

# A New Era of Missions (1)

The Industrial Rift [50 minutes]



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## Greetings [8 mins]



**Kia tau te aroha noa ki a koutou me te rangimarie, he mea na te Atua na to mātou Matua,  
na te Ariki hoki, na Ihu Karaiti.**

(Grace and peace to you all in God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ)

**Ko Takitimu te waka** (my tribal canoe is the Takitimu)

**Ko Te Waka o Kupe me Tuhirangi ngā maunga** (my mountains are known as the canoes of  
Kupe and Tuhirangi the taniwha or sea serpent that Kupe chased along the Pacific)

**Ko Ruamahanga te awa** (my river is the Ruamahanga which flows down the Wairarapa  
valley from the northern Tararua ranges, it was in this river that I was baptised as a new  
believer in Christ in 1984).

**Ko Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, ko Ngāti Porou, ko Kai Tahu ōku iwi** (I have birth  
heritage connections to these tribes which span the East Coast of the North Island and  
some of the South)

**Ko Ngāti Rākaiwhakairi tōku hapū** (my family group name means to hang in adornment)

**Ko Kohunui tōku marae** (my people's belonging place is called Kohunui)

**Ko Jay Matenga tōku ingoa** (my name is Jay Matenga)

Having now located myself, in the spirit of whakawhanaungatanga or close relations I  
want to **honour and acknowledge the traditional custodians-of-country throughout this  
land now called Australia** and acknowledge their connections to land, sea and  
community, which tangatawhenua o Aotearoa also share. We too believe that it is our  
country that cares for us so we have a responsibility to care for it. We do not inherit it from  
our ancestors, we are borrowing it from our grandchildren's grandchildren.

I recognise that we are meeting on Woi'rundrie country and **I promise to walk lightly on  
the land** — or as much as it is possible for big Māori fulla to do so! Although... it's quite  
possible that my great great grandmother may have been Woiwu'rung, but we only have  
hearsay and whispers in the dark to go by.

Nevertheless, in their absence from this gathering, I pay **my sincere respects to nga kaumatua, the Elders past and present**, and I recognise the mana or authority of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as people of this land since time immemorial.

Because **the authority of the local matters**. As I will touch on again in Session Two.

**Nō reira**, (anyway)

**E nga Rangatira i hui hui nei. Nga mihi nui kia koutou katoa.**

Respected leaders gathered here today, I greet you all very warmly.


**Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.**

Three times greetings to you all, in the Maori tongue of forefathers.

**Raranga katoa** (and it's all woven together)

**Tihei mauri ora!** (This is the vital life force).

Today, the vital life force can be found in **Te Rongopai o Hoani**, the gospel according to John. Here we're going to have a little bit of a Bible Study. In John chapter 17 verses 18 to 26, Jesus prays to the Father,

 Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!



O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.

## PRAY


# Introduction [4 mins]

## Primary Purpose

Over my two plenary sessions I will aim to unpack:

-  Session 1 — **Understanding our current crisis**, by examining the influence of what I call the Industrial epistemé or ways of knowing and living in habitats.
-  Session 2 — **Navigating a way forward**, by looking at the values evident in collectivist oriented peoples that I have chosen to call the Indigenous epistemé or ways of knowing and living in their habitats.

You might think of epistemé as being similar to a worldview, but **the concept of worldview is now a somewhat dated** way of understanding the ways people live in their worlds. It's a bit too fixed or what academics call "essentialist". It carries the danger of stereotyping people and 'otherising' them. So, to avoid this, I prefer to speak in terms of ways of knowing and the values attached to that. Epistemé is of course drawn from the Greek, *epístamai* which means to know, to understand, or to be acquainted with something.

-  I will **speak in very sweeping and generalised terms** about Industrial and Indigenous as two major ways of engaging with the world around us. While very general, it's not reductionistic. I'm not trying to simplify the complexity of differences we experience in our interactions with others. Rather, I seek to present a contrast so that we can better appreciate some of the big picture differences—to **encourage us to counterpoint them, to hold them in tension and tune the difference to create a wonderful, if an uncomfortable and sometimes painful, shalom harmony.**

Because the Industrial is clearly dominant in our collective missions reality, I seek to **expose some gaps in the Industrial** ecosystem of knowing so I can then **amplify some strengths in the values of the Indigenous realm.** I'm not intending to idealise the Indigenous epistemé over the Industrial. There are strengths and weaknesses in each. My aim, is to help us develop a counterpoint— two voices singing different vocals over the same rhythm and beat as it were. To find some point of equilibrium and equitability between the message bearers and the recipients, the expat and the local, the Western and Majority Worlds, Industrial and Indigenous.


So, let's dive in

## **The Industrial Rift** [30 mins]


This morning will focus on the Industrial rift. What is the Industrial epistemé? How has it influenced the modern missionary movement? And, could it actually be unravelling?

We'll tackle this in two sections, or by looking at two gears, to keep with the machine metaphor that best represents the Industrial epistemé. As these two gears interact they're spreading a great deal of anxiety like the spraying oil you see there in the image.


The main driveshaft is the Industrial system itself, which is driving the insecurities we are experiencing in the midst of a major, and I mean tectonic, shift from one paradigm to a new one that's shocking and shaking the world in the process.

 But I'll tackle these in the reverse order, by looking at some of the insecurities being experienced in the world and especially the traditional global missions community, and I'll then unpack why these insecurities are arising.

## Insecurities

 The neo-liberal economist Milton Friedman noted with confidence in 1982 that, “**Only a crisis (actual or perceived) produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around.**” He seized on the energy crisis among other challenges of the 1970s to propose neo-liberal economics as a solution. It had been around the margins of economic theory for years, but the time was ripe for it to be picked up and the great globalisation theory to be put into practice. After forty years of experimentation the theory is crumbling before our eyes, but the principle Milton observed is not without merit. I think it is a valid principle for shifts that are happening in missions right now.

### **The Current Crisis**

 2020 hit us like a ton of bricks. The pandemic pause provided the global evangelical church with an opportunity to positively re-orient our missions practice—from an industrial impulse to an indigenous initiative. But have we potentially squandered the opportunity?

As borders are opening up, it seems we're chaffing at the bit to get back out there. Westerners in particular can't wait to exert their influence on other parts of the world. Teachers need someone to teach, healers someone to heal, developers someone to develop, saviours someone to save.

In the relatively brief time expats were locked down we heard story after story of local initiatives popping up, connected with local churches and extension ministries, to meet real world needs. The gospel was shared in whole-of-life fashion to great effect in Africa, India, South East Asia and Latin America, particularly where there was little or no social welfare safety net for people. Even in Oceania. When expats returned home from Fiji, the local believers felt a sense of freedom to live and minister in innovative ways much more in line with their indigenous values than the imported values of the expats.

But even as the borders are opening again, we're being hit with another whammy of a global crisis catalysed by the new war within old Christendom which will quite likely spark a global conflict. It has amplified the negative effects of the pandemic, resulting in barely controllable inflation and struggling supply chains. High costs of travel, high costs of living, diminishing discretionary incomes, a climate and ecological crisis, rising nationalisms, shifting theological and social priorities... all these things and more have potential to cripple traditional missions strategies.

Furthermore, traditional missions have been experiencing **a supply shock** for some time—and it's just getting worse. Diminishing income, increasing expenses and lack of personnel interested in doing what missions are wanting to send them to do are only going to bring more pressure to bear on an already frail industry. I personally don't believe any amount

of clever innovation, traditional missions education or mobilising manipulation is going to pull traditional missions out of a nose dive. We need a missions transformation.

The ideas lying around before the crisis, that the growth of the global Church was more of an indigenous endeavour than an expatriate one, is starting to feature in conversations about World Christianity and it absolutely must be embraced by the global missions community. As I said to Jason Mandryk of Operation World near the beginning of the pandemic, “the future of missions is indigenous”. Because the growth of the global Church always has been indigenous—Church history and World Christian statistics prove it.

That kind of 30,000 foot view statement understandably sends traditional missions leaders into a bit of a tail spin. I tried to share this idea with the leader of a US missions agency who I'd worked with for over a decade and I thought he was about to reach over the table and thump me! It presents a significant threat to the missions paradigm that has held sway over the past 120 years or so — the Industrial missions paradigm. Some have rightly called the industrial missions complex.

Let's pause for a moment and look at just one contrasting way of understanding missions from Scripture. Note here, that the issue isn't a question of whether or not God sends, but what is meant by the sending. Therein lies what we understand by the meaning of missions—missio, to send.

## ***The Meaning of Mission/s***

### **[Focusing The Great Commitment]**

“Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world”.

From verse 18 through to verse 26 of John 17, which we read earlier, is what I call, “The Great Commitment”, in the hope that we are able to **reframe our understanding of missions for a new era**, rooted in **the means of the Father's mission made evident in this passage** and illustrated throughout the New Testament.

I have heard so many **missions rah-rah sermons** on our sentness based on John 20:21 where after his resurrection Jesus reiterates, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you”. Let's take a beat here. If I were to ask how did the Father send the Son, based solely on John 20:21, what would your answer be?

Oh, the Father sent Him full of the Holy Spirit, my Pentecostal siblings would say.

Or, the Father sent Him incarnationally as God in human flesh.

Or, the Father sent Him cross-culturally from heaven to earth.

Or, the Father sent Him in self-denial, to die on the cross to free us from sin and death

Or, the Father sent Him to bring liberty, justice and peace to the world.

So many possible ways to interpret how and why the Father sent the Son. But **it's not rocket science**. We don't need to guess.

In John 20:21 **Jesus is simply repeating what he had already said.** Reiterating. Recalling. Reminding them, then he breathed on them a promise of the Holy Spirit, the Glory he spoke of in chapter 17, which the Father had given Jesus, which was delivered in fulness at Pentecost for all believers hence.

Without understanding John 17:18 in its context, however you interpret John 20:21 for missions will be pure speculation. Eisegesis even. You're reading back into the text what simply is not there. It may not be wrong in the grand scheme of Scripture, but it won't be what John intends Jesus to say.

So **in what way did the Father send the Son?** "As the Father, so I". What's the "as"? What is this "means" of the Father's mission that would see God glorified in all the earth?

It's **our indivisible, inseparable, integrated oneness in-Christ** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Explain** —

- That they all, through the ages, will be one. As I am in you and you are in me, let them be in and with us.
- Connected through the Holy Spirit. Glory, it could be argued with reference to John 20:21, is the Holy Spirit.
- So that the world will believe, and KNOW that the Father lovingly sent the Son.

OK. So that's the Great Commitment.

As we move into the next era of missions, I believe this **should come into stark focus for the global Church and its missions. Unity.** But not a unity made of forced homogeneity or tolerant niceness. It is a unity that celebrates diversity and requires holding or sitting the tensions of difference, allowing them to transform us. Because, as I said, **you cannot create harmony without tension.**

Shalom is effectively created by tuning the tensions of difference. I'll unpack that some more in the Session Two and in my workshop because it is crucial for us to understand this to enable us to **move beyond our unhealthy attachments to a certain way of doing missions in the many worlds scattered over this earth.** Unhealthy attachments that are born out of an Empire orientation rather than that of God's Kingdom.

**[Bokeh-ing The 'Great Commission']**

For now, let me throw this thought grenade into the mix. Some of you may have caught a sniff of this already. Not long after she commenced her role, **Nataliya mentioned to me that she'd heard from somewhere that I didn't believe in the Great Commission.** Haha.

Well, whoever it thought that was... absolutely correct. But let me say this. While I don't believe that the *concept* we've come to know as the Great Commission is healthy for the future of missions, **I absolutely believe what Matthew recalls Jesus saying in Matthew 28:18-20.**

I just think the way it's being interpreted today is rooted too deeply in Empire. In an Imperial Euro-centricism that has dominated theology for a couple centuries and a little later, modern missions. Eurocentrism is identified in different ways. Black American theologian Willie James Jennings uses the term "whiteness". Many African and Asian missions leaders outrightly call it Western Superiority. European social philosophers call it The Machine or The Beast or The Western Deviation, Downunder here, we might call it Colonialism. I identify it as rising from the Industrial epistemé.



How does "the Great Commission" support these views?... Because the concept of the Great Commission is dominated by an expansionist mindset—with roots in the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Discovery at the start of the age of discovery that gave authority for the Christian possession and domination of lands thought to be uncivilised. So that they might be appropriately educated to Christian, or more to the point Eurocentric, sensibilities. Furthermore, any uncultivated lands were deemed fair game to claim under the auspices of a legal right of terra nullius—a Eurocentric legal right of course.

Evangelical missionaries have little consciousness of all this of course. We're not conquistadors. We're not converting people at gunpoint. But we fail to realise the subtle ways we exert authority and bring our Industrial influence to bear, subconsciously treating those we go to minister to as inferiors—even when we're the ones like infants struggling to learn their language and ways. No, these attitudes of entitlement run far deeper than the ethnocentrism we're taught to overcome in missions training or the paternalism we're told no longer has a place in missions. That's all find in theory. Until someone starts to tells us what to do and how to do it.

**So when it comes to looking at Matthew 28:18-20, we too easily interpret it to mean going out, from here, to there, to take territory for God, as the superiors to the inferiors.** We are the superior in education and understanding of God, going to the inferior benighted heathen, trapped as they are by demonic powers, or immoral (in our mind) ways of living, or unjust (in our mind) ways of acting.

The term, "Great Commission", was invented in the mid-late 1800s at the height of the Colonial powers. **The concept of a Great Commission cannot help but be steeped in the philosophies of Empire.** That there are people less than us upon which we have a divine duty to impose our enlightened understanding of life, the universe and everything. But oh, what damage has been done to the gospel because of it. Some good, for sure, but so much grace and gospel spread has been hindered because of a lack of humility.




But **the concept is not the Scripture.** Again, it's a form of eisegesis. As a lot of Scripture readings tend to be and can't help but be. We too easily read Scripture with our own philosophical lens and overlay our own values onto the text. I believe there can be some degree of Holy Spirit inspiration to this, to serve the purposes of God for a season. But, brothers and sisters, that season has passed.

**We are in no position any longer to approach missions with a superior and impositional attitude.** Rather, I suggest we now must go into all the world with a humble and genuinely servant-learner attitude. Many are today of course. But I believe the "Great Commission",

as a concept, is too heavy-laden with implicit imperial meaning and assumption to be helpful terminology for our polycentric global reality.

 To borrow a metaphor from the world of photography. **I believe we need to bring The Great Commitment (to integrated unity) into sharp focus and bokeh The Great Commission into the background**, relegated to the annals of missions history.

So, **what did Jesus mean** when he so strongly stated that the disciples should now go everywhere and make disciples of all peoples?

 One of the first rules of exegesis is to learn to **seek solutions in the text** for questions arising from the text. If you look for explanations outside of a book or letter or the context of a verse, you open yourself up to eisegesis—reading an interpretation back into the text.

If we limit our question about the meaning of Matthew 28:18-20 to Matthew alone, we see that earlier in the gospel Matthew has Jesus making a similarly strong statement to the disciples about going. In **Matthew 10** Jesus sends out the 12. There, in **verses 5-8**, he explicitly tells them, “Don’t go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but only to the people of Israel—God’s lost sheep. Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!”

It’s as if in Matthew 10 the disciples are restrained. The Kingdom of Heaven is near but not here. That tension is held until Matthew 28 **like the drawing back of a bow**. Then in Matthew 28:18 he lets the string go. The Kingdom is no longer near, it is here. All authority sits squarely with Jesus and he releases the disciples from the restriction to Israel. The Good News is now available to everyone everywhere.

The disciples are not so much compelled to go, they are released from their restraints! The **motivation is not so much Jesus’ command but the disciples’ compulsion** — they can’t wait to tell everyone about this great news. They are workers now free to be thrust out into the harvest. They are the answer to their own petition before the Lord of the Harvest.

As we see played out in Acts, not only can they now announce the *present* Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, cure disease, and cast out demons; but Jesus says in Matthew 28:19 that they have the authority to replicate themselves. **To bring others everywhere and anywhere into the unity we enjoy with the Father, Son and Spirit, represented by the metaphor and rite of baptism**. These new disciples everywhere then start learning about the new culture of the Kingdom enabled by the Holy Spirit and enjoy fullness of life in our always-present God through Christ, to the glory of the Father.

They have become part of The Great Commitment and they draw others into it by their witness, wherever they live.

**Nothing about this is “mission drift”**. This is the start of a new imaginary for the healthy future of missions. The meaning of missions needs to change. Our God sends us into this world, but **not to dominate. Rather, we are sent to dwell**. It is not something reserved for crossing cultures or borders. Wherever the Spirit leads us, there we are to dwell in common



unity, in covenantal bond with others in Christ, to be a blessing and thereby a witness. Not everything is missions, but it is certainly a lot more than what traditional missions allows for.

- For the World Evangelical Alliance Global Witness Department, I developed this definition of missions: “an integrated whole-of-life witness to those beyond the boundaries (or direct influence) of the local church.” So, sent from a local fellowship out into the world to invite people to participate in the covenantal community we call the Kingdom of God, in Christ.

The communal aspects of missions engagement, whether being sent from a community or sent into a community is much more apparent in an Indigenous missions narrative than it has been in the Industrial one. We’ll dive into that indigenous narrative in Session Two, but I’ll wrap up here with a bit of a clearer definition of the Industrial.

## **Industrials** [10 mins]

### ***Philosophical Roots***

- The single defining factor of the Industrial reality is the myth of autonomous individualism.** The modus operandi of this epistemé is to disconnect, separate or fragment so it can then manipulate and control. Its entire way of engaging with the world, its way of knowing the world, is to see it in terms of its constituent components. Sure, the components may intersect and interact, but the image is something like the cogs of a machine.

- As I suggested earlier, other commentators identify this by geography like the Western World or the Global North. But rather than highlighting geographic, demographic or economic divisions, I prefer to see the world as **two major knowledge domains or epistemé**, epistemic ecosystems, as I mentioned earlier: the Indigenous and Industrial, with overlapping influence and hybridization developing between the two, which biologists call an “ecotone”.

Geography no longer really determines whether or not someone engages with the world from an Industrial or Indigenous perspective. For example, people who share an Industrial way of knowing and being in the world have adapted to Western industrial enlightenment philosophies that have so influenced politics, education and commerce around the world that they can no longer be geographically limited to the Euro-American (colonial) West.

- It’s more about innate, usually unconscious, assumptions about the world and associated values than it is about one’s location or status.** For example, successive generations of formerly collectivist people, educated in Western-styled universities and living in urban centres, have become hybridized to individualist Industrial values to some degree over time. Similarly, we can find Indigenous thriving outside of the land of their forebears, particularly amongst migrant populations bringing a more indigenous influence to their new host societies.

The foundations of the rather invasive Industrial system arise out of assumptions born in the 1600s, a century after Europe was exposed to new worlds across the Atlantic and into Southeast Asia. It was born out of the European Christian faith, based on a God-ordered world and human mind, or at least the European mind. **The chief proponent and proposer**

**of the great separation that evolved into what we see as Industrial fragmentation was of course René Decartes and his philosophy of the mind, separating it from the body. This is what we know as Cartesian Dualism,** a somewhat revised version of Greek philosophy co-opted and blended with Western Christian metaphysics and then, eventually, God was left out of the equation altogether in favour of Almighty Reason.

This is the beginning of the Industrial order. The age of Enlightenment followed, steadily undermining the authority of faith and separating the influence of the Church from society. It's a slow burn thing—only now being felt in its full effect in Western societies some 300 or so years later. This is how long epistemological shifts can take. And **just as Enlightenment Rationalism has reached its zenith, over the past 50 years it has been in serious threat of collapse—from what I call emancipated relativism.**

**The Eurocentric theological consensus, developed as it has alongside Enlightenment philosophical assumptions, is crumbling with them.** We see this crisis all around us in the Western church, no more so in the USA at the moment, but also here in Australia, perhaps more so than in Europe or New Zealand. Most of Europe and New Zealand has been post-Christian for a good while. Evangelicals in the USA are struggling with the shift, and I hear there are lobby groups in Aus that are fighting on a similar front. What we are not realising is that the fight is for a theology built on the foundations of a fading empire.

And missions is caught up in this great Industrial rift.

### **Evolved Fruit**

**Protestant missions is a byproduct of a European faith exposed to global realities. It is the evolved fruit of the Enlightenment + Colonialism.**

As I close, let's consider some of the assumptions of an Industrial epistémé and I'll leave you to ponder how they influence what we consider missions to be. In Session Two we'll contrast these with the assumptions and values of an Indigenous epistémé.

For Industrial ways of knowing, relational expectations develop contractually, are transactional, and usually productivity or outcome oriented. Word pictures like team and part-nership are used, which assume autonomous agents in working together within an atomised or disconnected world. Groups that do form within or are dominated by this individualist perspective hold together because of a common aim or objective. Group cohesion is dependent on an agreed goal or outcome.

Collaborative relationships revolve around applying one's resources toward the achievement of a task. The individual or organisational contributor retains ownership of their resources and expects a reward or return on investment that is meritorious or profitable. What they perceive to own, they also seek to control.


Industrials live superficially on the earth. They live on the surface, easily able to shift from one place to the next, with little regard for the significance of place, nor any real sense of geographic belonging. Instead, belonging is more economic, political or status driven.

In trying to mitigate the destruction that industrialisation has caused to our habitats, a lot of the talk amongst Industrials is about sustainability, which effectively means, to enable continued consumption. A concept growing in popularity, in the climate change and creation care space at least, is that of stewardship, which is not wrong, but it tends to have underlying assumptions of control or mastery over the world, with people presumed to be separate from the world around us.

There are some stark contrasts between that list of assumptions, attributes and values and the Indigenous list. But we shall have to wait until Session Two to make those comparisons and see how we can navigate our way into the future of missions by bringing the two into harmonious counterpoint.

## Conclusion


For now, I conclude with a reaffirmation that our God is a sending God and the mission of God is not ceasing even though traditional Evangelical missions—our human participation in the mission of God—is undergoing a significant transformation right now as our global realities transform.

 Let me reiterate my definition of missions in a slightly amplified form...

“Missions is the demonstration and explanation of the shalom Kingdom of God beyond the direct influence of a local church.”

That is not changing and this fractured and hurting world needs to see the “Great Commitment” manifest in more places in authentic ways like never before. They don’t want our hyper-confident imposed perspective on truth. They want to see our Holy Spirit empowered compassionate manifestation of love. For, *then* the world will believe and know that the Father lovingly sent the Son.

The Industrial epistemé has many fine attributes and it has accomplished much, but it has also damaged much in the fallout of its pursuit of progress. Our current global crisis gives us pause for thought and believers who live within an Indigenous epistemé are waiting in the wings of missions asking, is it our time now? Will we finally be able to bring our values into the mix and have them taken seriously?

 Until we do so, I am convinced, we will not fulfil the ultimate aim of missions: God’s glory made manifest in all the earth.

Mā te Atua koe e manaaki (God’s best to you). Amen.

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# A New Era of Missions (2)

## The Indigenous Shift

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## RECAP [3 min]



Session 1 Primary Purpose = Understanding our current crisis

- I located myself and honoured the people of this land now called Australia.
- I introduced the concept of epistemé and the domains of the Industrial and Indigenous.
- We looked at the current crisis under the title of an “Industrial Rift” — a fracturing of the Industrial systems and values that have held sway for more than 300 years.
- I mentioned that the crisis is resulting from the pandemic, war in Europe, global inflation, climate change and supply chain interruptions, etc... but most of all from an undermining of confidence in Enlightenment rationalism from emancipated relativism.
- I noted that missions was being threatened by its own supply shock with diminishing income and personnel interest—or at least that’s the case with missions in New Zealand.
- In light of a decline of traditional missions momentum, I suggested the future of missions was indigenous and I’ll tease that out some more in this session.
- I recommended a theological shift, suggesting we retire the concept of a Great Commission, because of its tie to Industrial Colonialism and instead shift focus to the Great Commitment, which I’ll return to in this session as well.
- And I hope you heard me affirm, not undermine the fact that God sends and that participation in God’s sending is still a responsibility for God’s church.
- Finally, I provided a bit more of a detailed overview of what I consider to be the Industrial epistemé, born out of Western dualism and rationalism but now influencing people all over the world.
- I mentioned that Eurocentric theology and protestant missions are affected, or potentially infected, by these philosophical assumptions, which I believe is hindering the spread of the gospel today.




Session 2 Primary Purpose = Navigating a way forward

- In this session we’ll focus on the Indigenous epistemé in contrast to the Industrial, with a view to finding a way to counterpoint the two in tension for the benefit of God’s mission and our maturity in Christ.


- I suggest that our missions vision should be highly local and communal, bearing witness to the Kingdom of God in a way that encompasses the whole of life wherever the Holy Spirit leads and plants us.

## The Indigenous Shift [25 min]

Session one was the Industrial Rift. This second session is titled, "The Indigenous Shift".

-  I split Session One into two gears, with the industrial paradigm as a driveshaft under threat, that is driving increasing insecurities, resulting in a lot of destabilisation and anxiety.

**The indigenous epistemé lends itself more to the organic than mechanic**, so I borrow the koru as a metaphor. Koru is the Māori word for the curling fronds that form in fern bushes.

-  In this session I will discuss two emerging fronds: Indigeneity and Integration. Because, as we'll see, where the Industrial world fragments and disconnects, the Indigenous world integrates and relates.


Indigeneity and Integration are interrelated, emerging out of one rootstock into one fern bush if you will. My presentation of them is a temporary separation for the purposes of investigation, but they should never be fully separated from the whole... lest they die. In the Indigenous reality, everything must remain connected to the root, like a vine to the branches.

### Indigeneity

#### The Indigenous Contrast

-  **The term Indigenous literally means, "of the land"**. So, it implies connection to a specific location.

In many contexts this word has attracted a negative sense that diminished the dignity of people who were considered to be indigenous. It was treated like the concepts of 'primitive', 'underdeveloped', 'uncivilised', or 'animist' (a concept I love to hate). The indigenous were seen as inferior by their colonisers, and in many cases still are considered that way. In recent times, however, the term has gained higher status and there is a sense of pride returning to the idea of being 'indigenous'.

-  My use of the word 'indigenous' in a missiological sense is rooted in the UN definition of indigeneity but **extends much wider to describe the integrated values of people throughout the world who have a collectivist orientation.**

If it helps, I use Indigenous to more or less refer to the Majority World, and Industrial to refer to the West. Although, as I suggested in Session One, there is significant overlap between these two systems or ways of knowing. You can have urban and educated people living in cities within otherwise Indigenous geographies who have adapted to Industrial ways of knowing. And you can have Indigenous knowing people migrating into Industrial contexts.

Used in this way Indigenous and Industrial helps avoid categorising people by some random geography (Global South makes no sense to us who live downunder) or some constructed economic or political bloc. Indigenous and Industrial focuses more on broad spectrum values and ways of knowing and interacting with the world.

I include all collectivist-oriented peoples under the category of "Indigenous" because there are many commonalities shared by people whose way of seeing the world is still very much guided by the ideals, the principles, priorities and responsibilities of a collective.

As I noted yesterday, the **Industrial epistemé is associated with these attributes and values.** Autonomy, contractual and transactional relationships (quid pro quo), project-oriented processes leading to productivity outcomes. Word images like team and partnership conjure a particular way of working together. Profit or personal merit frames a lot of motivation. Engagement with the material world tends to be in terms of ownership and connection with a locality or habitat is superficial. Even concepts like stewardship can evoke meanings of control or manipulation.

As a counterpoint to this, **Indigenous ways of knowing are more interconnected, and spiritually aware.** Indigenous have a collective understanding of reality where the social agreement is covenantal rather than contractual. Relationships are mutual, reciprocal, and familial.

The outcome is less important than the relationship enhancing processes undertaken along the way. Sharing is more important than acquisition. In traditional contexts, little is individually possessed, and nothing is autonomous. Everything is inter-related and affected by human agency. At best, the Indigenous seek to honour and value and give toward the common good without much thought of direct return.

When faced with the broken universe around us, we seek vitality, to promote life in all things, fostered by reciprocity. A prevailing image for creation care and life in general is that of guardianship, where the underlying motivation is that of protection and mutual growth.

These Indigenous attributes might seem somewhat idealised and they probably are a little aspirational, while the Industrial ones may be presented with a negative tone. But for those with ears to hear, you might sense that our missions visions, strategies and activities are still firmly aligned within the Industrial paradigm—which can only take us so far. Over past decades frustration has been rising within missions, from the Indigenous or Majority World. **We feel the Indigenous influence desperately needs to emerge as a true counterpoint in our global missions practice.** Without it, I do not believe we will mature as a global missions community nor will we free the gospel to spread as it ought.

### **Indigenous Church Growth**

We are now in an era where Indigenous ways of knowing are already actively influencing the global church and global missions. This is somewhat related to the sheer size of the global Church outside the West. The World Christian Encyclopedia statistics show us that the global Church is Indigenous far more than it is Industrial, with the epicentre of World

Christianity now sitting somewhere in West Africa. Since the last decades of the 20th century, global missions too has been becoming more Indigenous, as Majority World Christianity climbed into the middle class, which is typically the economic strata that makes trans-border missions plausible... and, incidentally, as middle class Christianity diminishes, so too will expatriate missions.

In their book, "Christianity As A World Religion", Sebastian and Kirsteen Kim dare to suggest that **"the work of the missionaries who originally carried the message is only the CATALYST** for the local activity of its reception, dissemination and transformation in a new cultural and social context." They make an important observation that...

**"Christianity is increasing among indigenous communities"**. This thesis is well supported by numerous other scholars. Furthermore, in concert with Lamin Sanneh, the Kims prefer to speak of THE INDIGENOUS DISCOVERY of Christianity rather than the Christian discovery of indigenous societies. A very important distinction.

The spread of Christianity in the world, therefore, has not been an expatriate spread, it is indigenous—with a mere fraction of the funding that goes into supporting expatriate missions actually influencing that spread.

This verifiable fact is born out among **my own people from late 1830's**. It took the missionaries a few years to break ground, but once a handful of young indigenous acolytes received the gospel, they proceeded to spread it. And the indigenous framing of the gospel, Te Rongopai, spread like wildfire amongst Māori by Māori until, by the 1850s, at a minimum, 60% of Māori throughout our islands were followers of Jesus...


That is, until the colonial settlers came, and English expressions of the faith began to dominate. Add to that settler land wars and uncontextualized colonial law, and the numbers began to diminish—at least in terms of established church attendance. The indigenous faith that was evolving—we might call it a contextualised faith—was increasingly condemned by colonial settler Christians.


Māori faith in Jesus may not have exactly matched the Eurocentric theological consensus, but it was often no less biblically faithful. Furthermore, it was a faith that viewed the Christian settler's behaviour as biblically substandard! I am among a new generation of Māori participating in the process of reindigenising the Jesus Way among Māori as part of an exercise of decolonising our theology.

This is just one of many stories of the polycentric reality that is global Christianity. What is happening afresh among my people, is just one example of the *indigenisation* of the faith over against what has become understood in mainstream evangelical missions as the *contextualisation* of the faith.


When Taiwanese Theologian Shoki Coe coined the term contextualisation in the mid 1970's, it was supposed to facilitate a gospel-meets-culture dialogue. Sadly, in most missions praxis today, it means little more than an attempt clothe European theology in local terms—**missions conversations shifted from indigenized faith practices to contextualized faith propositions. And it ends up becoming something of a straight jacket,**

stifling indigenous spirituality. So I recommend we move away from talk of contextualisation and embrace again the indigenisation of the faith, which allows the knowledge of God to grow within a group of people, governed by them and their growing relationship with Christ in their context—while in dialogue with Scripture and the rest of the global Church.


 I believe **expatriates need to accept the self-determination rights of local believers to be guardians of the gospel for themselves.** And if this causes us to worry about the emergence of aberrant theology or syncretism, we need to check the log in our own eyes, repent of our attitudes of superiority and condescension, and get comfortable with co-learning.

 Beyond what World Christianity researchers have observed, **indigenous influence on Christianity continues to rise rapidly on the missions periphery of the global Church.** In these first decades of the 21st century, mainstream missions has been confronted by the emergence of large movements to Christ of people from other majority religions. Spectacular growth stories abound. They're being contested and too often dismissed based on the arrogance of European theological superiority. Nevertheless, robust research is ongoing, such that we can have some confidence today, according to Justin Long from the Beyond missions organisation, that approaching 2% of the global population belongs to one of 1,350 new Christ-following people movements out of another religion — effectively, over 114 million people following a new indigenous expression of Christianity from presumably unreached people groups in the last 20 years or so... with barely any missionary input. God is growing the Church among all the people of the earth.

### **Indigenous Future of Missions**

 During the pandemic lock-downs **God's mission continued in local expressions of faith and the extension ministries of the faithful,** to witness to Christ in myriad practical ways to those outside of their faith communities. By claiming that the growth of the Church is indigenous, I mean it is neighbour ministering life to neighbour. Often, as it is right now, in the midst of brutal hardships. The primary role of expatriates in the global missions community is to serve that reality: local, whole-of-life manifestations of faith in-Christ.

As an aside, your own Missions Interlink leader, Nataliya represents a great example of this type of outreach. This time last year **Ukrainian refugees** weren't her neighbours, at least not proximately. But suddenly, here they are on her doorstep, and she is uniquely qualified to minister to them.

 That's not necessarily an indigenous example per se, although I'd suggest Eastern Europe is far more indigenous than industrial in many ways. Regardless, Nataliya's experience is an example of indigenous values—relational, self-giving, life-affirming, family-oriented, reciprocal. Yes, these are biblical values, and they easily emerge in times of crisis, but they tend not to be the priority for Industrials over the long term. Even now there are reports of Ukrainian relationships with hosts in the UK deteriorating.



This begs the question: is boundary-crossing local ministry missions? Well, with all due respect to those debating the semantics of the concept, who are we to say that it is not? God's mission is evident there. Christian witness is exemplified there, and God's Kingdom is manifest in places the local church wouldn't normally reach—right in the midst of crisis. In such situations, all theoretical definitions of missions go out the window—there is a need, and the people of God respond.

A valid reading of Matthew 28:18-20 suggests that, by our very nature as disciples, all Christ-followers are sent... into our wider worlds, wherever we find ourselves. But I **believe there still is a place for the transboundary servant of the gospel who leaves their faith community to minister where the gospel is not yet known. Such a Spiritual gift is not for everyone, any more than celibacy or martyrdom is for everyone.** But the recipient of this servant's ministry could be the believing second cousin of a part of a clan that has no gospel witness. Or the residents of a block of flats in a multi-ethnic housing estate where there are few or no known believers and everyone's struggling with the effects of impoverishment. Let's not restrict the gifts of God to our understanding of how or where those gifts can be used. Missionary service is a gift to traverse boundaries for Christ, but not one limited to crossing ethno-linguistic lines or one that requires an expatriate experience. It could be the reverse, as the Spirit of God continues to bring nations to our neighbourhoods.

The US National Intelligence Council believes that “During the next two decades, demographic shifts and economic incentives are likely to **increase pressure for migration out of developing countries...**”. I recently asked Sam George, Director of the Global Diaspora Institute at Wheaton's Billy Graham Center, what affect the pandemic might have on migration and he felt strongly that it will be similar to the affect it has had on other things—it will be an accelerant, at least once the borders fully open again.

In the case of migration, the locus is that of the individualist Industrial world, but migrants and refugees will more than likely live by collectivist Indigenous values, and in the process are subtly influencing or undermining adherence to the Industrial epistemé. Some of them even see themselves as missionaries to the West—I believe wrongly called “reverse missionaries”. Wrong, because that kind of label continues to centre the Western world in the story. The West can no longer claim the centre, it must be relinquished.

The global pandemic has disrupted the flow of influence from Industrial or traditional missions sending nations, allowing **a fresh confidence to emerge from Indigenous-background missionaries to take their lead in missions.** To set the beat or take their place at the centre of the narrative. As a result, I believe we will see missions shift from transactional relationships and translated theological concepts, to covenantal relationships and a collective understanding of God in-Christ. What has been happening on the margins of missions for some time, will emerge as mainstream. And history suggests that the indigenous shift will help missions flourish in the challenging new normal ahead.

## **Integration** [11 min]


Having emphasised the importance of the Indigenous experience of faith to the growth of the Church and introduced the Indigenous as a category defined by values that will be

important for the future of missions, I want to take care not to diminish the important history and ongoing role of the Industrial world for missions. We need both. But they need to be carefully counterpointed.


## The Peripheral Missions Community

In musical terms, a counterpoint requires that we have two distinct voices equally discernible, with a different melody set to the same rhythm and beat. A good counterpoint depends on creating space for each melody or voice to be heard. In missions the melody of the Industrial has been overwhelmingly dominant in the mix. We are at a unique period of history where we have the opportunity to create a better counterpoint harmony. But it requires identifying the gaps in the Industrial melody and amplifying the Indigenous voice so their melody can be heard. That is true of culturally diverse missions groups, but especially so between expatriate and national believers.


Much is being made these days about polycentricity. The Mission Commission's 2016 Global Consultation was on the theme of Polycentric Mission, and the Lausanne 4 Congress being planned for 2024 in Korea is supposedly conducting a polycentric process while acknowledging, at least in theory, polycentric Christianity. I say in theory because from the accounts I've heard so far, it is still very much Industrially controlled in reality.

 Polycentrism is a term from the realms of Industrial political sciences. In missions it is often thought to mean from everywhere to everywhere, but it does not. It means multiple centres of authority within a larger system. It means centring the local.

This is what Indigenous people have always known. We live within circles of honour which overlap and interact with other circles of honour, which all together make up an entire system. Whether it is a larger tribe of sub-tribes or large geographic regions of interconnected tribes like we have across the great highway of the Pacific Ocean, throughout Africa, or up and down the Americas. Indigenous peoples have always been polycentric, honouring and respecting other tribes authority. Well, ideally anyway.

 Honouring the authority of the local, then, fundamentally changes missions. When we centre the local, we move the missionary or the expatriate to the periphery. I am effectively asking outsiders to surrender the privilege they bring with them and give space for local self-determination in all matters.

For its entire existence, the Evangelical missions enterprise has assumed an implicitly superior condescension towards host cultures. It is inherent in the colonial Industrial impulse that has long influenced missions. So, by encouraging us to centre the local, I seek to expose an unspoken pride and dominance that is rightly no longer tolerated in our post-modern, plural and globalized world.

 Centring the local is not about empowering them. To empower, you give power to something. You're still the one in charge. But power is not ours, as outsiders, to give. Rather than empower, we need to take our power out of the equation to create space for local initiatives to emerge. Space for their voice to be amplified so that their melody is coming

through loud and clear in the global Church's conversations. Because their experience of our ever living God is valid.



## The Integrated Missions Community

O.K. so I've established the need to expose gaps and amplify alternative voices to create a more harmonious counterpoint. I reiterate—it should not diminish the role that those native to an Industrial epistemé have to play in missions. But, as some wise person once said, “When you're accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression.”



Missions is not a zero-sum game. God gifts the entire Church with people called to transboundary service: the Industrial and Indigenous alike. For a good reason, which loops us back to the Great Commitment of John 17:18-26. God draws us together in culturally diverse missions groups to show a unity that will help the world believe (that is, consider credible) and know (that is, actually experience) the love of the Father for the Son.



I love serving in missions for this very reason. Because all over the world **missions groups exist as unique and glorious points of cultural convergence**. Obedient Christ-followers find themselves outside of their comfort zones alongside Christ-followers from completely different comfort zones, usually serving local people not like themselves. The intercultural missions reality has servants of God struggling with one another and growing together as a diverse cultural mix, not conforming to the pattern of this world but living as witnesses to the perpetual reconciling power of God.

For it is in that tension that we are transformed, it is in our communal life as Christ's body that Romans 12:1 is set. We're not transformed by our personal devotional life, but our body life—and the more diverse the better. As I said in Session One, living in the tensions of difference can create a wonderful if uncomfortable and sometimes painful shalom harmony... if we persevere, as James recommends at the start of his epistle. There he promises that if we hold on to the faith and let perseverance do its transformative work, we will mature. This is an ancient truth that Euro-theology has co-opted, codified, spiritualised, and called sanctification. But it's maturity in community and the New Testament is almost entirely focused on this aim: our communal transformation into Christlikeness.



The late Alan Krieger's book, “Patient Ferment of the Early Church” is compelling in the way it reveals how the early church was convinced that their persevering common unity would grow their numbers and spread the Kingdom to all nations in fulfilment of God's promised future.

Which, by the way, is how I believe Matthew 24:14 should be interpreted. The Good News being preached throughout the whole world is a promise, not a task to be fulfilled. By making it a task, I believe Industrial missions strategists have shifted our focus to an unhealthy and unbiblical anthropocentric perspective of the mission of God. That's just another example of where an Indigenous epistemé, focused more on dwelling than dominating, can reveal gaps in the way Industrial missions have been interpreted Scripture.

It is an example of how we need to counterpoint the two sets so that we might work towards harmony in the interrelationship and a fuller understanding of God's mission—because Industrial and Indigenous are complementary, and **we must always view and work with the people of God in-Christ as an integrated unity.**

## Conclusion [4 min]

And it is on this note that I will conclude. There is a well-known Māori proverb that says,

He aha te mea nui ki tēnei ao?

What is the most important thing in the world?

Māku e ki atu...

I would reply that it is...

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

the people, the people, the people—in other words the wellbeing of community.

It is always about people—and, in our case, different people learning to live together in integrated unity in Christ, gifted and empowered by the Spirit of God. This is the only missions strategy Jesus ever gave us. It is there in the Great Commitment of John 17:18-26, I believe it is implicit in Matthew 28:18-20, and again in Acts as the Spirit of God empowers new types of covenantal communities in Christ to be created as the Spirit moved God's people to share with others, near and far. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth, encompassing every tribe, language, nation and people is, again, a promise, not a task or a model. And it is happening in our day. Not because of some powerful mobilising method, but because the Spirit of God is moving obedient people to do God's will.

The era of transboundary missions ahead of us must be highly collaborative and deeply relational, with upmost respect for and inclusion of locals as guardians of the gospel. Those uniquely gifted to traverse boundaries as specifically sent-ones will find themselves working together for God's glory to bring a whole-of-life shalom Kingdom witness where there is none. They each bring their values, skills and God-given gifts, honed in their respective backgrounds, into the mix. Together creating an interactive harmony through transformational counterpointed relationship tension.

As we learn from tuning stringed instruments, you cannot create a harmonic without tension. So it is with Industrial and Indigenous relationships in missions. Tuning is hard work. We need to surrender assumptions. It takes a lot of dialogue. It means giving way. It requires perpetual reconciliation, out of which cooperative action flows. This is the integrated unity Jesus prays for in John 17.

In the midst of our global crises, God's mission continues, and it is the shalom Kingdom, come in myriad local expressions throughout all the earth for God's glory.

No reira, arohanui i a koutou e haere ana ki te ao — And so, much love to you all as you go into the world. Amen.

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