Sarah Nicholl
Integrated Mission: Recovering a Christian Spirituality for Evangelical Integral Transformation
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Sarah Nicholl's book, *Integrated Mission,* explores a spirituality of mission for evangelicals with the purpose of both pointing out this as a lacuna in the Lausanne Movement's documents and exploring a way forward for Lausanne. In this, she is joining theologians and missiologists seeking to reintegrate theory and praxis; a separation beginning, according to Nicholl, in the 13th century. She locates herself as an evangelical scholar of practical theology, with an interest in Lausanne from the 1980s in the UK, a time when John Stott's influence was prominent. She approaches the study from a multi-disciplinary and ecumenical perspective, including missiology, spirituality, theology, and history.

The first part of the book sets the theoretical and hermeneutical stage for her arguments, and her clear elucidation of both her personal and theoretical positionality lays a robust foundation for her arguments in the rest of the book. Her methodology chapter articulates her understanding of the relationship between theory and praxis, specifically drawing on Don Browning's method in his book, *Fundamental Practical Theology,* which encompasses four theological components: descriptive, historical, systematic, and practical (p. 16), and this structure informs the book. Browning's method is rooted in Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics. Gadamer argues that humans engage dialogically with history and tradition to interpret their present. Their "interpretative horizon" then interacts with a text, and this "fusion of horizons" can facilitate new realizations and insights. With this hermeneutical framework, Nicholl outlines her intention to visit Christian history to uncover fresh insights regarding integrative mission. Every person is extensively researched and placed in their cultural and historical context, so that the reader can understand the particular environment from which their theology and missiology emerged.

Nicholl's descriptive theology chapter focuses on the contents of the Lausanne Documents emerging from its Congresses in 1974, 1989, and 2010. Regretfully, the book was published the same year as the most recent Lausanne Congress and so does not include discussion on its document, "The Seoul Statement." Nicholl details the historical context of Lausanne's beginnings and argues that its various documents have a primary focus on evangelization based on Mathew 28, with an emphasis on the Church's service to the world. She critiques Lausanne's prescriptive, dualistic approach to evangelization and highlights their neglect of critical

concepts such as *missio Dei* and other key biblical texts for mission. Although there are no explicit references to a spirituality of mission, Nicholl points to implicit references—such as forming one's life like Jesus, incarnational and kenotic movements, and love— that could help develop a spirituality that both fuels and is shaped by mission.

Nicholl's historical theology chapters focus on John Wesley (Britain) and Ignatius of Loyola (Spain). Both were concerned about many aspects of life, not just conversion. Wesley emphasized that through abiding in Christ and receiving gifts from the Holy Spirit, one lives in relationship with God and other Christians, but also faces outward toward the world. Service to the world is "works of mercy' as a means of grace, which is fueled by one's relationship to God (p. 71). This is the kind of integration Nicholl is foregrounding; the Christian being sanctified as they are doing acts of mercy, not as a result of their good works, but through their life with God that empowers and transforms them as an act of grace.

Ignatius brings an experiential, even mystical element to Nicholl's discussion, but she roots it in his relationship and participation with the Triune God, which is consistent with the patristic understanding of *perichoresis.* Ignatius's life with God and service to the world again emphasizes the non-dualistic approach to life. Specifically, bringing one's missional methods into discernment within one's relationship with the Trinity. It is this intimacy with Christ and accompanying discernment that Nicholl believes offers Lausanne wisdom to form their integrative spirituality.

Nicholl's next two sections highlight contemporary theology, which focuses on Orlando Costas (Puerto Rico) and Segundo Galilea (Chile). Here, she names Costas as a radical evangelical and, although she used the term several times earlier in the text, defines it for the first time. Also known as integral mission, radical evangelicals synthesize evangelism and social action and are concerned with a practical application of the Bible instead of a theoretical one. Latin American theologians and missiologists, even from the 1970s, critiqued Lausanne's tendency to separate these two dimensions of mission, and this remains a tension point even today—some missiologists, for example, take issue that integral mission is listed as an "issue network" instead of being the lens through which Lausanne views mission. Nicholl specifies that Costas' writings do not explicitly deal with spirituality in relation to mission; thus, her analysis of his writings in relation to her theme requires some extrapolation. However, she points to a greater synthesis near the end of his life between experience and service—encountering God while serving the poor and marginalized, and a connection between liturgy and witness.

Her second choice of contemporary theologians is a Latin American Catholic, and his spiritual theology "guides Christians to practice the elements of the Christian faith in ways that both engage their contexts and encounter God" (p. 123). Nicholl describes Galilea's understanding of mission as evangelism, social justice,

and prophetic, before discussing his spirituality. His holistic view of the Christian life centers around following Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit, and then responding to the challenges of individual contexts and histories. In this, he tried "re-situating traditional spiritual practices in a contemporary setting in a manner that created renewal and a relevant spirituality for Latin America" (p. 138). These traditional practices included prayer, reading the Bible, practicing the sacraments, and serving the poor. It was encountering God in these practices, Nicholl asserts, that ensured mission was both contextually driven and spiritually robust—a mission of justice grounded in an authentic relationship with God.

Her final sections on practical theology bring all these voices together in a "round table" forum, comparing and contrasting their views on the relationship between mission and spirituality, and then reflecting on how this synthesis of voices could critique Lausanne's understanding of mission. Some of the questions she addresses seem to anticipate objections or fears from her audience; for example, she explains that her emphasis on the experiential is a needed counterbalance to other ways of knowing that have been prioritized by Lausanne, such as the intellectual and cognitive. She sums up her primary findings from her conversation partners: no distinction between social action and evangelism; a spirituality within mission which transforms both the missioners and their neighbors; this holistic mission is grounded in a spirituality of following Jesus, an intimate relationship that is fostered by spiritual practices; these practices then become interdependent with mission; this is not just individualized but in community; following Jesus means displaying kingdom values, and finally, she draws out the connection between *missio Dei* and *perichoresis*—Christians participating in the Triune God and taking part of God's mission. Her attention to the sacraments as part of an integrated spirituality might cause some evangelicals to be wary, particularly as one of her conversation partners is a Catholic priest. However, her roundtable dialogue with perspectives from evangelicals such as Wesley and Costas regarding the eucharist offers an enriched addition to experiencing God's presence in the Eucharist. Particularly, she draws out the insight of sacramental service, that one experiences God while living with and serving the poor.

Her final chapter converts these primary insights into six concrete proposals for Lausanne to assist the integration between their theology, missiology, and spirituality: expanding their idea of mission, the mutuality of mission, mission emerging from an intimate relationship with God, participating in the life and love of the Trinity, integrating communal spiritual practices, and promoting mission as incarnational.

Nicholl offers a compelling case for both the lacuna within Lausanne and a way forward, drawing from a rich tapestry of historical and contemporary voices reimagined for the present. But perhaps this critique of Lausanne actually reveals the deeper issue—a past overreliance on Western voices, which have tended to

be more dualistic, prescriptive, and pragmatic—to shape the conversation to the neglect of other cultural perspectives that already view the world more holistically. In light of this, it is helpful that she engages with voices from Latin America as well as from another Christian stream. Curiously, however, all her interlocutors are men, and although it is obvious she carefully chose each individual, numerous women could have brought additional nuance and enlarged perspective to the discussion.

Although she hints that Lausanne already seems to be moving towards a more integrative mission, some of the debates and controversies at the 2024 Congress (for example, primacy of evangelism vs. service, or how justice is expressed in mission) and critique of the Seoul Statement (for example, INFEMIT, a network of theological reflection and practice that Nicholl identifies in her book, pointed out a minimizing of integral mission in the Statement) challenge this optimism. If anything, this indicates that there is a need for this book. However, as mentioned earlier, certain streams of evangelicalism may struggle with her engagement with Catholic voices and her openness to reimagine the place of liturgy in relationship to mission. And yet, this is precisely what her methodology addresses early in the book—to recognize one's biases and be open to encounter the "Other"—not to blindly adopt their thinking, but to see beyond one's present interpretative framework. This, it seems, is actually part of an integrated mission—as Christians move into deeper intimacy with the Triune God, God's grace enables them to grow and learn with others and be transformed through their service and witness to the world. Despite the differences in time periods and contexts, as Nicholl astutely points out, each man in the study lived this kind of spirituality. This leads her to conclude that perhaps the conception of *missio Dei* needs to be broadened to be a "place of being, participating (*perichoresis*), and growing in grace with God" (p. 196). This emphasis on *being* in mission is an important corrective to the frantic pace of growth, strategy, and action that still characterizes so much of modern mission. It is in this *being* where not only are we shaped, but we can discern to what and where the Spirit is calling us to participate.

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