

Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum

Volume 42 · Number 4 · October 2018

See back cover for Table of Contents



WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Theological Commission

Published by



Reciprocal Mission Theology for Diaspora Mission

Samuel Cueva

The concept of diaspora is not new within the social and political environment, but amidst the increasing movement of people groups today, it is essential to apply this concept to a critical analysis of the global mission of the evangelical movement. For this reason, I am eager to share my thinking on reciprocal mission theology so as to strengthen the process of developing a global diaspora mission for the twenty-first century. I believe that reciprocal mission theology will support any diaspora mission and the formation of any effective networking for the benefit of God's kingdom.¹ Reciprocal mission theology will also provide a positive interaction between mission strategy and the theological framework of any diaspora mission model.

¹ For instance, three hundred leaders attended the Global Diaspora Forum held in Manila on 24–27 March 2015. They formed the Global Diaspora Network and have produced *Scattered and Gathered: A Global Compendium on Diaspora Missiology*, edited by Sadiri Joy Tira and Tetsunao Yamamori (Oxford: Regnum, 2016). The work was sponsored by the Lausanne movement.

I. Foundations of Reciprocal Mission Theology

Reciprocal mission theology² emphasizes that collaboration in mission is mainly a reciprocal relationship involving freedom of sharing, trust, truth in the gospel, togetherness,³ unity in diversity, respect for dignity, and common goals for God's glory. I define 'reciprocal contextual collaboration' as reciprocal relationships of harmonious freedom in creative tension that exist between two or more of Christ's disciples as they seek to accomplish the *missio Dei*. This mission contains two aspects: the dual mandate of evangelism and social responsibility, and commitment to the cosmos and the people

² See the whole examination of mission theology of reciprocal contextual collaboration in Samuel Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension: An Analysis of the Relationships in Mission within the Evangelical Movement with Special Reference to Peru and Britain between 1987 and 2006* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Monographs, 2015), 308–20.

³ Mission reciprocity is developed through trust, truth, time and togetherness. For further discussion of the fourfold 'T' see Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 322–24.

for the glory of God and the benefit of God's kingdom.⁴

The term *reciprocal* is very closely related to the following concepts: *complementary* (to improve each other), correlation (the relationship depends on one another), *interchange* (exchanging things with each other), *interdependence* (dependence on each other), *reciprocate* (transitive verb, entailing give and take) and *reciprocity* (a noun that denotes interchanging for the benefit of both collaborators). Therefore, we will use these terms in an interchangeable manner so as to avoid a reductionist view of reciprocal mission theology.

Reciprocity, as seen from above, clarifies that the church's reciprocal mission belongs to and is empowered by a Trinitarian God; reciprocity from below affirms that the church's reciprocal mission belongs to Christ's body, which is called to sustain with joy and transparency a reciprocal mission theology of unity in diversity within all varieties of models of the church's mission activity.⁵ Moreover, reciprocal mission from above stresses emphatically that God is the owner of the mission, and that he has made a covenantal plan to include his chosen people within his redemptive mission. Hence, the church is a steward, with the responsibility that goes along with this privilege.⁶ At

the same time, reciprocal mission from below affirms that the church is chosen, equipped and empowered to fulfil God's mission in a covenantal response of humble obedience.

A reciprocal contextual collaboration is to be expressed in the daily life of the church. This Trinitarian ecclesial life is rooted in God's eternal nature of love; in communality (a functional relationship, not a hierarchical one); in transparency (absolute confidence and truth); in humility (recognition of cultural identity by accepting differences), in submission (respect, first to God, then to our fellow mission workers) and in happiness (no one is happier than God, who gives joy to the church through reciprocal co-participation in the *missio Dei*).

Reciprocal mission can be both symmetrical and asymmetrical.⁷ As one example of an asymmetrical approach, one side might give money while the other offers loyalty. Or one participant may provide personnel or buildings while the other provides trust, technology, opportunity or training.

Meanwhile, symmetrical reciprocal mission occurs when we Christians work together within a complementary understanding as the body of Christ, and when everything we have for mission belongs to God's kingdom. Accordingly, an understanding of mission labourers working together, as

4 For a fuller discussion of reciprocal contextual collaboration, see Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension* (2015), 68.

5 Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 334.

6 Calvin B. DeWitt suggests that God's creation is a creation of symphony, with human beings being stewards of this symphonic gift, which has a divine appointment to safeguard the integrity of creation. See DeWitt, 'To

Strive To Safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Renew the Life of the Earth', in Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 85–93.

7 See Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 311.

we belong to and work for the same kingdom, grounds a mission theology of reciprocal contextual collaboration. It will help us to find appropriate new models of mission through autonomy (of individuals without individualism), freedom (to be shared, not imposed), and interdependence (in harmony, without domination) of mission co-participants. This mission theology promotes dialogue and reciprocity within a non-manipulative but truthful interdependent communication, consistent with the fundamental character of the Trinity.⁸

Reciprocal contextual collaboration is a kingdom mission, with a mission theology led by the Spirit, through the Son to the Father. This understanding gives the Church a theological view that speaks to the human need for relationships, communication and unity within diversity.

Reciprocal contextual collaboration is manifested in different responses to the mission mandate by the people of God. In this sense, reciprocal mission theology can be understood in the following ways:⁹ (1) partnership, (2) strategic alliance, (3) cooperation, (4) business as mission, (5) evangelism, (6) social responsibility, (7) mobilization, (8) liberation, (9) celebration, (10) building two-way bridges, (11) diaspora mission and (12) training for mission.

⁸ Alistair I. McFadyen speaks of communicative autonomy for independent communication in *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 32; see also pp. 113–50.

⁹ See Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 312.

II. Reciprocal Mission Theology and Complementary Collaboration

Within a theology of mission reciprocity, *reciprocal* concerns complementary functions between two or more persons or institutions, and giving or doing something in return for something else. As an example, the Peruvian Quechua words *ayni* and *minka* relate to reciprocity, in the sense of community work focused on social participation that benefits a society through sharing work with common goals.¹⁰ The emphasis is on working together in harmony, with different purposes such as helping an individual or a family, participating in the harvest of products, or constructing houses and public buildings, but always as a positive response or what I call complementary collaboration with those who help. *Minka* has characteristics of celebration, solidarity, a collaborative spirit and team working philosophy.¹¹

There is an important difference between the concepts of *reciprocal* and *mutual*. Whereas the former involves a complementary action on the part of two or more people or institutions, the latter involves two parties being united by performing the same act at the same time, such as a mutual covenant or mutual love. However, a reciprocal

¹⁰ Reciprocity as *ayni* and *minka* implies maintaining equilibrium. See Deborah Chapman, *Florencio Segura: Communicating Quechua Evangelical Theology Via Hymnody in Southern Peru* (doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh), available at www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/1565/2/Chapman+D+07+thesis.pdf.

¹¹ See 'La Minka en Movimiento', <http://lamingaenmovimiento.wordpress.com/la-minka/>.

act is distinct in the sense that one party acts by way of return or response to something previously done by the other party.

Furthermore, reciprocity integrates a theological meaning of sharing (either partaking or participating), which affirms participation with others.¹² It implies 'contribution with' (Rom 12:13) or 'distribution of' (Rom 12:8), such as sharing possessions (Luke 6:38; Heb 13:16; 1 Jn 3:17–18), sharing power (e.g. decision-making authority on priorities, allocating personnel or financial resources), and sharing spiritual gifts.¹³ It is within this reciprocal understanding of biblical collaboration that sharing in mission becomes both natural and possible.¹⁴

Sharing is the organizing principle of the *oikonomia* (administration) and social justice;¹⁵ for Craig Blomberg, sharing material possessions is pivotal in biblical theology.¹⁶ Hence, within

mission reciprocity there will always be tensions about how to put into practice the spirit of reciprocal sharing.

III. Reciprocal Collaboration in Practice

Reciprocal co-participation in mission means that a kingdom action on the part of one member (or institution) receives a positive answer from the other member (or institution). At that point the members arrive at reciprocity in goals, relationships, purpose, motives or strategies. Accordingly, it seems that the emphasis on mutuality in mission (having something in common or shared), developed especially in the missiological thought of the World Council of Churches (WCC) from the 1950s to the 1980s, has lacked a clear explanation of mutual missiology.¹⁷ This is one reason why mission reciprocity, which stresses quality of relationships through making a positive response to help one another as members of Christ's body, is the way forward for a more effective mission.¹⁸

According to reciprocal mission theology, one of God's kingdom co-labourers should start the dialogue or provide

¹² Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 345.

¹³ See Colin Marsh, 'Partnership in Mission: To Send or To Share?' *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 366 (July 2003): 370–81.

¹⁴ On biblical sharing, see John Corrie, *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations* (Nottingham, UK: IVP, 2007), 274. Lee Hong-Jung, 'Beyond Partnership, Towards Networking: A Korean Reflection on Partnership in the Web of God's Mission', *International View of Mission* 91, no. 363 (Oct 2002): 580–81, suggests that sharing involves more than reciprocity of giving and receiving and also more than mutual recognition of needs. See also Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999).

¹⁵ Lee, 'Beyond Partnership'.

¹⁶ Blomberg suggests that material possessions are a good gift from God, and that sharing is necessarily a redeeming process of

transformation in the area of stewardship. See Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 243–46.

¹⁷ Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 314.

¹⁸ Although some dictionaries suggest that *mutual* and *reciprocal* are synonymous, I prefer to make a distinction so as to emphasize that in Christ's body, all participants should have something to share with joy. *Mutual* seems more oriented to equality, whereas *reciprocal* is a more relational concept, allowing asymmetrical participation in mission.

a mission proposal, and then others should make a response, which could be negative ('let me think about it', or 'I do not think so') or positive ('I like your project, let's work together').¹⁹

An appropriate mission theology of reciprocity implies that churches belong to one another (1 Cor 12:12–27; Eph 4:1) as they confess Christ as the

only saviour (Eph 4:5), as they are led by the same Trinitarian God (2 Cor 13:14) and by Holy Scripture (2 Tim 3:16) and as they are empowered by the same Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:13; 4:4). Based on this theological foundation, mission collaboration therefore sees the Church as an indivisible unity (Eph 4:16), called to proclaim the good news in accordance with the *missio Dei*, God's kingdom and Trinitarian mission theology.²⁰

19 Reciprocity supposes at least two presences relating to each other. Thus, reciprocal communion becomes gradually more perfect, but there will never be complete fusion as each partner retains its identity. See Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Exeter, UK: Burns and Oates, 1988), 129.

20 Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 315.

21 Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 317.

Theology of Reciprocal Mission Collaboration²¹

Elements	<i>Missio Dei</i>	<i>Missio ecclesiae</i>	<i>Missio Context</i>
Reciprocal	Trinitarian theology	Biblical freedom	Interdependent mission theology
Contextual	Supra-cultural principles of freedom theology	Reciprocal Christological relationship	Consider both internal and external factors
Collaboration	'Under God's kingdom' mission theology	Mission theology of compassion and generosity	Prophetic <i>missio imagination</i>
Physical	Freedom, generosity and reciprocity	Multicultural teams and simple lifestyle	Non-territorial, non-denominational
Social	Freedom from personal and social sin	Practising a unity theology	Empowering the new emergent Church
Cultural	Developing a theology of cultural identity	Holistic mission relationship	African, Asian and Latin American
Economic	Sharing the control of power and decision making	Overcoming disparities in economy	Recognition of the immigrant, bi-vocational missionary force
Spiritual	Trinitarian	Diversity submitted to unity	Local and global
Missional	Fulfilment of the double mission mandate	Metanoia relationship	Development of local theologies

IV. Reciprocal Mission Theology and Diaspora Mission

Diasporas are a very important process for the mission engagement of the evangelical movement. Although a basic meaning of *diaspora* is dispersion,²² a wider meaning refers to the scattering of a people who settle for a longer period in a location outside their original homeland.²³

One of the seminal thinkers on diaspora mission, the Peruvian missiologist Samuel Escobar, explains that migration patterns and refugee movements have helped to bring together a multiplicity of cultures, and that this phenomenon has exerted an influence in different forms within Christian mission.²⁴ Along the same line, Matthew Krabill and Allison Norton suggest that diaspora mission was reflected by Lesslie Newbigin when he stated that the Triune God is the missionary sending agent. No longer is mission activity based on professional missionaries in foreign lands, but on individual Christians and their local congregations. Indeed, the main topic discussed at the American Society of Missiology in 2002 was related to migration.²⁵ Krabill and Norton indicate that in fact there is multidirectional mission activ-

ity as a result of the global diaspora phenomenon, and that non-Western Christianity has a pivotal role within mission activity today.

I agree that the global diasporas of the present time are unique in human history. The economic, political and social realities of twenty-first-century globalization permeate these movements of peoples. Communication, travel, and economic and social conditions have created a new environment for migration.

For example, it is estimated that 500,000 Latin Americans live in the United Kingdom and that 200,000 people from Spain have moved to the UK in recent years. Others have come from Eastern European countries, and there has been a massive Syrian diaspora. Amidst such migrations, diaspora mission is a new tool that God is using to promote new models for mission.²⁶

The various case studies presented at the 2015 Global Diaspora Forum in Manila help to show that there are no boundaries for a geographical understanding of diaspora mission.²⁷ People move not only because of their preferences, but also because of external factors mobilizing them—political, economic and social factors that are outside their control. I would propose that God is using these external factors for the fulfilment of the *missio Dei*. More people are on the move than ever

22 See Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2011), 25.

23 Wan, *Diaspora Missiology*, 74.

24 Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 14.

25 Matthew Krabill and Allison Norton, 'New Wine in Old Wineskins: A Critical Appraisal of Diaspora Missiology', *Missiology: An International Review* 43, no. 4 (2015): 447.

26 Samuel Cueva, 'Mission, Missionaries and the Evangelization of Europe: Towards an Integrating Missiology from a Latin American Perspective', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 34, no. 4 (October 2010): 347–57.

27 See 'The Global Diaspora Forum in Manila 2015', <https://www.global-diaspora.com/about-us/>.

before in the history of Christian mission, and God is active in this new mission context.

Another important aspect of the diaspora mission process entails accepting that the global diaspora is largely influenced by the majority world. Major reasons for this are economic crises, poverty and war, which cause people from poor countries to try to move to more affluent countries for a better quality of life. For instance, 800,000 Syrians have recently migrated to Germany, and 350,000 Venezuelans have migrated to Peru over the last five years.²⁸ This is the greatest migration to Peru in the past century.

Our theological and missiological understanding should provide a view of reciprocal mission theology to undergird more effective diaspora mission work. Also, any diaspora mission should observe the foundations of reciprocal collaboration discussed above.

When we look at the New Testament mission diaspora, we see that the basic understanding was adapted from the Jewish diaspora, which had somehow become assimilated within the Greco-Roman world (Greek in culture and Roman in political authority). Following this example, the New Testament believers made an impact within their context as a Christian community.²⁹ These people were mission workers on a daily basis, communicating Christ's gospel to the people of their time. It was a mission of shalom and hope to people facing extreme pressure by the Roman Empire. They communicated

the Good News in the power of the Spirit, trusting that Christ will come soon. They had a clear eschatological understanding of mission, with a diaspora missiology that combined hope and realism. This is the message of 1 Peter 2:9: 'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.'

V. Reciprocal Collaboration in Diaspora Mission

I support the novel approach of training people as 'collaborators' in diaspora mission, such as refugees and asylum seekers, along with people in the academic environment such as international students. These people will become a mission force to strengthen the fulfilment of God's mission if we provide appropriate theological and missiological training to them. This use of non-conventional missionaries can be expected to increase faster than the traditional model of sending missionaries through a mission society.³⁰

However, diaspora mission also needs the reciprocal collaboration of traditional mission structures (mission organizations), mission networks, and emergent mission structures (indigenous movements of local churches and Christian organizations) to be most effective in global mission.³¹ Furthermore, reciprocal mission collaboration

²⁸ See the Peruvian newspaper *El Comercio*, 1 July 2018.

²⁹ Wan, *Diaspora Missiology*, 76

³⁰ Cueva, 'Mission, Missionaries and the Evangelization of Europe'.

³¹ Cueva, *Mission Partnership in Creative Tension*, 221–22.

must not squelch the spontaneity of what the Spirit is doing.

This diaspora mission should have an intentional approach of collaboration with the broader Church. Therefore, we should acknowledge that God is mobilizing the global diasporas for a great contribution in mission history. In this line, a reciprocal mission theology should be a pivotal theological point for any kind of diaspora mission.

The concept of reciprocal mission theology, with its understanding of complementary functions, helps us to avoid any kind of superior or inferior attitude. Mission reciprocity may be either asymmetrical or symmetrical; accordingly, the concern should be for not the quantity but the quality of mission activity on each side.

Finally, practicing unity doesn't

mean uniformity; rather, it welcomes diversity in mission. We must watch carefully and be open to how the wind of the Spirit is blowing to empower the *missio Dei* at a global level.

VI. Conclusion

Christian mission must respond to the increasing levels of migration in today's world. Without losing the spontaneity of the Spirit, diaspora mission must work in reciprocal collaboration with traditional mission structures, networking missions and emergent mission structures. To ensure the necessary complementarity for carrying out diaspora missions, reciprocal mission theology is foundational and will enable us to fulfil the dual mandate of evangelism and social responsibility.