

**A Response paper by Roberto Hodgson on;**

**Holy Mission:  
The “Entire Sanctification” of the Triune God’s Creation:  
Affirming and Moving Beyond Articles 15 and 16  
By Phil Hamner and Andy Johnson**

**Introduction:**

I would like to thank the planning committee for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to respond to the essay of Andy Johnson and Phil Hamner on Holy Mission. I am responding in this reflection as a minister not as a theologian.

I congratulate Phil and Andy for their fine work. I have structured my response, first by affirming some of the theological reflections in their presentation; secondly by looking at expectation and belief of the church in the second coming of Jesus as related to the Holy Mission of the Church; and finally, on the final judgment and its implications for the Holy Mission of the Church.

**Affirming Andy and Phil’s Theological Reflection**

I agreed with Andy and Phil that the mission of the church for so long has been interpreted primarily as saving the soul of the person. This departure point obviously does not see the person holistically and in relationship to his/her society and creation. Jesus presented a holistic approach of his Holy Mission according to the narrative of the gospels, particularly in Luke 4:18-19. Jesus’s Holy Mission was to redeem the person from his/her affliction of sin as well as any form of dehumanization. As Andy and Phil stated in their paper: “God (through Jesus) sets out to reclaim the entire creation from powers of chaos/sickness/death, whatever is destructive of persons, or society, or the good earth.” Orlando E. Costa in his book “Christ Outside the Gates - Mission Beyond Christendom” states: “...the final consummation of the kingdom...in the hope of new heavens and a new earth does not mean that this mission is either atemporal or beyond history. On the contrary, it is a mission whose stage is history. The hope that infuses it is nothing less than the hope to transform history.” p90. To reduce the good news of Jesus to only saving the soul, is to distort the fullness of the Holy Mission of the triune God in

redeeming the whole person and the creation, which is humanity's staging ground.

### The Kingdom of God and the Second Coming of Jesus

Jesus came to inaugurate and proclaim the Kingdom of God. His view of the Kingdom of God included the two-fold reality of the "here and now" and that which was "yet to come in its fullness". The fullness of the Kingdom will come when Jesus completes his reign in his second coming. David J. Bosh in his book "Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission" states: "We live between the times, between Christ's first and his second coming; this is the time of the Spirit, which means that it is the time for mission. As a matter of fact, mission is the most important characteristic of and activity during this interim period." p.503

On one occasion according to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus when responding to a question by some of his disciples, answered: "And the gospel must first be preached to all nations and then shall the end come." The church has interpreted the words of Jesus, as its universal Holy Mission until the end of time. The second coming of Christ was the fuel of the Holy Mission of the early church and has been a driving force throughout the church's history.

The early church expected, and the persecuted church around the globe expects the eschatological fulfillment of the Kingdom of God because their hope is grounded in the promises of Jesus for the "now" kingdom and also for the "not yet" kingdom that will be ushered in at the second coming of Jesus as Lord of lords. Paul in his writing introduced the word Maranatha, which other writers in the New Testament also refer to, as the concept of the second coming of Jesus in hope and judgment. Later "Maranatha" became a greeting in the early persecuted church.

The apocalyptic writing of the beloved disciple at the Isle of Patmos was embedded with the theme of Maranatha. The One who reigns and will reign says "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20b)

It seems to me that the church in USA/Canada is in danger of diminishing the biblical and theological concept of the second coming of Jesus. Maybe we have become skeptics on the subject because of hearing so many exaggerations and assumptions in wider circles, sometimes even date-setting, which directly contradicts Jesus words "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the

Father..." Mt 24:36. The final question that the disciples asked Jesus, recorded in Acts 1:6 "...Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority." Perhaps also we are becoming so comfortable that we do not see the hope and joy of the second coming of Jesus as the early church did and the present-day persecuted church around the globe see it.

We need to recapture our biblical and theological concept of diligent preparation for, and anticipation of, the second coming of Jesus, as Jesus himself taught in some of the parables related to his second coming; for instance, the parable of the ten virgins according to the gospel of Matthew in chapter 25:1. As we know weddings require a lot of preparation and are anticipated with joy as the participants await the consummation day.

### The Final Judgment

Illustrative of the core values of a materialistic postmodern society is the statement of one of its philosophers who said "At the end whoever has the most toys is the winner."

Our article of faith XVI declares: "We believe in the future judgment in which every person shall appear before God to be judged according to his or her deeds in this life."

In our biblical theological stance, we believe that at the end, the winners are those whose convictions and beliefs reside in the redemptive grace of a loving triune God. In the day of judgment the justice of God will reign. The oppressors who in the name of their game accumulate a lot of toys while exploiting the poor will have to face the consequences of their actions. God is a God of justice and will in the final day confront the evils that rob and kill the defenseless. In the final day those who have destroyed God's creation will be judged. Only a just God has reserved the right to a final judgment to bring justice to the innocent, to the powerless and the martyrs. In the book of Revelation, there is a group of people who "called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?'" (Rev. 6:10).

Does being true to Holy Mission require us to re-read Scripture with eyes toward the Day of Judgment? Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of

the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Mt. 25:34-36. Lucien Legrand in his book “Unity and Plurality-Mission in the Bible, states: [At] “the...eschatological tribunal at which “all nations will be assembled...Here the separation between the sheep and the goats will be effected not in terms of ethnicity, but on the criterion of charity toward the least.” p.56-57

### Conclusion:

Is Holy Mission in the light of article 15-16 to teach and preach the Good News of the “now” and the “not yet” of the Kingdom of God to all nations? Is Holy Mission a holistic approach of the Gospel of Jesus that transforms the person, society and creation? Is Holy Mission to proclaim and make people conscious of the Day of Judgment when every person will appear before a just God? Is Holy Mission to join the Holy People and the Holy Church in declaring Maranatha?

It seems to me that these are some of the questions that we in the USA/Canada church in our post-Christian era need to ask in our theological reflection on, and engagement of the Holy Mission of the Church.