

## **“Not so far West: Taking the ‘Mission’ out Of Missiology”**

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Abstract

In this paper Archpriest Eric Tosi (The Russian Orthodox Church of North America) and Charles Fensham argue that Missiology, in name and in fairly common but not exclusive practice, represents a theological discipline that implies a Western-Latin bias while most other theological disciplines identify themselves in terms of the Greek New Testament traditions (Theology, Christology, Pneumatology, etc.). They argue that it is therefore necessary to evaluate the implications of the discipline’s Western and Latin bias, and the cultural shifts in the use of the word mission, to examine the impact of the use of this terminology on the place of mission studies among the theological disciplines. The paper discusses the problem of the word mission in its contemporary usage as well as in its entrenchment in Western church culture. It explores the rich history of apostolic action in the Eastern tradition of the church and recent and contemporary ecumenical developments that call into question the use of the word mission. It also explores some of the implications of following creedal language in framing the study of the intersection of church and world with a focus on an Eastern Orthodox perspective. Subsequently, the paper moves towards a tentative proposal for the use of the word “apostolic” rather than “mission” for the discipline to enable further discussion and critique in framing the discipline. This paper is written with the intension of being a catalyst for a discussion starter on the name of the discipline with much wider implications for the scope and practice of the discipline in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Throughout the paper different forms of the word apostolic is used in the place of mission, missionary, or missiology, where appropriate, to demonstrate how such terminology might function.

### **“Not so far West: Taking the ‘Mission’ out Of Missiology<sup>1</sup>”**

The discipline of Missiology, at least when named in this way, developed within the Western tradition of the church. This is even represented in the title of the discipline that identifies with Latin tradition rather than the Greek and New Testament language. We will argue here that

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<sup>1</sup> Archpriest Eric G. Tosi is the General Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America and former chairman of the Department of Evangelization. Charles J. Fensham is Professor of Systematic Theology and Mission Studies at Knox College, Toronto, School of Theology, University of Toronto.