



Mission in Britain today: some modest reflections and proposals

Stephen Bevans

STEPHEN BEVANS SVD is a Roman Catholic priest in the Society of the Divine Word, and Louis J. Luzbetak SVD Professor of Mission and Culture (Emeritus) at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.

sbevans@ctu.edu
Chicago, USA

While 'Mission in Britain today' includes many aspects, this article focuses on the witness of the Church within Britain's contemporary highly secularized culture. Rather than 'technical change', the Church is called to work at 'adaptive change', and so to concentrate less on strategies and more on internal renewal. Such adaptive change involves freeing people's imagination from simplistic and abusive images of God, offering a positive image of God that is inspiring and truly challenging, recognizing the kenotic nature of the Church, and realizing that mission is carried out in a world of grace where God is already present and working

MISSION • EVANGELIZATION • BRITAIN • SECULARISM • GOD • CHURCH • SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

Like the language we share, there are enough similarities between my US culture and context and the culture and context of Britain to give an American a false sense of understanding what British culture is all about. As any of us knows, that seeming similarity is dangerous, something like the ‘false friends’ that we are warned about when we begin as English speakers studying French. Because of this, especially as someone who is known as a contextual theologian and who has advocated that a contextual theology be done best by an ‘insider’ in a culture or context, as I begin to reflect on how mission might be thought of and practiced in Britain today, I have to begin with a caveat. *Take everything I say here with a grain of salt. Approach what I say with a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’.*¹

That having been said, however, I have a modest hope that what I write here about mission could be useful to those who engage in mission in Britain. This is because, while there are significant differences in our cultures and contexts, we still share a Western, secularized culture that has experienced tectonic change in the last several decades, and a context in which formal religious adherence has been in drastic decline. There are, I believe, enough similarities-in-difference to offer some kind of coherent reflection on how we Christians might partner with God in Trinitarian practice.

From another perspective, what I say may be so off the mark that it might stimulate you to reflect on why I am wrong and how your reactions are right. I offer, in other words, a missiological reflection here that employs what I have called the ‘transcendental model’ of contextual theology. Some things that I say may strike you as exactly right; other things might strike you as absolutely wrong. What I hope, however, on both accounts is that what I write here gets you thinking. If I am able to do that, these reflections will not have been a waste of time, either for you or for me.

These reflections are, in any case, the result of a lot of thinking that I’ve been doing in the past months about the way that we Christians need to engage in mission. Some of them are pretty practical; others are quite foundational, theological, and perhaps theoretical. All of them, especially the theological ones, are very personal, however, and come not only from my head but also from my heart. In the transcendental model of contextual theologizing, as I have described it in my book *Models of Contextual Theology*,² this kind of authenticity is essential. I rely on that great line of the American psychologist

Carl Rogers, who observed that ‘the most personal is the most general’.³ This is why, despite my great trepidation, I offer these reflections for your consideration.

Before beginning, however, let me offer another caveat, or perhaps a clarification. I want to focus in these reflections only on the question of mission in the context of contemporary Western secular culture. There is a lot more to mission in Britain today – and indeed the West. I think particularly of the challenges of migration and the pastoral care and evangelization of the millions of migrants from all over the world, many from former colonies of the British Empire. I think too of the challenges for mission of women and men of other religions who have come to the West and the UK in particular – Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, African traditional religionists to name a few. I think of the huge and pressing social issues of poverty and race that plague both my own country and the United Kingdom as well. The harvest for mission is indeed great – overwhelming even – but I only want to focus here on witnessing and preaching the gospel in contexts of unbelief, alienation and the profession of ‘being spiritual but not religious’. These, I believe, if not the only areas for mission in Britain and the West, are certainly some of its most neuralgic points. Again, with trepidation, let me begin.

The challenge of adaptive change

In a powerful, challenging article in the *International Review of Mission* in April 2013, Welsh pastor Peter Cruchley Jones paints a bleak picture of the state of religion in Europe in general and the UK in particular. Reflecting on the theme of the World Council of Churches’ Tenth Assembly that would take place later that year in Busan, Korea – ‘God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace’ – Cruchley Jones observes that the theme ‘would come as a surprising and provocative statement to many in a European context’. This is because, he says, in Europe today

God is associated not with life, but with death. God is associated not with justice, but with prejudice; and after centuries of religious war and rivalry, not with peace, but with intolerance. For many the claim for God is a conservative one, not a transforming one.⁴

These attitudes toward God are borne out in the results of the 2011 Census in the UK. Whereas in the previous census of 2001, 71 per cent of Britons identified

themselves as Christian, only 59 per cent did so in 2011, and those who claimed to have no religion at all rose from 15 per cent to 25 per cent in the same decade.⁵ Writing in 2005, Nick Spencer, reflecting on the attitudes toward Christianity and the Church revealed by the Diocese of Coventry's 'Beyond the Fringe' project conducted in 2003, reported that ordinary people saw the Church as 'dull, narrow, bigoted, hypocritical, unfriendly, unreal, prescriptive, judgmental, patriarchal, unquestioning, inflexible, nerve-wracking, alienating, corrupt and unable to handle doubt.'⁶ In the same volume, Bishop Graham Cray pointed out that 'the Church of England is only beginning to grasp the scale of the social and cultural changes that have transformed the missionary context in recent years.'⁷

A page toward the end of Nigel Rooms' *The Faith of the English* identifies, I believe, the problem that we face in engaging in mission in Britain today, and I would argue in places like the United States, Canada, and other secular societies like Europe, Australia and New Zealand as well. Referring to the American leadership theorists Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky, Rooms writes of their distinction between 'technical problems' and 'adaptive challenges'. Technical problems, Heifetz and Linsky say, are problems for which people already know the answers. What is needed is a new organizational plan, or more personnel, or a fresh motivation. Technical solutions like these effect technical change. 'But there are a whole host of problems,' Heifetz says, 'that are not amenable to authoritative expertise or standard operating procedures.' These he calls 'adaptive challenges,' 'because they require new experiments, new discoveries and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community'. The solutions to adaptive challenges produce adaptive change. Without the development of new attitudes, values and behaviors, people will only be stuck in past ways of seeing and doing.⁸

In the Catholic Church, my sense is what we have called the New Evangelization is an attempt at technical change. In a situation like secular Europe, proponents of the New Evangelization say, we Catholics need to develop a bolder attitude toward sharing the faith and educating the faithful. If we do that we will solve the problem of lapsed Catholics and the continuing rise of the 'Nones'. The more dialogical approach developed out of the Second Vatican Council was seen by some as a 'flawed pastoral strategy.'⁹ Pope Francis, however, seems to me to see something deeper at work, and so calls not just for renewed efforts of evangelization but for a conversion to take place in the entire Church – to rise to the challenge of adaptive change. The Church, he says, needs to understand itself as a 'community of missionary disciples,' and take a 'missionary option ...

capable of transforming everything so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.¹⁰

This is where the Church is in Britain today. As Rooms says:

There are no technical changes we can make which will solve our problems; rather, we are consciously incompetent about what to do and can only experiment (or we could say 'play') to see what works – and we might expect experimental failures ... All of which is a deeply spiritual task, as it requires us to stay with uncertainty, weakness and struggle while living by faith.¹¹

We are facing, in other words, a situation that calls for adaptive change, and this means, as Bishop Graham Cray expresses it, 'to resist the temptation to turn every tentative question into an excuse to preach the "right" answer, without giving evidence of attentive listening'.¹²

My thesis in what follows is that mission in Britain today – or in other secular and unchurched contexts in the West – is to be done not so much by a strategy of technical change as by a response to a call to rethink or reimagine the foundational understandings of the Christian message and their implications for Christian missionary practice. By rethinking some of the basic aspects of our Christian message – our understandings of God, of the Church, of the 'big questions' that people are asking today – we might discover new ways of living out and presenting the gospel that are nevertheless faithful to the age-old Christian tradition. I certainly don't have all the answers here – not by a long shot! But I hope this might be a way that together we can develop ways of thinking and acting that are worthy of the gospel in today's world and today's Church.

Mission in Britain today

The reflections that follow will be in four points. First, we must work to expose any simplistic or abusive understandings of God that still persist in the way we present the message or in the way that people understand the message. Second, we need to present an understanding of God that is inspiring, consoling, challenging and exciting. Third, we need to move to a thoroughly missionary understanding of the Church, one that does not focus on the

Church itself, but on the God and the world order that it preaches. First and foremost, the Church needs to embody in its community life the joy, wholeness and flourishing that is the result of living the Christian gospel. Fourth, we have to recognize that we do mission in a world of grace, helping people understand the spiritual experiences that they are already having, or the haunting questions that grace raises. I think that by reflecting on these questions we will come a long way to foster the adaptive change that is needed to be a partner in God's mission of prophetic dialogue in Britain and our world today.

De-constructing the 'hollow über-God'

Peter Cruchley Jones describes the God that most people imagine today – and don't believe in – as a 'being who is egotistical, punitive, and divisive, whose mission is to quell a rebellious humanity by tipping most of it into hell and damnation'. To most of his neighbors, he says, once more referring to the WCC theme, 'this God has lost, is lost, and it is laughable to suggest that he is able to lead anyone anywhere.'¹³ It seems to me that a first task of mission today is to expose this simplistic and abusive God as an idol. People who have rejected this false God are absolutely right. In rejecting such a God they are our allies rather than our enemies.

When I teach my course on God at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, entitled 'Trinity and Mission', my first lecture is entitled 'The idols we carve', and I ask the class to consider four expressions of idols. Of course there are many more. The first is the scene in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* in which two of the main characters, Cely and Shug, are discussing their understandings of God. Cely, when pressed, confesses that although she is an African American woman she still imagines God as a white man, with a long white beard, and blue-gray eyes. It's amazing how that image of the 'old Man with a Beard' persists in people's imaginations. As one respondent in Coventry's 'Beyond the Fringe' project responded: 'The problem is I can't relate to a man with a big beard sitting on a cloud somewhere. That does not feel real to me.' Indeed.

Next I show the students an advert in an evangelical magazine that I came across some years ago. The advert simply reads: 'In the time it takes to read this message ten Muslims will die and go to hell.' Then I show one of my favorite *Far Side* cartoons – of an old, white-bearded man looking at a computer screen at a man walking down the street under a piano that is being lowered down from a window. The old man's finger is about to hit a button on the computer that says 'Smite', and the caption says 'God playing at his computer'. Finally, I

read the chilling story of the American author Mark Twain, entitled 'The War Prayer', in which a local congregation prays for victory and honor as their troops leave for war – only to be confronted by a prophetic figure who tells them about the other side of that prayer: that for every victory for their soldiers children will lose fathers, mothers will be raped, lives will be destroyed. The congregation hears but cannot understand, and continues to pray for God to be on their side.

A male God, a vengeful God, a capricious God, a God who condones unspeakable violence – these are all images of God that many people believe in, but that many people have also rightly rejected. And yet these images persist in people's imaginations, even in the Church. They are undergirded by the language of our liturgies, in which God is addressed as a king on a throne, reigning over a celestial court. They are perpetuated by our exclusive male language about God. They are upheld by patriarchal structures – in the family, in society, in the Church – that appeal to divine sanctions for their validity and perpetuation.

A first step in mission today, I am convinced, is to work to root out these idols from our imaginations – especially in our Church, as much as possible in our liturgies, in our preaching, in our public statements like pastoral letters. Peter Cruchley Jones writes of 'the missiological task of deconstructing the hollow *über-God*'.¹⁴

One of my deepest religious experiences was when I realized that I'd rather be in hell than in heaven if such an abusive, angry, unloving God really exists. I think we have to work hard and constantly to insure that the true God, the God of Jesus Christ, is not obscured by our obscene images and unworthy behavior. The Second Vatican Council was so right when it declared that Christians, 'to the extent that they neglect their own training in the faith, or teach erroneous doctrine, or are deficient in their religious, moral, or social life ... must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion'.¹⁵

Constructing an understanding of God that inspires and excites

It is, of course, not enough to expose idolatry. Mission today has to offer understandings and images of God that are awe-inspiring, consoling, challenging, exciting.

One of the ways of understanding and imaging God that has blown me away in the last several years is to think about God in the context of the 'new creation story' that contemporary astronomy and physics has provided for us, and in

the context of biological evolution. One of the most powerful ways to think about God, I believe, is to present an image of God based on the new creation story and evolutionary theory. Rather than imaging God as an old man with a beard, or any noun, think of God as the very power of sending, of the Spirit present in creation from its first nanosecond, coaxing, cooperating with creation's freedom, challenging, persuading the processes in the seconds after the Big Bang, and in the billions of years as the universe has expanded, planets have formed, earth's atmosphere has developed, life of all kinds has emerged, and religious consciousness has unfolded, especially clear for us in the biblical record of Israel's history. As US feminist/ecological theologian Elizabeth Johnson reflects in her amazing book on Darwin and the God of Love, the Spirit's presence in creation ensures creation's freedom. God is always a God of freedom and participation:

Far from being merely a tool, instrument, or puppet in divine hands, the world acts with its own free integrity to shape its own becoming. It is empowered to do so by the transcendent mystery of the Spirit of God, who pervades the world, quickening it to life and acting in and through its finite agency.¹⁶

This freedom is most clearly revealed in the life, ministry, death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, whose life gave concrete expression to the Spirit's all-pervading presence. His ministry was the continuation and concretization of the ministry of the Spirit: 'The Spirit of the Lord in upon me, God has anointed me' (Lk 4:18). Elizabeth Johnson quotes US theologian Sallie McFague's succinct summary of Jesus' ministry: 'liberating, healing, and inclusive love is the meaning of it all!'¹⁷ Jesus' death on the Cross, the direct result of his ministry of fidelity to the Spirit's presence in the world is, in Cardinal Walter Kasper's powerful words, 'the unsurpassable self-definition of God.'¹⁸ If we want to know who God is or what God is like, we need only to look to the Cross. But then also, to the Resurrection, for both point to God's power, which is revealed in God's total vulnerability. Peter Cruchley Jones notes how 'the God of Life is absent from figures of power, yet found in figures of strength whose life is conveyed especially as spirit.'¹⁹ A vulnerable God, who knows suffering and identifies with the suffering of the world, is ultimately more powerful than any force in our world. A patient God, patient enough to cajole and try to persuade the movements of evolution over billions of years, is a God who is always ready to forgive – overflowing in mercy, as Pope Francis has insisted over and over again.²⁰

Danish theologian Niels Gregerson speaks of 'deep incarnation', meaning that Jesus' taking on flesh is much more than simply becoming human.²¹ Becoming human means becoming part of the entire creation, and, like our own bodies, Jesus' body is inscribed with 'the signature of supernovas and the geology and life history of the Earth'.²² That body, like all living creation, experienced death, but in the Resurrection, as Australian theologian Denis Edwards says, 'the Word of God is forever flesh, forever a creature, forever part of a universe of creatures'.²³ The God that we present in mission, in other words, is a God who from the beginning of time is connected to all creation, who loved everything into being, and brings every creature to fulfillment. The only thing that can stop that fulfillment is our own refusal to take part in it, to 'go with the flow', as it were.

To me this is amazing, overwhelming good news, something worth staking my life on, something I'm excited to share with women and men in today's world. The more we open ourselves up to this loving, vulnerable, patient God, as Karl Rahner has argued, the more we become ourselves.²⁴ I think we can argue as well that the more we give ourselves over to God, the more we are committed to justice and care for creation, to life. Although, as Cruchley Jones says, it might surprise many in our day, faith in the God of Jesus Christ will lead us to justice and peace. Religion does not 'poison everything', as Christopher Hitchens famously argued.²⁵ Just the opposite, it gives purpose and life.

Letting emerge a kenotic Church

Mission in Britain and in the secularized West today needs once and for all to recognize that the point of the Church is not the Church, but the reign of God. British-born theologian Paul Lakeland offers a striking reflection on this in an essay on a recently published book on Catholic ecclesiology.²⁶ He spoke of three types of Apostolicity, the mark or dimension of the Church that I have come to understand as fundamental to the other three of Catholicity, Unity and Holiness.

A first kind of apostolicity Lakeland calls 'Build it and they will come', and it is an understanding that is wholly centripetal – an apostolicity, he says, of maintenance. This is a mission strategy that some have taken in the Church. If only the Church is faithful to the tradition, if it keeps its orthodoxy, it will attract. The Church may be smaller, but those who will be members will be deeply committed to its doctrines and values. Lakeland, however, suggests that this form of church will continue to decline, despite the support it has had from a

more traditionalist coalition. The future of the Church cannot be built on Latin liturgies, strict orthodoxy, a denial of the importance of human experience, or hierarchical authority.

Lakeland sees a second form of apostolicity in what has come to be called in Catholicism the New Evangelization, highly promoted by both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. This is a more centrifugal approach than the first, but, as Lakeland puts it, it is centrifugal for the sake of being centripetal – ‘to a high degree the outreach of the New Evangelization is also in-reach’. The idea here is to be more proactive in preaching the gospel, but the focus is much more on former church members than people who have little or no Christian belief. Lakeland observes that ‘the new evangelization movement seems to have little sense that its message need be any different from that of the old evangelization. “New” seems largely to mean a new attempt, rather than an attempt to do anything new.’ John Paul II spoke frequently of a new ardor, new methods, and new expressions needed in the New Evangelization.²⁷ Efforts in the Catholic Church have focused almost exclusively on the ‘new ardor’ aspect.

Lakeland’s third understanding of apostolicity – and the one that he espouses in his paper – is one that ‘understands concern for the world beyond the Church to be the primary if not exclusive meaning of apostolicity’. This is an apostolicity that is totally centrifugal in its approach, and so can be called ‘kenotic’ – in two senses. On the one hand, the apostolic Church imitates Christ in his own emptying of himself as described in Philippians 2, leading to a humble, de-centered Church. On the other hand, a kenotic apostolicity is one that is concerned with emptying itself of any and all Western cultural baggage, so that it can be attuned to the context in which it works. This would result in a listening Church, an open Church, a Church of dialogue.

A kenotic Church would be a Church that recognizes that it is ‘missionary by its very nature’.²⁸ Its focus, in other words, is not on itself as such, or even on recruiting new members, but on the reign of God. This does not mean that Christians in mission do not invite people to join the Church, but they do so in order to invite women and men into a community that has its eyes set beyond itself, a community that itself already anticipates by its faith, vitality and mutual support the full reality of the reign of God. The Church works at being in itself a sign, a sacrament of the reign of God. This is the task of mission *ad intra*, of being constantly evangelized itself, so it can more credibly witness and preach the gospel – of a merciful, liberating, humble, incarnated God who suffers with humanity and gives the strength to resist evil and work for liberation.

Much more important than gaining new members is its reform of itself for the sake of the gospel. Lakeland quotes French theologian Ghislain Lafont's conviction that 'evangelization absolutely presupposes that the Church regain the confidence of men and women'.²⁹ This is not so much for the sake of the Church but for the sake of the message and the person to which and to whom the Church witnesses. If the Church is not willing to model itself on the vulnerable, humble, dialogical and listening God with whom it is a partner in mission, it will have no right to speak or act in the world. Australian missiologist Noel Connolly remarks that the Catholic Church in Australia is calling people to return to regular practice at the very moment when it has never before been so mistrusted.³⁰ We have to work hard to win people's trust back.

A kenotic Church will be a patient Church, once again in imitation of and participation in the life of the infinitely patient God who works with a world coming to be in an evolving universe. As Anne Richards writes, 'perhaps if we concentrated on waiting patiently, we should see the prodigal from far off more clearly.'³¹ In the words attributed to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, our task in mission is not to be successful but to be faithful. If we can be a Church that truly reflects the nature of God, we can have confidence that our kenosis will bear fruit – perhaps in ways that we cannot even imagine today.

Doing mission in a graced world

We carry out our mission in a graced world. Rather than seeing ourselves being sent into a godless, evil world, we need to develop the conviction that we are being sent into a world where God is already at work, and in which people are responding to God in ways that we need to discover.³² Nick Spencer writes that the diocese of Coventry's 'Beyond the Fringe' project 'reminds us that God has indeed set eternity in the hearts of mankind but that, all too often, we cannot fathom what he has done. In doing so, it encourages us that even though the workers may seem few, the harvest is plentiful.'³³ Recently I attended a conference in which a young evangelical pastor spoke about his ministry among young, upwardly mobile adults in a fashionable area in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina in the United States. Of all the young adults that he encountered in various ways – at the gym, at the swimming pool, in casual conversations in bars – he said that there was not one young adult that he met that did not have some kind of spiritual experience in her or his lifetime. Much of the point of the book *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age* is to alert the Church to the fact that the quest for spirituality is indeed a widespread, perhaps even

universal, phenomenon. In her essay in the book, Yvonne Richmond writes about her being struck by,

first, the extent to which people of no apparent faith ... were actually very spiritual in their makeup. Second, how prepared they were to discuss spiritual things when taken seriously as people of faith and given permission to talk. Third, how prevalent mystical and paranormal experiences seemed to be; fourth, how easily this could be translated into a tentative step of Christian faith whatever people's experience, since they needed little convincing of a spiritual world.³⁴

The task of mission, given this grace-filled context, might well be described as *naming, articulating* that grace as it is experienced in people's lives.³⁵ As Yvonne Richmond implies, the first thing that the Church needs to do is to listen with respect to what people are experiencing, and then enter into a dialogue with them. This, sadly, is often not the case, as Anne Richards writes:

Research shows that many people don't trust us with their stories of spiritual search, the rituals and activities they've tried, because they believe Christians will laugh, humiliate them, assert their superiority ... It is important for us to accept the different ways in which people do search for a spiritual identity and that they, like us, can make mistakes which they need to work through.³⁶

It will only be in respectful listening and learning from others that Christians will be able to make the connections between people's experiences and the wisdom of the Christian tradition. I think we have to do mission with the conviction that our tradition is the clearest, most powerful way to express the adventure of the human spiritual journey, but we have to leave space for people to come to this conviction themselves, on their own. This is why the task of inculturation is such an essential one in Christian mission. We need constantly to find ways to help people understand that *their* story is best understood in the light of *the* story in the Bible and in the wealth of Christian doctrine and practice. Inculturation, I always insist, is not to water down or simplify the gospel, but to allow it to be preached more effectively.

In September 2014 Catholic Theological Union in Chicago was host to Jonny Baker, director of the CMS Pioneer Program of ministry training, and one of the Pioneer students, Steve Leach. The theme of the conference was 'Finding Grace

in Young Adult Culture', and Jonny and Steve helped us to have confidence in the fact that grace is indeed present in the music, the clubs, the poetry and art of young adults today. Entering into that world is indeed to enter into a *Terra Periculosa*, a seemingly dangerous and unexplored world, but it is a journey that being faithful to the gospel today requires. Indeed, we enter into mission today in Britain and the West confident, as Orthodox theologian Michael Alexa said originally and is quoted by Nigel Rooms, that 'we can never be sure where God, or Christ, is not'.³⁷

The questions people have – often deep, disturbing ones – are also evidence of God at work. Nick Spencer reports that the results of Coventry's 'Beyond the Fringe' project discovered six burning questions that people of all types kept surfacing in their responses. The first was the question of human destiny – what happens when we die? The second was the question of the purpose of human life – what does it all mean? The third was about the existence and nature of the universe – how did it start? How is it designed? How is it controlled? Fourth, the question of God – as if the previous three questions were not about God – does God exist? If so, what is God like? Fifth, the question of a spiritual realm and how it influences a person's life. Finally, the perennial question of suffering, and why there is so much of it in the world. Spencer comments that, 'for the vast majority of respondents interviewed, the traditional Christian responses to these questions are either incredible or literally incomprehensible ... Re-establishing this link is one of the most important tasks facing the church today.'³⁸

Conclusion: no magic wand

On 24 September 2014, Pope Francis addressed a group of pastoral workers assembled in Rome. In his usual fresh way, the Pope told the group that while we must trust in God, 'who accompanies us and never abandons us', we still 'do not have a magic wand for everything'.³⁹ As Nigel Rooms said in terms of our responding to adaptive change, we 'can only experiment (or we could say "play") to see what works – and we might expect experimental failures'.⁴⁰ If, however, we cleanse our minds and imaginations of the idols we have carved; if we work creatively and carefully at constructing images of God that inspire and excite our hearts; if we work to build a Church that empties itself of all pretense and cultural accretions; and if we look to find ways of tapping into the spiritual journeys of the peoples of our cultures and our lands, we can have

fair hope of success, or at least of being faithful as partners of a patient and gracious God. Speaking of how the Holy Spirit assists the Church in its decisions, Pope Francis said that it happens 'when the dialogue among the people and the bishops goes down this road and is genuine.'⁴¹ Perhaps as we continue to dialogue among ourselves at all levels, asking and reflecting on the fundamental questions of our image of God, the true nature of the Church, and the fact that God goes before us in mission, the Holy Spirit will assist us as we try to bring the beauty, the truth, the joy and the love of God to this 'green and pleasant land.'⁴²

Notes

1. It is important to know the context of this article. It was delivered first at the annual meeting of the British and Irish Association for Mission Studies, and subsequently, as the annual Cambridge Theological Federation Lecture, both in October 2014. The author, Stephen Bevans, is a Roman Catholic priest of the Society of the Divine Word and Louis J. Luzbetak SVD Professor of Mission and Culture (Emeritus) at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. The article has been edited to address a more general audience.
2. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002, pp. 103–116.
3. Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961, p. 25.
4. Peter Cruchley Jones, 'You Have Not Sought the Lost: A Reflection from Europe on the WCC Theme', *International Review of Mission* 102.1 (396), (April 2013), p. 69.
5. Cruchley Jones, 'You Have Not Sought the Lost', p. 71.
6. Nick Spencer, 'Attitudes toward Christianity and the Church' in Steven Croft et al. (eds), *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age: Communicating Faith in a Changing Culture*, London: Church House Publishing, 2005, p. 48.
7. Graham Cray, 'Foreword' in Croft et al. (eds), *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age*, p. ix.
8. Nigel Rooms, *The Faith of the English: Integrating Christ and Culture*, London: SCM Press, 2011, p. 115; Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002, ch. 1, 'The Heart of the Danger: The Perils of Adaptive Change'.
9. See Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012, p. 202.
10. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, paragraphs 24 and 27.
11. Rooms, *The Faith of the English*, p. 115.
12. Cray, 'Foreword', p. ix.
13. Cruchley Jones, 'You Have Not Sought the Lost', pp. 69–70.

14. Cruchley Jones, 'You Have Not Sought the Lost', p. 79.
15. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, 19.
16. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, London: Bloomsbury, 2014, pp. 164–165.
17. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 2014, quoting Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993, p. 161.
18. Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, New York: Crossroad, 1984, p. 194.
19. Cruchley Jones, 'You Have Not Sought the Lost', p. 79.
20. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 37.
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