Mission and Ministry

The Christian mission in every era is to acclimate the citizens of the kingdom of this world into the language and custom of God's eternal kingdom. In Woodford and Senkbeil's forthcoming book, *Textualization: Courageous Witness in a Mashed-Up Culture*, they outline a strategy toward just that mission.

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od’s intent is clear. No matter the time, the culture, the language or the
tation, He desires all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) through the suffering,
death and resurrection of His beloved Son. This Gospel remains the power
of God for salvation in every era, even our own rapidly shifting times.

The two of us come from radically different worlds. One grew up during the
Eisenhower administration; the other during the Reagan years. We were both farm
boys, yet one remembers a team of horses doing the fieldwork while the other
always had giant tractors leading the way. One is a grandpa; the other the father of
five, including a new baby. One’s idea of rock-n-roll is Buddy Holly; the other’s is
Def Leppard. We’re separated by a full generation, but we share a common passion
for proclaiming the Gospel and giving care in our Savior’s name to souls—both lost
and found—in these rapidly changing times.

We do so in a mashed-up culture. This is what happens when bits and
pieces of pop culture are taken and remixed together; all sorts of wide-
ranging entertainment, technologies, truths, moralities, deities and meanings
(or the lack thereof) are compressed into a commonly shared experience. It’s
a riff off what the first MP3 players did to “mash up” emerging digital music
culture, mixing and matching diverse artists in playlists that might include
both Buddy Holly and Def Leppard, along with the likes of Mozart, Katy
Perry and Weird Al Yankovic. It’s also what DJs and artists do now to create
mashed-up music by layering the vocal track of one song seamlessly over the
instrumental track of another. So too, all sorts of clashing and conflicting
ideas and experiences converge in our mashed-up culture. And though at first
one of us thought “mashed-up” was a potato dish, both of us now live and
move amid these mashed-up times.

That’s true of the Holy Christian Church as well. These days, the Church
is called to proclaim the unchanging truth of the eternal Gospel in a chaotic
and rapidly shifting culture—mashed up, in other words. And her churches
face the perennial temptation to mimic their surrounding culture; that is, to
“contextualize” themselves and the Gospel they proclaim so that the mes-
sage is more appealing to the culture. As well intentioned as this may seem,
eventually some churches end up with

an impulse and identity that matches our times: mashed up. A mashed-up
church breeds confusion, uncertainty and division. It needn’t be that way.
We’d like to chart a unifying way forward that combines both biblically
faithful foundations and culturally sen-
tive approaches.

Of course, it’s essential to commu-
nicate the Gospel in clearly understood
language to actual contemporary cir-
cumstances; we simply call this “com-
mon sense contextualization.” But we
also contend that the text of Scripture
must remain central; we need a clearly
biblical and Christ-centered confession
for our contemporary world without
apology or compromise, saturated with
compassionate care for the souls of our
troubled age.

The real challenge is not to con-
textualize the Gospel but to textualize
people; that is, to wrap them into the
life of the Holy Trinity by means of
the divine Word. In a very real sense,
fatherly proclamation and catechesis
is always countercultural; it seeks
to remedy the misbeliefs and idolatry

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