythm was paralyzed.

In 1969 the Argentine Methodist Church declares its autonomy. Such decision attempted to be a consistent response with the struggles for justice and liberation of our peoples and Continent. It also manifested a will to mature and take responsibilities in relation with the church's essence and activity towards society. Another consequence of autonomy was the liturgical renewal incorporating music and lyrics particular to the country with a theological content, increasing the laymen's participation in service leadership and reinforcing service activities and the prophetic condemnation of injustice.

In this situation several theological traditions lived shoulder to shoulder in the Methodist congregations (the original Methodism, social evangelism, the liberal theology of the XIXth century, the conservative American, the Barthian neo-orthodox and the liberation theology, which was more notable in its leading sector. Although these different theological currents did not provoke a dissension, they contributed to deepen the identity crisis in Methodism motivating the estrangement of a high percentage of members.

Undoubtedly that was an intense period, because the military *coup de etat* happened shortly in 1976 unleashing ferocious persecution and terror. The Methodist Church leaders assumed the lead position in the defense of human rights. This had its cost: an ideological divide that made several brothers and sisters leave the church again.

Due to the abovementioned issues the personal and congregational piety and the evangelizing mission took a second place. The search for an ecumenism with an organic unity with the "historical" churches on the church leaders' part, without the members' accompaniment and without giving a maturing time to an ecumenism of unity in what is

functional made the Methodist identity weaker still. These changed paradigms, became the factors which stopped evangelization and thus growth.

Going through the history of our church we realize that we have a lot to be thankful to God for: so many brothers and sisters' loyalty to the call to be agents of the Kingdom of God, many laypeople and pastor's prophetic role in the struggle for justice and the defense of human rights, the permanent ecumenical vocation and disposition for service, and the witness of so many lives transformed and supported by the Gospel.

But we are also aware that there is a lot to be changed: we have fallen into a paralysis, we assume lame excuses to justify our lukewarm evangelizing passion, we have been quite generous with our service but selfish and cowardly to share the Word, we have been carried away by a tendency to neglect the evangelizing duty which was regarded by everyone as their personal and unwaivable call. This awareness of our weaknesses and the need for changes has manifested itself in these last years as a growing search for spiritual renewal, as a more fervent desire to live in that (personal) and outer (social) inner holiness which the Gospel asks for and that is in the roots of the Methodist movement, and challenges to project ourselves in the mission. We are also aware that we are before a turning point in the progress of our church, since what is at stake is its survival; as has been reflected upon and specified in various documents written lately.¹²

Notwithstanding the above we coincide with Dr Miguez Bonino when he posed the following question to the audience of the XVI Argentine Methodist Church General Assembly on the occasion of dealing with the document "Mission Paths for the XXIst century", (concerned about the loss of the evangelizing mission and its decrease):

"What is our weakness ? What is still missing is enthusiasm. One of the criticisms made to the initial Methodist Church was that its members were enthusiastic and had a tendency to say that they had the Holy Spirit. Enthusiasm means several things, including the recognition of the power of the Holy Spirit, that implies a real enthusiasm " Christians are recognized" says Paul, by their fidelity to the Scriptures and by their love". This is what differentiates it from fanaticism. At IEMA (Methodist Argentine Church) we do not lack knowledge or capacity to carry out things, what is missing is enthusiasm..."¹³

Towards an Evangelizing Mission Proposal

As we said at the beginning the church is to be God's mission instrument in the world. God has a renewal purpose that reaches the totality of humanity and the universe and invites us to participate in his plan. But when we talk of mission and evangelization in general, if we look at the history of Protestantism, it had a tendency to reduce the whole of God's mission to the evangelization task with an individualistic approach thus losing the objective of forming an intrinsic unity with the community. As evangelization was understood there was confusion in the mission's broad sense, which covers worship, pastoral care, service, a prophetic role that searches for justice, etc. We understand the mission as Miguez Bonino has conceptualized it, as a Trinitarian mission *"If the mission is full participation in the whole of "God's mission", all evangelization must bear – together with the proclamation of the reconciliation worked in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – witness of God's good creation and called to*

¹² Proyecto Misionero Nacional de la Iglesia Metodista Argentina
The Argentine Methodist Church Document "Mission Paths for the XXIst century"

¹³ Minutes of the XVI Argentine Methodist Church General Assembly, 1999 Bs. As., pag 19-20.

nurture it and take good care of it, as an announcement of God's justice and called to practice and serve it. A message that in the midst of repression and torture, speaks of the Crucified as if he had nothing to do with the poor crucified in history or that, in the growing destruction and marginalization of great sectors of the population, presents a Jesus Christ as if he had said nothing about the subject, as if it had not been The Holy Spirit what descended upon Amos, Hosea and James, as if those suffering and dying were not the image" of the Creator, it does not deserve to be called evangelical. But an evangelization that told everything there is to tell about it without a call to repentance, faith and discipleship is not a participation in the mission.

An truly trinitary evangelization - like a worship and action that are such - is the invitation to participate in faith in the Trinitary God's life itself and consequently in all what God has done, does and will do to carry out his purpose of being "all in everyone".¹⁴

From Genesis to Apocalypse, the Holy Scriptures give witness of God's action as creator of the universe and of man's life by means of his Word and Spirit, the alpha and omega of everything. In the Bible we are presented with God's history with his people. Facing humanity's rebellion, God intervenes with his redemption, which is completed in Jesus Christ, a new creation of whom by the Spirit the church is born.

Jesus Christ is "the life of the church, He incarnates and carries out his missionary impulse and that yearning for a complete communion in love.

The God of the Bible is then the protagonist of the story. Jesus of Nazareth incarnates that history. The Bible interprets it, the Church guided by the Holy Spirit proclaims it in the midst of the history and culture of the people of the earth.

In this missionary dialogue we are included in the Trinity as co-actors of the divine mission through the mission. What is this mission? In the great commission according to the Gospels of Matthew and John, Mt. 28:16-20; Jn. 20:21-22. the believers' mission has to do with the Trinitary God's dynamics: The Father sent his Son in the power of the Spirit, his Son sends us, a community of faith invested with authority to call humanity to faith and love and send it in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to make disciples in all the peoples of the earth. In this way we are included in God's mission towards the world in his own name so that the Church may send us in God's name.

What is the purpose of God for the world?

In general, without getting into too much detail, it is to "and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" of His Son Jesus Christ. (Col. 1:20)

In Jesus Christ God intends to judge the world, (Acts 17:31) starting his Kingdom of Justice among men in order to liberate humanity of the power of sin and death and His creation of corruption by means of Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:1-3;1 Timothy 2: 5-6). At incarnation, (the whole of Christ's life), a new era "under the sign of liberation" has been inaugurated.¹⁵ God proposes to create a world community of love where his justice, peace, and salvation can take place. God's commitment with the world is total, because the whole world has been a victim of evil. That is the reason why we make a serious exegetic and theological mistake when we limit God's reconciling mission to the individual and private sphere, when we reduce it only to the social ambit or when we separate it from the ethical implications or when we push the divine judgment and salvation to the other world.

¹⁴ Miguez Bonino J., "*Rostros del Protestantismo Latinoamericano*", Ed. Nueva Creación, Bs. As. 1995, ISEDET, pag 139.

¹⁵ Miguez Bonino, "Theology and liberation" *Internacional Review of Misión*, January 1972, pag 68

From the biblical point of view God's mission is not limited to an individualistic, spiritualistic, escapist, extrawordly reconciliation, and separated from the oppression that the world has suffered as a consequence of sin. Rather it is a mission that offers a complete salvation of the person's life, of society and of humanity, of creation that has been groaning. Romans 8:22.

According to the biblical witness the church is called to be first fruits of the Kingdom. It is not the Kingdom but its first fruits and clear signal of God's purpose in history as carrier of its word. As agent of God's mission, the church must not only worry about leading a lifestyle in accordance with the new life in Christ, but it must also act as a spokesman of this style, (a paradigmatic role of the church, with all the ambiguity of being conformed by sinners, but with all the holiness of the presence of the grace of the reborn Christ that intercedes in its midst).

As it can well be seen in the Council of Jerusalem, to talk of mission means inevitably to have culture in mind. Since the incarnation of the Christian mission always takes place in a given culture and history but emphasizing that only "by the Lord Jesus Christ's grace we will be saved" and not for bearing the burden of alien religious and cultural mores or standards that become forms of slavery for those having a different culture (Acts 15: 10-11). And in the midst of that culture to keep faithful to God resisting every ethical detour that would make us tolerate idolatry and indifferent to the commitment of working for the welfare of all and in that "all" especially for the needy. (Acts 15:29). The Jerusalem Council paradigm invites us to distinguish among the elements of a culture to incorporate and those to discard for not being faithful to the gospel. Thus we will need to recourse to an understandable language to the people of the given culture, but without avoiding questioning customs and practices of that culture at variance with the gospel e.g. this world's powers absolutistic claims, idolatries, racism, exclusions, machism, nepotism, xenophobia, authoritarianisms, violence or the subjection to the market utopia¹⁶... being when they are installed in the church or when they abound in the society. Thus the church will always be challenged to carry out a therapeutic and critical function in the particular context where it develops its mission: assisting and supporting the people and communities in times of crisis, training them in the knowledge of the gospel in order to de-colonize their subjectivity¹⁷, consolidate

¹⁶ (The specialists in consumption culture know that the most important thing is not the product's characteristics, but the capacity to communicate senses, dreams and hopes that go linked to the products to be consumed. They know that dreams and hopes are people's vital needs. Neoliberalism not only offers its dreams and hopes but spreads its own utopia: a world dominated by market logics).

¹⁷ Nestor Miguez, in "El Imperio y la Cruz" describes very well how the globalized imperial culture aims to conquer the core of human behaviour, desire, since as we have already said the ultimate result of globalized subjectivization is not the disappearance of "objective reality", but our own subjectivity, while social reality goes on. It also shows us that it is necessary to construct the "de-imperialized" subject as a new creation in Christ where desire becomes responsible and free in relation with others. (Gal 5:13-15).

"The subject is no longer a subject that desires freely, but his desire is guided compulsively by the other's desire, of the powerful other. Therefore he loses his condition of free and responsible subject, to remain subject to desire, and thus captive and isolated, individualized. The estrangement of desire in the consumer society replaced the estrangement of the bodies in Roman slavery and the alienation of work in the society of production capitalism. It is not only the "alienated worker", but now it is the "alienated consumer", that is, the other's desire subject. This brings about the destruction of the subject as a subject. Those post-modern and de-constructivist theories, which are sold as "politically non-conservative" and put forward the

them to be critical and that they may denounce what is evil in the ruling order and challenging them to live in personal and social holiness.

Of course we do not make the neoliberal and its representatives the scapegoat for all the evils of mankind. We are aware of the weakness of human condition as part of its limited and sinful nature. What we have put forward is that neoliberalism and globalization have increased exclusion, the suffering of humanity, the colonization of subjectivity and the danger of ecological destruction.

Only in a Trinitary God can we overcome the captivity of desire to turn it into a free desire and construct a de-colonized subjectivity. It is in the radical experience of conversion and in the process of Christian perfection which takes our whole life, where the subject stops being a victim by resisting the colonization of his desire, his hopes and dreams in order to maintain his mental and emotional structures renewed to live his faith and love in a caring community.

The need for renewal in our Methodist congregations

Nowadays many of our congregations reflect a need of deep renewal in their life and mission. This need of renewal is evidenced in the lack of ethical and theological resources and in the inconsistency of their behaviour. They know that they are not called to live but for whom gave his life committing himself to those that suffer, nevertheless they are more worried about caring for their temples and maintaining the given denomination's program than about the evangelizing mission and serving its smaller brothers (has no solidarity for the excluded people's suffering, Mt. 25). It is aware of its inevitable responsibility as a legal agent, (denounce the links of the oligarchies with the transnational capitals, the judiciary power's abuse, the genocide wars, public corruption, political repression, technological de-humanization, environmental pollution, ethnic discrimination), but its mission has weakened, it is not yeast in the midst of dough), and therefore its prophetic role is no longer efficient in society. It prefers not to lose its composure before running the risk of being questioned and persecuted as was her Lord Jesus Christ.

It does not ignore the biblical imperative of love and unity. Nevertheless it prefers mingling with sectors' struggles that ensue division evidencing disbelief, desperation and reduction of members.

In our denomination's case there is a deep identity crisis with respect to the Wesleyan legacy, to the extreme of having lost the center of the evangelizing mission. A lack of renewal in its liturgy and a carelessness in the musical ministry is perceived. At institutional level there is a neglect of discipline which brings about profound ethical consequences in the midst of the life of the church. The programs of activities are not very attractive nor popular.

disappearance of the subject, do no less than hallow the imperial aspiration. As Terry Eagleton, says "being publicly questioning they end up being partners from the economic point of view".

"Criticism about the Empire is centered in the formulation of a human identity project capable of incorporating the cross experience as a constructive one, of freedom from the desire of its imperial captivity, to become desire with the other, expression of freedom and love. The identity, history and project recovers this message of the Cross, not to stay worshipping the crucified, but to learn the human project that encouraged him to face the cross as obedience and whose validity is confirmed in the announcement of the resurrection, the announcement of hope of that new form of human and divine relationship that we call "Kingdom of God".

These last examples show clearly our members' and ministries' precarious condition and the need to challenge churches to carry out a deep renewal.

For Paul, new life in Christ stands out for its renewal power. Thus his emphatic exhortation to the believers:

“Do not conform to this century, but be transformed by means of renewing your understanding, so that you can see which is God’s goodwill, agreeable and perfect” (Romans. 12:2)

In one of his many missionary journeys, after preaching Wesley wrote in his diary:

“I was more convinced than ever that to preach like an apostle, without gathering the awakened and training them in the Lord’s ways is only to bring up children to the murderer. What a lot of preaching has been done in these twenty years in all Pembrokeshire! But there are no regular societies, there is no discipline, no order or connection. And the consequence is that nine out of ten awakened are now more dormant than before ”¹⁸

Wesley was aware that the renewal that the church experienced with his ministry “was God’s whole work” due to his Spirit that “blows from where It wants”. But he discovered that community life was the way to await that renewal.

Wesley provides us with a valuable church renewal instrument in its practical conception of “*ecclesiola*”. The whole organization of the Methodist movement in societies, bands and classes linked in a connectional network, that the Wesley brothers built, was an interconnected network where the “converted”(the justified) received education in the faith, advice, assistance, economic support, community piety, perception as fruits of love, an ethic formation as a result of everyday experience, personal and social holiness, (renewal in the image of God)...which in the Holy Spirit’s hands worked like yeast in the renewal of the church and the society.

The Methodist movement could synthesize the objective elements of the protestant heritage, (Word, sacraments and order), with the subjective ones of the pietist heritage, (experience, inner holiness, spontaneous pray, brotherly communion) in the context of an evangelizing and missionary passion. These groups were not only the place where the church was revitalized and reformed, where Christians grew, but it also was the border place from where Methodism’s evangelizing mission expanded. From the Methodist historical experience we can reaffirm that mission and renewal are inseparable.

This experience reminds us of the first times of the primitive church where there was this practice that made it attractive and efficient in its evangelizing mission, which resulted in growth. According to the Methodist approach that understood its ecclesiology as functional to the mission, if a church neglects or loses its mission and within it the evangelization, it is no longer a church.

I am convinced that our globalized world needs more than ever that the church go back to being a church, thus the church must renew itself to be able to give responses and the service that our globalized world demands.

I take it that the evangelizing mission is a pressing need in our Methodist church. We have left evangelization as a peripheral activity for too long already.

¹⁸ Obras de Wesley, Diarios, Tomo II, Editor General Justo I. Gonzalez pag 159-160

In this sense I agree with the diagnosis and the possibilities of Abraham Williams¹⁹ “...we are challenged as a historical denomination to respond to the present problems of evangelization, not getting away from them, but more restoring it to a priority position within the total ministry of the church”.

In actual practice this implies that evangelization covers a variety of actions that are held together by the intention of starting people in the Kingdom of Love and Justice of the Trinitary God: proclamation, call to conversion, discipleship, visitation, witnesses, spiritual disciplines, the Means of Grace of the Methodist tradition, etc. With all its ethical, subjective, theological, and community implications.

Pastors have a crucial role in the preaching of the gospel. The pastors set the bases of a congregation as leaders, teachers, counsellors, pastoral care agents, administrators, etc.

But often they can undo or reinforce the evangelization ministry of a congregation.

One of the crucial responsibilities of ministries is in the area of evangelizing preaching. Nowadays we must develop the art of relating the gospel with the central themes of our preaching. Each time a message is written, it must have an evangelical touch. To combine this is difficult, it is an art.

I think that the Methodist church has tremendous potential in this ministry. But the renewal needed in this area will not occur by chance or accident, it will need an intentional impulse during several generation.

It will also demand not only creativity and innovation in practice, but also a theological renewal in our way of thinking.

As a Methodist I believe that we must recover the wesleyan heritage of adding knowledge to piety of life, where Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have a leading role in evangelization. I am wholly convinced that the Methodist church has surprising resources, that if put at the Trinitary God's service, could make an extraordinary contribution to the evangelization of the future, to the *missio Dei*.

Otherwise we will continue under God's judgment that will allow for the fear of growing and its fateful effect, the dwindling until it becomes a minority with no fermenting power in the Argentine society or in an extreme case go out.

But if we sincerely restate the subject and devote to evangelization as a main activity, I am convinced that pessimism is impossible.

My intuition is that the Methodist Church has a tremendous potential, **if it “wakes up”**, **if it “becomes enthused”** with being a vital force in the evangelization, growing from the local church and in the diverse ministries in the years to come.

The following list are some of the most important potentials I see in it, in addition to William Abraham's list:

1- An expansion of the church's work by means of the number of churches strewn in the country favors the possibilities of physical implantation of new communities in the different provinces, cities and towns. Taking into account the established churches or starting new missions.

“Evangelization is an inevitable provocation to the generation of communities. We can say that from the original declaration “it is not good for man to be alone”, there appears in the divine proposal a call to communion. The good news have to do with ridding ourselves of loneliness . A rupture with God, or our unawareness, as our

¹⁹ William J. Abraham, *El Arte de la Evangelización, La evangelización ajustada a la vida de la iglesia local*, Ed. Clie Barcelona 1993, pag 15 ssg

*rupture with others and indifference towards others leaves us alone, that is, half done. And God intervenes in history raising against loneliness”.*²⁰

2- The Connectional system allows the Grace of God and the Holy Spirit gifts to flow naturally from one part of the body to the other, being within the country or in the world. It also makes sharing human and material resources easier within and outside our boundaries.

3- Churches have within their members many trained young people, sick of that feeling of defeat, that wish to see the church as a vital strength in favour of evangelization and the prophetic service leading to justice, love and freedom. An attractive church which will make people want to participate.

4- Churches have in their midsts an important group of faithful members that are anxious to deepen their devotional experience and their personal and community piety.

5- Churches have a set of rules and administrative organization in their controlling bodies that limits and de-activates economic corruption by keeping their accounting books open for perusal.

6- A solid ethical basis in the personal and community witness is also verified in most of its members.

7- Churches have constantly refused to be sectarian, faithful as they are to their ecumenic tradition and to their universal spirit try to be friends of all and to exercise tolerance and the functional unity of all the people of God.

8- Churches have used creatively the sacraments for evangelization, seeing them as an ordinance for conversion as well as a means of grace for pastoral care.

9- Some churches have developed a liturgical tradition through songs and hymns and other contributions that rescue regional and national, Latin American and international cultures, taking into account an updated language of people of today that are jewels for worship. Besides, others have preserved the hymnological genre that is very rich theological and musically.

10- Some churches have resumed the experience of the Methodist classes of our tradition or celular experience, as they are called nowadays, to foster fraternity and discipleship. These are used successfully at other denominations as means of evangelization and growth in spiritual maturity. They are valuable spaces to recover prayer life in the community and biblical studies, lost in most of our congregations, and which are sources of renewal.

11- The churches have rejected: the magic and sacramental practices that blur evangelization work: personality cults, manipulation of people, maintaining the balance

²⁰ Julio C. Lopez, *La generación de comunidades evangélicas, Visiones y Herramientas*, Instituto Universitario ISEDET, Bs. As, 2007, pag 23

among Faith, doctrine, tradition, healings and miracles that God operates in congregations.

12- Churches have been open to the evolution of science and culture, being faithful to the evangelical revelation. In this sense they have been open to the complexity of the individual's personal processes that lead us from sin to freedom and truth in Christ that God's children possess.

13- Churches have a wide range of highly educated pastors, and if we could be freed from our mentality of stagnation, shyness, convenience and committed ourselves to our pastoral call and went out to evangelize in Faith, we would be surprised of what God could accomplish through ourselves.

The church has an enormous potential in us as agents of the Kingdom of God if we just **wake up**.

15- Churches have certain congregational experiences referred to evangelization and growth that would serve as models and inspiration for a new resurgence of missionary activity.

16- Churches have an extraordinary theological heritage that once inspired and maintained a missionary and evangelizing ecclesiology. That heritage is thank God, reflected in the theology, doctrine and the churches' missionary work documents and in the Wesley Works contributions translated into Spanish and of other methodists or wesleyans that have written copiously.

17- Churches have a rich history in missionary activity:

Their trinitary approach, where they have glorified Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit's power, with compassion and mercy by means of proclamation and social service. By means of education, health care, of participation in the defense of life and human rights and social reivindications through politics they have had a whole vision of the individual in their mental, body, spiritual and community dimensions, and of the community and its social dimension. They have had a whole and totalizing approach of the mission

18- It has an itinerant heritage that facilitates the evangelizing mission.

In showing this list, we are well aware of the issues that the Methodist Church is faced with in the mission and evangelization field. We live the spiritual crisis in the flesh, which has trapped us as an institution with a maintenance mentality having got used to a reduction in the life of congregations.

As Abraham says:

"We are aware that the art of evangelization must be learnt again, that the gospel's good news have been relegated in most congregations to the back pews, that is why we shrink. I know that we have prioritized important secondary themes in detriment of evangelization, when we can do both things at the same time.

Our claim which coincides with many outsiders' opinions, is that the Methodist church has tremendous potential in its missionary and evangelizing identity. And therefore the Methodist Church could be a magnificent agent for the expansion of the Kingdom of

*God throughout the earth and in our country in this century. If I am not mistaken then, this is the moment to have dreams and cultivate a fresh vision. It is not the time to be cynical, or be discouraged, nor the time to a nostalgic reminiscence of old times...*²¹

It is the moment of marching towards the future in repentance and request that the Holy Spirit's power dawn on us again and renew our missionary vision filling it with enthusiasm.

Time goes on and we cannot afford to have another generation without taking any action. Evangelization will require strenuous work from our part in multiple areas.

To take it as seriously as it deserves may entail a revolution for many of us pastors and lay leaders, brethren; since it will imply an intellectual and theological renewal in the church, a de-colonization of subjectivity as a whole and will result in a spiritual struggle that will shake us down to our foundation.

²¹ Williams Abraham Ibid, pag 28