

**Considering Incarnational and Representational Models of Missions:
Moving Towards a New Understanding**

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To Mom and Dad, for making it possible for me to learn.

To Andy, for awakening my desire to learn.

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for teaching me that learning most often does not take place in the classroom.

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Considering Incarnational and Representational Models of Missions: Moving Towards a New Understanding

Chapter 1 - Introduction to Missions

Writing about the expansion of the Christian church in the last two centuries, Allan McNicol explains that "it has only been in the modern era that Christianity has truly become a global religion. Thus the golden era of Christianity was not the first, fourth, or sixteenth, but the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."¹ So, it has been in modern times that missions have made the most gains. Missions also carry, in some circles, the title of "frontier missions." That is, taking the gospel message to a people who have not yet been reached by it. Missions have made incredible progress in the last century. The following table is taken from a study done by Ralph Winter. It is quite valuable for understanding the rate at which the gospel is being brought to unreached² people groups.

¹ Allan McNicol, "Discipleship as Mission: A Missing Dimension in Contemporary Discussion on Matthew 28:18-20," *Christian Studies* 10 (Fall 1989) 27.

² It is worthwhile to understand the use of the terms "reached" and "unreached" in relation to people groups. The 1982 Unreached Peoples Meeting defined "unreached" as this: An unreached people group is "a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize the rest of the group." Thus a group would be reached when mission efforts have established an indigenous church that has the strength to evangelize the rest of the group.

PROPORTION OF UNREACHED PEOPLES
TO CONGREGATIONS OF CHRISTIANS³

YEAR (A.D.)	NON-CHRISTIANS PER BELIEVER ⁴	UNREACHED PEOPLE PEOPLE GROUPS ⁵	CONGREGATIONS PER UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS ⁶
100	360 TO 1	60,000	1 TO 12
1000	220 TO 1	50,000	1 TO 5
1500	69 TO 1	44,000	1 TO 1
1900	27 TO 1	40,000	10 TO 1
1950	21 TO 1	24,000	33 TO 1
1980	11 TO 1	17,000	162 TO 1
1989	7 TO 1	12,000	416 TO 1

Winter has further observed, "the drop from 11 to 7 (62 percent) between 1980 and 1989 (in the second column) is equivalent to the drop from 360 to 220 (62 percent) in the first nine hundred years of church history!"⁷

This trend suggests that mission work is continuing to grow and to reach more and more people. It also beckons Christians to examine and reexamine their approaches⁸ to mission, due to the vast number of people, one could venture to say souls, involved.⁹

³ Ralph Winter, "The Momentum Is Building in Global Missions: Basic Concepts in Frontier Missionology," *Mission Frontiers, 1990 Special Edition* (1990): 17-26.

⁴ According to Winter, "Non-Christian" here means people who do not identify themselves as Christian. "Believer" refers to estimates of true believers among the vast multitude of people that consider themselves Christians. Another way of describing this group is "Great Commission Christians" -- a term suggested by David Barrett -- those who take the task of world evangelization fairly seriously.

⁵ Winter adds, "These numbers are high because a narrower definition of "people group" is being used than the "ethno-linguistic" definition.

⁶ Winter defines "congregations" as being an average of 100 people who are "Great Commission Christians" (see note 5).

⁷ Winter, "Global Missions," 20-26.

⁸ "Approaches" is plural here simply because of the fact that many different, and intelligent, views on missions

⁹ It is reasonable to say this if we assume that at least part of the work of missions, as it exists today and as it has existed in the past, is to guide unbelievers to a "saving" faith.

Understanding Missions Work

It is the purpose of this study to aid in the cause of correcting the doctrine of missions. In recent years, many scholars, such as Kostenberger, Bosch, Carson, and Hesselgrave¹⁰ have studied and debated over the topic of the “work” of missions. They have come to the understanding that as technology makes missions more and more possible to almost anywhere in the world, right understanding of missions must be grasped. In other words, the question is that of how the Church is supposed to carry out Jesus’ commissions to spread the gospel throughout the world. More often than not, these scholars come to many varying conclusions. However, two major models of missions have arisen from these studies. These two models have come to be regarded as the “incarnational” model and the “representational” model. These two models will be compared and contrasted in following sections, in order to illustrate many of their distinct features, and to understand the biblical basis for each.

The arguments and misunderstandings about these two models, and no doubt others, seem to be an integral part of the state of confusion missions finds itself in. Obviously, there are many challenges involved in motivating a group of people, or an entire church for that matter, to participate in missions. To motivate a person to leave the comfort of

¹⁰ These works include David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), D.A. Carson, “Church and Mission: Reflections on the Contextualization

one's home and to cross language and culture barriers is no small task. If church and mission leaders do not have an intelligent and biblically founded understanding of what the work of missions entails, the difficulty in this must increase exponentially. This is to say nothing of the belief held by many missionaries, myself included, that to pursue an endeavor as great as bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations while misunderstanding or ignoring the biblical teachings on such endeavors is unwise, and will inevitably lead to unfortunate consequences. However, hope does exist for this situation. One purpose of my thesis is to offer aid to the practice of missions by urging the Church to return to faithfulness to the biblical images of mission.

It is my thesis that the scriptures teach the followers of Christ with clear images that illuminate the work of missions in the contemporary world. I find that neither the representational nor the incarnational model adequately depict this image. I seek a biblically loyal model that synthesizes these two models in a manner that gives priority to the representational model, but also includes the incarnational model. I will suggest that aspects of each of those models are necessary. Finally, in the conclusion, I will explore how this synthesis is important for my personal search for understanding of missions.

While it is *not* my intention, in this study, to suggest an entirely new model of missions based on this thesis, it is my intention to offer

and the Third Horizon," In *The Church in the Bible and the World*. D.A. Carson, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker,

guidance to such an undertaking. Also, while this thesis is primarily introspective, and my primary goal is to examine these issues for my personal sense of call and vocation, it is my hope that these observations will provide helpful analysis and critique of missions in the contemporary church.

In order to do this, I will first illuminate the problems missions currently face. My intention in doing this is to show the need for a better understanding of biblical missions theory. Second, I will illustrate a preliminary model of missions, in order to help the reader understand the elements of missions theory. Third, I will compare and contrast the representational and incarnational models in order to illuminate distinct features of each, and to help the reader understand the biblical basis of each. I will then briefly argue that personal witness must be the main focus of missions, not incarnational ministry. To conclude, I briefly suggest how characteristics of the incarnational model of ministry might be used to enable and empower this witness. It is my hope that this study might evolve into or support a study on a new model of Christian missions that will utilize both models.

Two Assumptions

In this study I make two assumptions that should be clarified. First, I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and

1987), David J. Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988).

infallible in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.¹¹ I have also tried, wherever possible, to use scholars who seem to hold this same belief. Of course, I recognize that scripture must be understood in context, but I do not recognize that context negates or lessens the value or authority of a single verse. I believe that, understood properly, scripture does not contradict itself, and that each verse is useful for teaching, teaching, and rebuking. Thus scripture has full authority in matters of my beliefs, actions, and lifestyle. Having said this I seek to use scripture in an acceptable manner, to most readers, in this paper. I hope not to derive too many conclusions from solitary verses, or to allow verses to stand alone as proof, and I hope to rightly understand context in interpreting scripture.

Second, because I understand all scripture to be infallible and authoritative in all situations, I believe that missions are good, because in their truest form they are what Christ commands. Furthermore, I believe that in their proper, biblically taught, mode are carried out for the good of those they go to, in order to enable hearing the gospel, repentance, faith, and salvation. Not only that, but I believe that missions and evangelism are part of Christ's calling to *all* of his followers.

¹¹ Cf. 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31-32; John 20:31; Acts 20:32.

Chapter 2 - Problems in Missions

I will move now to more of the problems that missiology currently faces. It is necessary to understand these problems in order to remedy them. One can not treat an illness without first diagnosing it. The practice of missions, as it exists today, is suffering from a lack of sound theory and biblical basis in its execution. Kostenberger perceives this problem, and recognizes how it is being worsened. "Missiology currently appears to be suffering from an acute identity crisis. This crisis is exasperated by at least two major factors: the increasing interdisciplinary nature of missiology and the rapid pace of change in the world around us."¹² In making this statement, he cites the effects of the world's urbanization, modern computer technology, the pervasiveness of mass media, among others. It also seems that this may not be a recent trend *only*, according to Bavinck.

Discussing the history of missions, Bavinck writes, "Missions has always been an activity of the church. This was particularly true during the very first century of church history. The church preached the gospel for many centuries before it gave profound consideration to the character of its commission."¹³ Of course, mission might have taken a much different form in the early church, as seen throughout Acts 13-28. Paul

¹² Kostenberger, "Missiological Insights," 446.

¹³ J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1960), xi.

preached the gospel to the Gentiles, in person, in strategic cities and organized churches, which may be likened to mission work today. But he also wrote letters to churches to meet special crises (e.g. Galatians vs. legalism), and defended the gospel in front of powerful bodies of authority, such as the Sanhedrin, an act that would be difficult to liken to modern day missions. However, I am confident that the definitions of "mission" and "evangelism" given earlier are broad enough to encompass the missions work of today as well as in the early church.

Nevertheless, it may be time, once again, for the church to give "profound consideration" to the character of its commission. This is being addressed in some extent today, but there are still hundreds, maybe thousands, of churches and missionary organizations that have strayed from the original commissions given throughout the gospels, Acts, and Pauline literature. Piper, writing about this condition says "much of this is due to the effects of the secular world. While the potential for global Christian outreach has never been greater, these external pressures have led to a rising degree of secularization¹⁴ in the church's self-understanding and strategizing."¹⁵ Piper, also, sees that secularization of mission strategy threatens to undermine the biblical model of mission, and pervert true mission.

¹⁴ Secularization, in this context, might be understood as a condition that exists when secular ideas, goals, and morals overshadow, or replace, biblical ideas and goals for many activities, including missions. One effect this might have on missions is the adoption of improper motivation for mission, which will be discussed on page 24.

This is one of the dangers missions-oriented Christians must strive to prevent. External pressures and secularization are polluting the biblical model for missions. Not only that, but it has also become common for missions to come under criticism as being oriented to propagate the American way of life among other cultures. Missionaries have, more and more frequently, become characterized by various negative images. These may include "the fanatic, enthusiast, or eccentric, a view as common in the overseas church as at home." Also, "the anachronism, an outdated relic of a period of church history now over, [and] old fashioned."¹⁶ These characterizations should urge the church to critically examine its theory and practice of missions.

It is important to understand that many of these negative characterizations may stem from the effects of individuals and groups whose ministries are faulty in their motivation for mission and "characterized by superficiality and imbalance – usually extremist Biblical liberalism which is often manipulatory both of Scripture and people." These must include "the tragedies of modern 'tele-evangelists' and cult leaders such as the Rev. Jim Jones of Jones Town, Guyana (1980), the Waco sect and the Children of God,"¹⁷ who perverted biblical

¹⁵ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993).

¹⁶ John Pritchard, "Missionary Concepts and Procedures: Time for a Review." *International Review of Missions* 87, no. 344 (1998).

¹⁷ Okorochoa, "Mission and Evangelism," 69.

doctrine for private gains at the expense of many other innocent people's money and lives.

Lost Missions Doctrines

Many of these problems I have just illustrated can be traced to a larger, over-arching problem: the fact that the Church is guilty of poorly defining mission, and educating its members in mission theory. This might be seen in the increasing number of churches that put little, if any, emphasis on missions. It can also be seen in the lack of much needed study and writing on missiological doctrine available. Christian missions today have gone somewhat awry in their doctrine and are without biblical foundation in many cases. Kostenberger, who is familiar with this crisis, maintains that "there is a mounting concern among missiologists and other Christian thinkers that missiology, as a discipline, should be rescued from drifting (and drowning!) in a sea of social science data and be anchored once again to its theological foundation."¹⁸ He believes, once again, that this is due, in large part, to the quickly expanding knowledge in the social sciences, and the rapid pace of technological and sociological changes.

Surely, many denominations face this threat to missions, and no doubt some have already felt the effects. Tannehill laments the failure of

¹⁸ Andreas J. Kostenberger, "The Challenge of a Systematized Biblical Theology of Mission: Missiological Insights from the Gospel of John," *Missiology: An International Review* 23, no. 4 (Oct 1995): 446.

the Methodist Church, and its problems in defining missions and motivating its members:

The United Methodist Church knows that it is called to mission, but it confused about the nature of its mission in the present time. It knows that its mission should embrace the world, but actually spends most of its time and resources on a limited constituency. Our mission has become stuck... there is a strong temptation to define the group's purpose in light of the desires and the needs of its present membership. Yielding to this temptation, the church [has turned] inward and mission to the world [has become] a minor activity.¹⁹

As this trend begins to affect more and more of the Church, a remedy must be found. I intend to contribute to this remedy by attempting to understand the biblical images of mission. The theme of mission, or simply spreading the gospel can be found all throughout the New Testament. Donald Senior explains,

Mission is at the heart of the New Testament. The early Christian communities were the result of a dynamic missionary proclamation, and that mission left its mark on the character of those communities and on virtually every page of the New Testament.²⁰

Paul might be considered inherently missionary in his theology, and the ministry of Jesus in the gospel narratives has obvious mission overtones. For example, in Matthew 28:19-20a, we see that the goal of missions is discipleship: "Go therefore and make disciples." Karl Barth describes Jesus' intention in making apostles and writes, "Jesus 'made' apostles from the first disciples (Mk. 3:14-15). The apostles are called to make

¹⁹ Robert C. Tannehill, "Mission in the 1990s: Reflections on the Easter Lections from Acts," *Quarterly Review*, (Spring 1990): 84-85.

apostolic Christians of all others."²¹ By using the term "apostolic Christian," Barth implies that this next generation of apostles (and the next, etc.) will also assume the commission to "make disciples."

Detwiler, drawing upon Wilkins, defines discipleship:

"Throughout the book of Acts, *disciples* is a title for those who have placed their faith in Jesus and are now followers of Jesus, converts."²² Whenever people 'turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus' (Acts 20:21),²³ they become disciples of Jesus.²⁴

Thus, the goal of missions, according to Matthew 29:19a, is to guide people toward a state in which they repent and have faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, to understand the central work of missions we must understand the biblical model of making disciples, which is what my thesis will address.

"Mission" or "Evangelism?"

Before I continue, I would like to avoid later confusion by offering a definition for the term "mission" in the Christian sense, and how it differs in meaning from words such as "evangelism." According to Joy Thomas,²⁵

²⁰ Donald Senior, "Correlating Images of Church and Images of Mission in the New Testament," *Missiology: An International Review* 23, no. 1 (January 1995): 3.

²¹ Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *The Theology of Christian Mission* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961): 63.

²² Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992): 249.

²³ *Ibid.*, 191.

²⁴ David F. Detwiler, "Paul's Approach to the Great Commission," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (January-March 1995): 33-41.

²⁵ Joy Thomas, "The Evolution of Concept of Mission in the Bible," *SEDOS Bulletin* 26 (Sept. 1994): 239.

The word "mission" is *missio* in Latin and the verb form *mittere* appears quite frequently in the Latin Bible, which corresponds to the word "send" in the English translations. Biblical scholarship has related these two words "mission" and "sending" for the equivalent term in the Hebrew Old Testament is *Shalach* and *Apostello* [*pempo*] in both the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament. They stand for the biblical language of "sending" which is a very rich concept in the whole Bible.

Since the English word "mission" carries with it the connotation of sending, or being sent, obviously it has to do with a person going *somewhere*. The *somewhere* is what separates missions from evangelism. Piper makes the two terms distinctive by drawing upon comments by Ralph Winter. In Piper's view,

Evangelism can never be finished, but missions can be finished. The reason is this: missions has the unique task of crossing language and culture barriers to penetrate a people group and establish a church movement. Evangelism is the ongoing task of sharing the gospel among people within the same culture.²⁶

The two tasks are equally important, and very similar in many of the ways they are carried out, but the critical difference is that of the spreading of the gospel among the people of one's own culture and language or the people of a foreign culture and language.

To illustrate the relationship between evangelism and missions, we may examine the last words of Christ in Acts 1:8. Here Christ gives a commission to His disciples that reads as follows:

²⁶ Piper, *Desiring God*, 194.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of earth.²⁷

Jesus commands them only one task: "you shall be my witnesses."

However, He also commands that this task be carried out in different locales. The first might be considered our own region and culture ("in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria," in which the same language, at least, was likely spoken as the disciples' native language), which Winter would label "evangelism." The second is outside of our native culture and homeland ("even to the remotest part of the earth."), which Winter would label "mission."

Michael Raiter goes so far as to classify the different types of evangelism and mission "according to the cultural proximity of the evangelist to the group that he is trying to reach for Christ," also according to Acts 1:8. His classifications can be presented like this:

But you will receive power when the Holy spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem (*evangelism-1*), and in all Judea and Samaria (*evangelism-2*) and even to the remotest parts of the earth (*evangelism-3*).

Kane further defines the two terms by narrowing the meaning of evangelism to the proclamation of the gospel *only*. Drawing upon John Stott's writing, he says,

John Stott has defined mission as embracing "everything

²⁷ New American Standard Bible (NOTE: all scripture translations will be NASB)

which God sends His people into the world to do."²⁸
Evangelism, on the other hand, involves only the proclamation of the gospel.²⁹

If we accept this definition for evangelism, it is important to

understand that mission *can* take the form of evangelism. This will be vital to the thesis of this study, since my objective, once again, is to make a case that while missions may consist of many different forms of ministry, proclamation of the gospel is and *must* be the primary focus of any biblically founded mission model. The reader should note that I draw the majority of my biblical material from the New Testament. This does not go to say that the Hebrew Scriptures do not contain some relevant information for understanding the practice of missions.

However, I have chosen to draw scripture for my arguments from the New Testament, so that the focus will be on the commands and practices of Christ and His apostles alone. As previously mentioned, I believe that the New Testament writings offer the most relevant and authoritative guidance on the practice of missions.

²⁸ John R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975): 40.

²⁹ J. Herbert Kane, *Life and Work on the Mission Field* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980): 242-243.

Chapter 3 – A Preliminary Model for Mission

Having offered a definition for evangelism, at least in relation to mission, I will briefly outline a fairly commonly accepted biblical model of mission. If the Church is to come to a truly biblical understanding of missions, all aspects of its practice must be examined. It is not my intention, at the moment, to critically do this. I believe that the most important piece of the pursuit for this model is understanding *how* the Church is instructed by the New Testament to make disciples. However, in order to come to a better understanding of what missions currently consist of, I offer the following model, which addresses much of what mission theory involves. This model does not, of course, represent all of the current thinking on mission, but it should be adequate to facilitate later discussion on the work of missions.

Who Is the Subject of Mission?

Who are the responsible bearers of the gospel of the Kingdom? The answer to this question may also help define more precisely the audience to whom this study is directed. Arias offers this answer to the question: "the subject of mission is the church, the community of disciples,³⁰ represented in the gospel final story by the symbolic number of the

³⁰ "Disciples," as I am using the word here, refers to those who have placed their faith in Jesus and are now followers of Jesus, or converts, according to Acts.

eleven who met the resurrected Lord at the mountain."³¹ In other words, Arias believes that the responsible bearers of the gospel message are anyone and everyone who considers himself or herself a "Christian." Thus, one might say that even as Christ calls a person to follow him (to become a disciple), that person is immediately called to the task of winning people to Christ by proclaiming the gospel. Matthew 4:19 states:

And [Jesus] said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

As Jesus calls his first disciples, he immediately assigns to them the task of "fishing" people to Christ. There may be some disagreement among interpreters of this verse that being a "fisher of men" means being a missionary in the modern day sense. However, it is clear that Jesus has in the same breath called for these men to follow him, and also to, in some mode, bring people unto him.

Karl Barth believes that the call to follow Christ and the call to witness are absolutely inseparable. He writes,

It is common to all the biblical accounts of calling that to be called means being given a task. And for those who are called according to these [texts], vocation thus means existence in the execution of this task.

Because Barth believes that a Christian exists only as long as he or she actively witnesses to others, he also writes,

It is not the case, then, that when the called have received

³¹ Mortimer Arias, "Church in the World: Rethinking the Great Commission," *Theology Today* (July 1998): 418.

the task they can continue to exist in some way in and for themselves and devote themselves to other things that its execution. Acquiring it, they are consecrated to it.... Everything that they have and are and will and do as men must take second place and be subordinated to and made to serve the execution of their task.³²

Barth argues that all those who are called by Christ to be disciples of him are also immediately and inseparably called to the task of bringing people unto him. Obviously, this answer of the question does not help us understand who is called distinctly to evangelism or to mission as they have been defined. However, it should suffice to say, for this study, that all who would call themselves "Christians," if that means following Jesus Christ, are called to this task in some locale and in some capacity.

Neither in Acts 1:8, nor in any other commonly used missions texts does the sender make a distinction as to who will be sent where. However, scripture does tell us the manner or character of person that is to be sent to proclaim the gospel to *many*. Okorochoa describes the kind of person called to mission by making reference to the first missionary. "Paul lamented that there were those who proclaimed the Gospel but their whole life style was a contradiction of what they proclaimed." And, "[Jesus] warned against the possibility of preaching the gospel...and still missing out on the final admission into his immediate presence, as a result of living lives that contradicted the message of the Gospel." He called such people "damnable characters, whose end shall be according

³² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 573-574.

to their deeds' (Matt. 7:20-22; Phil. 3:17, 18)."³³ Thus, those called to proclaim the gospel in the hearing of others must hold themselves to the same standards to which Samuel and Paul held themselves to.

Furthermore, Okorochoa partially defines these standards. She writes that they must include being

free from greed, cheating, dishonesty, moral misdemeanor, etc; in short they are to be persons who are utterly reliable -- or "above reproach" (see 1 Sam. 12:2-5; Acts 20:18-21; 1 Tim. 3:2-7).³⁴

We can conclude that the responsible bearer of the gospel message is any Christian who has submitted themselves to a lifestyle that is, more or less, in accordance with biblical standards of conduct.

Mission to "All the Nations"

The next part of a preliminary model of mission is an understanding of where missions are to take place. I have already briefly discussed the commission of Acts 1:8 which, in the interpretation I have utilized, is a directive to preach the gospel among the people like us in language and culture, as well as those in other languages and cultures throughout all the world. However, it is worthwhile to also look at what may be considered to be the most widely used mission scripture in the New Testament, namely the "Great Commission," Matthew 28:18-20.

³³ Cyril C. Okorochoa, "Scripture Mission and Evangelism," *The Anglican Communion and Scripture* (1996): 77.

³⁴ Ibid.

Verse 19a reads, "Go therefore and make disciples of *all the nations*." A cursory reading of this passage would seem to make plain that there is no place where evangelism and mission is *not* appropriate. However, it must be recognized this has been a topic of considerable debate. One reason for this is that in Matthew 10, Jesus makes it clear that the disciples are *not* to go to anyone except, as verse 6 reads, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He specifically tells them in verse 5, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans."

Also, there has been debate that the phrase "all the nations," in Matthew 28, does not refer to Israel. Hultgren says that the latter objection relates to the interpretation of the phrase, *παντα τα εθνη*, "which can be translated 'all the nations' or 'all the gentiles.'" ³⁵ Obviously, if the latter translation is accepted, we could conclude that disciples of Christ are not to bring the gospel to Jews. However, Hultgren contends that "the latter proposal has generally not met with approval by major interpreters," and that "the emphasis in a reading of 28:19 should be placed on the *all*, not on the translation possibilities for the Greek term *εθνη* ("nations or "gentiles")." ³⁶ Thus, the verse is inclusive, and from Matthew's perspective, Israel is one among many nations in the post-resurrection of Jesus.

³⁵ Arland J. Hultgren, "Mission and Ministry in Matthew," *Word & World* 18, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 342.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

We might infer from Matthew's gospel, that Jesus' intended audience for the gospel message before his death (ch. 10) is different from that after his resurrection (ch. 28). According to Matthew 28, the message of the gospel is to be taken to *all* nations.

Motivation for Mission - Improper

Next, let us consider how the Christian is motivated to cross cultural and language barriers with the gospel. First, however, I would like to draw upon some of the work of David Bosch, who illustrates several wrong motives for mission. These, for the most part, are motives that many Christians feel are reasonable for mission. Thus, in recognizing them and the faults they have, we may come to a better understanding of a pure motivation for missions.

First, the *eschatological motive*, which is driven by an alarming concern that the 'end is near,' and that the Lord's return is dependent upon our completing the evangelization of the world.³⁷ The argument is that the Lord is not asking us to evangelize or convert the nations but to evangelize people groups and the Lord will believe that they have been evangelized. He will then return and set up his kingdom for the faithful missionaries and donors. "This hastiness," Okorochoa believes, "cheapens the Gospel and caricatures the meaning of conversion. This viewpoint

³⁷ G.E. Ladd, "The Gospel of the Kingdom" in Winter R. *et al.* (eds.), *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader* (Pasadena: William Carey, 1981), 51-69.

necessarily leads to a disinterested attitude to the socio-political immediacy."³⁸

The second motive Bosch outlines could be called the *church planting motive*. This idea is equally misleading in that it tends to drive the missionary to struggle to show their success in the form of tangible results - a new church or churches, 'planted.' Besides, there is a tendency to try to reproduce the home church in all its forms and doctrines. This leads to more denominational rivalries among the missionaries, and ecclesiastical imperialism in relation to new churches, as the 'baby-churches' must be nurtured and controlled by the 'parent church.' Shearer sympathizes with those whom this wrong motivation effects, and contends that "when we remember that churches are people, not buildings, the dehumanizing implications of such naivete become more obvious."³⁹

Third, Bosch delineates the *philanthropic motive* which is the most subtle and least easily discernable error. This is the challenge to seek justice in the world, to work to improve the lot of the poor, the less privileged and apparently oppressed. The outcome is often the equation of the Kingdom of God with the improved society. Missionaries driven by this motive tend to amplify "the virtues of the poor," says Okorochoa. Worse yet, she writes, is the "humiliation to which the 'poor' are subjected as their condition in its most grotesque form is orchestrated

³⁸ Okorochoa, "Mission and Evangelism," 66.

and publicized in order to enlist support and arouse pity from politicians and donors."⁴⁰ Thus, a mission continues by taking advantage of the situation of the poor.

Okorochoa adds one more wrong motivation to this list. "In modern times," she writes, "it is also possible to add to this list of wrong motives, the private *empire building motive*."⁴¹ This motive refers to those who are bent on extending their image and area of control, many times in competition with another organization or religion. In this case, the emphasis usually is not even on the work of the mission, but on extending the influence of one's government or culture.

Motivation for Mission - Biblical

It is extremely important to understand that missions are not the purpose of the church. Missions are a means to an end, and when the goal of missions is accomplished, missions will no longer be needed. Piper writes, "worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man."⁴² He continues by explaining motivation for missions is worship:

Worship is also the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. You

³⁹ James Shearer, *Missionary Go Home* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1964).

⁴⁰ Okorochoa, "Mission and Evangelism," 67.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 11.

can't commend what you don't cherish.⁴³

Thus, Piper would say that the proper motive in missions the worship of God. He believes that in order to effectively witness and spread the gospel, the missionary themselves must rejoice in the Lord. He writes:

Missionaries will never call out, "Let the nations *be glad!*," who cannot say from the heart, "*I rejoice* in the Lord... *I will be glad and exult in thee*, I will sing praise to thy name, O Most High (Psalm 104:34; 9:2). Missions begins and ends in worship.⁴⁴

Okorochoa offers a slightly different view on missions motivation. She holds that right motives for missions includes fully appreciating who we are as Christians. She believes that, "to know that our calling is to mission means to be involved in mission. To fail to do so will be pejorative to our very existence."⁴⁵ This argument is very similar to Barth's argument, used earlier, that to exist as a Christian means to exist in the execution of the task to which Christ calls us, namely to spread the gospel. Okorochoa continues explaining this notion by referring the call Paul claims:

Paul asserts, "I am under an obligation...woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel." Our identity as the people of God is bound up with the Gospel... It is the very reason why we are called. We are saved to serve. We are here as his witnesses (Isa.43:6-8) and he saves...that we may bear his

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Okorochoa, "Mission and Evangelism," 69.

goodness to others (Mark 3:13-15; Acts 1:8).⁴⁶

Now understanding the “who,” “where,” “why,” and “how” of missions, we move toward the “what” of missions. The “what” is the subject matter of my thesis. I seek to understand what the work of the person called to mission is.

The Work of Missions - Incarnational vs. Representational

Kostenberger holds that one of the concepts missionaries must understand is whether the scriptures teach Christians to adhere to an incarnational or a representational kind of ministry.⁴⁷ He gives a case for the representational form of ministry, arguing that “this kind of incarnational model is never taught in the scriptures...”⁴⁸ While Kostenberger would permit that understanding and submitting to the culture of the people among which a missionary is working is advisable, he argues that it is not biblical. This is the subject I would like to dwell on for much of the remainder of this paper. First, however, it would be valuable to come to an understanding of both the incarnational and the representational model, as they are terms that are intrinsic in understanding my thesis.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Kostenberger, “Missiological Insights,” 454.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 455.

Chapter 4 - Incarnational Ministry Defined

In order to understand the thesis of this study, it is necessary to understand what exactly incarnational and representational models of ministry are, and what they entail. I will begin with the incarnational model. Definitions of the term "incarnational ministry" vary to some extent, but most have in common some basic understandings. The first is that the model suggests that the missionary should adopt a certain characteristics and qualities that were prevalent in the incarnate Christ. Kostenberger cites McElhanon in his definition of this model: "incarnational mission" is "an identification that transcends the superficial material culture and behavior roles and focuses on the underlying attitudes that should characterize missionaries as servants."⁴⁹ In this case, the characteristic of Christ's servanthood is emphasized. Thus, it seems that to understand the incarnational model, we must understand the elements of Jesus' incarnation.

Kealy urges missionaries to study Jesus' approach to mission as an example of how to model a ministry:

The key to the Incarnation is much more than the mere fact of God becoming man, it shows the depth of God's involvement. This lies in God's solidarity, in Jesus Christ's identification with the human condition, and with it's problems, deepest longings, suffering, failure.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid., 453.

⁵⁰ Sean P. Kealy, "Jesus' Approach to Mission," *African Ecclesial Review*.

We might say, then, that incarnational ministry concerns itself with becoming like the people it ministers to. This could be as shallow as understanding and learning the native language, or as deep as knowing and adopting the people's struggles, hardships, living conditions, etc. A missionary immersed in this form of ministry might draw this conclusion: In God's redemptive plan, He decided to send a God-human, begotten in our (human or flesh) likeness, to speak the truth and justify the wicked, *therefore* missionaries should create in themselves a likeness to those to whom we carry God's message. Let us examine some of the vital facets of the incarnational model.

Empowering the Weak and Lowly

The gospel of Luke will be my starting point for examining incarnational ministry. I do not presume that it is the most important source, however I do believe it is valuable to understand the mission of Jesus in Luke's gospel for a discussion of incarnational ministry. This is primarily because of its emphasis on the empowering of the marginalized, healing the sick, and saving the lost.

It is a fairly common understanding that Luke's gospel has a special interest or concern with those individuals who, for some reason or another, whether it be disease, poverty, low social class, etc., have been ostracized from the social and religious establishment.

The first of these groups are the Samaritans. Among the synoptic gospels, Luke mentions them most frequently and in the most positive way. Luke contains three key references to Samaritans: the Samaritan village which refused the hospitality of Jesus and his disciples (9:51-56), the story of the Good Samaritan (10:30-37), and the instance in which the ten lepers were healed, and only one, the Samaritan, returned to thank Jesus (17:11-19). Bosch remarks on these stories:

All three stories are told with a view toward broadening the horizon of Luke's readers; in addition, they have the effect of putting the Jewish establishment to shame. In the eyes of nationalistic Jews, Samaritans were worse than Gentiles.⁵¹

Bosch believes that it is Luke's understanding that the intention of Jesus in associating with the Samaritans is to facilitate equality and understanding between people of difference social, religious, and economic classes.

In Luke 10, the Samaritan stands at the bottom of the religious and social hierarchy, while the priest and the Levite are at the top. Yet, it is not the "righteous" priest or Levite who shows mercy on the victim, but the Samaritan, even though he is transgressing certain taboos such as offering charity to a Jew or offering oil and wine to a Jew.⁵²

Another marginalized group that Luke highlights is women. Luke tends to make certain that women are recognized for the important roles

⁵¹ David J. Bosch, "Mission in Jesus' Way: A Perspective From Luke's Gospel," *Missionalia* 17, no. 1 (April 1989): 5.

⁵² Ibid.

that they hold in the gospel story. Robert Tannehill has studied this concept, and has drawn attention to Luke's tendency toward "doubling."

Bosch comments on Tannehill's work:

Luke either relates an incident in which both a woman and a man feature, or he has two successive narratives, one about a woman, the other about a man. In the birth narrative, Zechariah and Mary have parallel roles as parents in similar annunciation stories. When Joseph and Mary take the infant Jesus to the temple they encounter a man as well as a woman: Simeon and Anna.... The parable of the man who has lost one of his sheep is followed by a parable about a woman who has lost a coin.⁵³

All of these instances seem to indicate that Luke is very concerned with how women, a marginalized group in ancient Judea, are portrayed. In Luke 8:1-3, we even find several women travelling with Jesus during his mission to Galilee. All these examples testify to what Donald Senior calls "a stunning crossing of a social and religious barrier in the patriarchal society of [Jesus'] day."⁵⁴

A third group Luke's gospel shows interest in is the tax collectors. While the tax collectors can no doubt be found throughout the other gospels, we can see them very purposefully used in Luke. Tax collectors were considered traitors to the Jews because they aligned themselves with the Romans by collecting tax from the Jews, who were under Roman rule, for the Roman empire. They were regarded as unclean, sinful, and even detestable, "not least because of the way in which many of them illegally enriched themselves and inflicted economic suffering on the

⁵³ Ibid., 6.

population,"⁵⁵ according to Bosch. In first century Pharisaic literature they were associated with robbers, prostitutes, Gentiles, thieves, murderers, and the like.⁵⁶

If the story of the Good Samaritan was repulsive to a Jewish audience, so must have been the parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. Jesus' conclusion that the tax collector, not the Pharisee, was the one to go home justified must have shocked his audience. The mere idea of tax collectors repenting of their sins, as in this parable, must have been unheard of among the Jews.

In chapter 3:12-13, Luke alludes to tax collectors repenting and being baptized in response to John the Baptist's preaching. All three synoptic gospels contain the account of Jesus calling Levi, a tax collector, to follow him. Of greatest importance, argues Bosch, might be the story of the "chief toll-collector⁵⁷ of Jericho, Zacchaeus (19:1-10)."⁵⁸ Zacchaeus gave half of his possessions to the poor, although the Jewish teachers recommended only one-fifth. And rather than returning only one and one-fifth the value of the goods he had illegally taken, as the law required⁵⁹, he offered to restore fourfold what he had defrauded.⁶⁰ Jesus

⁵⁴ Donald Senior and C. Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983): 261.

⁵⁵ Bosch, "Mission in Jesus' Way," 6.

⁵⁶ Joachim Jeremias quoted by Josephine M. Ford, "Reconciliation and Forgiveness in Luke's Gospel," in R.J. Cassidy & P.J. Scharper (eds) *Political Issues in Luke-Acts* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983): p. 75).

⁵⁷ "toll-collector" may be the more precise term, according to Eben H. Scheffler, "On Suffering in Luke's Gospel," in Cilliers Breytenbach (ed) *Church in Context: Early Christianity in Context* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1988): 29.

⁵⁸ Bosch, "Mission in Jesus' Way," 7.

⁵⁹ Leviticus 6:5 addresses the obligation of one who has dealt illegally with another.

⁶⁰ Ford, "Reconciliation and Forgiveness," 77.

says to Zacchaeus, in verse 9, "Today salvation has come to this house," indicating that a significant change of heart has taken place with Zacchaeus.

Finally, Luke gives substantial attention to the poor and oppressed of first century Palestine. In fact, the very first words Jesus speaks in public in the gospel are from his reading of Isaiah 61:1:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind. To set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.⁶¹

From the outset, Jesus intends to free the poor and afflicted from their oppression by proclaiming the good news and healing. Jesus also brazenly denounces those who were wealthy, but not "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). Luke includes the story of the rich ruler who "became sad, for he was very rich" (Luke 18:23), as well as the parable of the rich man in Luke 16:19-31. Bosch says that Jesus teaches the people that this man "in contrast to the poor Lazarus, ended up in Hades instead of in Abraham's bosom."⁶² It is apparent throughout Luke's gospel that Jesus is refusing to recognize ethnic, social, economic, or religious barriers in his ministry, and intends to relieve the suffering of the poor. This is an integral part of the incarnational model.

⁶¹ It should be noted that Luke, in this particular case, takes an excerpt from Isaiah out of its historical context, and uses it in a way it may not have been intended. This might serve as an illustration of a very common objection to mission. This objection claims that those who sponsor missions work take Jesus' words, directed toward the eleven (or twelve), and those of his apostles, out of context. They actualize them in order to justify their missions work.

⁶² Bosch, "Mission in Jesus' Way," 8.

Healing the Sick

A second central characteristic of incarnational ministry is healing the sick. The references to the lowly, throughout the gospels, also include the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers, and the demon-possessed. Bosch writes, "Most of the chronically ill in Israel – lepers, the blind, the deaf, cripples – were discriminated against socially as well as religiously."⁶³ This was due, in large part, to the idea that their afflictions were the due penalty for their sins. We see in John 9:2, that even Jesus' disciples held this understanding to be true:

And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

Bosch, however, makes a an important distinction: "The removal of such a chronic affliction is described as a physical healing and therefore as something different from the 'empowering of the lowly.'⁶⁴ Throughout the gospels, health is concerned with the whole person. That is to say that physical, social, and religious conditions are reflected in a person's health. Jesus embraces a ministry of healing because the curing of an illness, in ancient Judea, was a sign of much more than simply no longer being ill. Bosch writes, "Healing of a physical ailment was therefore regarded as a part of a person's restoration to comprehensive

⁶³ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

wholeness.”⁶⁵ Therefore, it is not surprising that throughout the gospel, we can easily see Jesus linking physical healing to such things as faith, salvation and forgiveness.

As we see in Luke 8:2, some follow Jesus specifically because he had healed them. In other words, they have come to believe in him, or at least in his healing powers. We might say that as a result of Jesus’ miraculous healings, people put their faith in him. The phrase “Your faith has saved (or healed) you,” or a similar rendering of it, is scattered all throughout the gospels (Matt. 9:2, 9:29, 15:28, Mark 5:34, 10:52, Luke 7:50, 8:48, 17:19, 18:42). For example, in Luke 17:11-19, ten lepers are being cleansed. One of them, discovering that he had been cured, returns to Jesus to thank and praise him. Jesus says to (only) him, “Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.” Flanagan writes, “Jesus’ physical healings are sign, symbol, sacrament, manifestation, and proof of the spiritual healing with which they are allied.”⁶⁶ Thus, Jesus’ aim in healing was not curing alone, but also to encourage the afflicted to commit themselves to following him. Furthermore, because Jesus relates healing to faith and salvation, it seems clear that he must relate healing to forgiveness as well.

⁶⁵ P. Borgen, “Miracles of Healing in the New Testament,” *Studia Theologica* 35 (1981): 99.

⁶⁶ Neal Flanagan, “The What and How of Salvation in Luke-Acts,” in D. Durken (ed) *Sin, Salvation, and the Spirit* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1979): 211).

No where is this more evident than in Luke 5:17-26, which contains the healing of the paralytic, where Jesus first forgives the man's sins and, in response to the Pharisees objections, declares, in v. 23-24:

Which is easier to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,'
or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But, so that you may know
that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,...
I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.

It is plain to see in this passage that it is Jesus' intent that healing, faith, salvation, and forgiveness all be understood in the same context.

Healing and servanthood are important ways that the incarnational model deals with forgiveness, faith, and salvation.

The Characteristics of Jesus

While these aforementioned characteristics of incarnational ministry may be the most central to the actual work of the incarnational missionary, there is something left to be said. A vital verse in the incarnational model is John 20:21b, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Those who use the incarnational model generally seek to adopt a certain lifestyle. They seek to become, as the popular phrase goes, "Jesus in the flesh," exhibiting the characteristics of Jesus himself, not only in his ministry, but also in his moment-to-moment behavior. We might say, for example, that those who are called to mission must imitate their Lord in becoming companions with those who we serve. Obviously, this could be manifested in an endless variety of fashions.

Anyone who is familiar with the life and work of Jesus in the gospels could draw inferences as to how a missionary utilizing incarnational ministry must live and act. In fact, this very notion might be one of the biggest problems with the practicality of the incarnational model. That is, it may be nearly impossible to assume all, or even many, of the characteristics attributed to Jesus, especially if we are supposing that Jesus is God incarnate! Thus, in order to avoid drawing out all these characteristics that are readily accessible in the gospels, I will highlight a few that seem to be fairly common among incarnational ministries.

The first, and arguably the most important, is humble servanthood.⁶⁷ "The missionary will be, in the best sense, a humble servant, one whose life is offered in the service of another as God offered his life for us."⁶⁸ Mark 10:45 reads,

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

In fact, many of these missionaries might suggest that we *also* are called to give our lives to the cause of Christ. To what extent this might mean is a matter of interpretation. Some would argue that this means devoting our entire lives to the service of Christ, while others will and do argue that this means putting so little value on our earthly lives that we

⁶⁷ The gospels are saturated with images of the humble servanthood spirit of Jesus. Maybe the most compelling image is that of Jesus in John 13, at the Feast of the Passover, kneeling before his followers to wash their feet, an incredibly humble gesture.

⁶⁸ "The Manner of Persons in Mission, *Church & Society* (Sept./Oct. 1993): 49.

diligently carry out our service into areas where our lives might be demanded of us (China, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia, Sudan, Nigeria, etc.),⁶⁹ without reservations against having our lives taken from us.

Another significant part of this lifestyle is evident in "Jesus Christ's identification with the human condition, and with its problems, deepest longings, suffering, failure."⁷⁰ Thus, the missionary must be willing to sacrifice the luxuries of wealth, much comfort, and worldly pleasures, for his or her work. Bosch explains that the Church in general, especially in the West has done exactly the opposite,

As I see it, the hardest lesson the Church-in-mission will have to learn in the coming years is how to become again what it originally was, and always supposed to be: the Church of the catacombs, rather than halls of fame and power and wealth.⁷¹

One must wonder if this kind of reversion to a Church of humble stature will ever be possible or plausible. However, it is clear that the church must, somehow, regain its calling to servanthood. Bosch asserts that the church must take on, "in its mission, the form of a servant, and become truly solitary with its suffering and persecuted sisters and brothers elsewhere."⁷²

Suffering and rejection were, after all, undeniable characteristics of Jesus' ministry. As Kealy explains, "Jesus, in blunt fact, failed to convert

⁶⁹ The Voice of the Martyrs. www.persecution.com 1998

⁷⁰ Kealy, "Jesus' Approach," 27.

⁷¹ David J. Bosch, "Vision for Mission," *International Review of Mission* 76 (January 1987): 8.

people, was rejected at Nazareth, wept over Jerusalem and had his life ended early, in public disgrace, by crucifixion, the most cruel symbol of a human being's hatred of another one."⁷³ The incarnational model teaches missionaries, and the church as a whole, to adopt and endure a life riddled with similar suffering and rejection. Clearly, it would be masochism to *hope* that one's message and work be rejected, or to *long* for suffering. However, this model must struggle to find ways to identify with the suffering and persecuted.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Kealy, "Jesus' Approach," 32.

Chapter 5 - Representational Ministry

Having come to an understanding of the incarnational model, I will now focus on the representational model. It should be noted, however, that as I describe the representational model I will also make arguments for its superiority in missions, based predominantly on Pauline literature, Mark, and John.

The representational model of ministry has a vastly different focus than the incarnational, a focus that is considerably less complicated for the most part. The representational model might be embodied in Matthew 24:14:

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Also, in Mark 10: "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations."

This model recalls the accounts of Paul sent on mission to the Gentiles by the risen Christ, or the eleven disciples gathered on the mountaintop in Galilee and sent out to the world by the risen Christ at the end of the gospel of Matthew. It recalls descriptions of Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and John Mark in Acts, as they are sent by the Jerusalem apostles and driven by the Spirit to bring the word to new frontiers. As Senior writes, it also recalls the powerful image of the "work

of Apollos, so fired by mission zeal that he sets out on his itinerant work of proclamation even though not yet fully formed in the Way."⁷⁴

Paul's mission plans as described in Romans 15:14-21 may reveal his mission objectives. This ideal can be pieced together from other parts of his letters as well, but scarcely can it be found so explicitly elsewhere. Paul's ministry is one of proclaiming the word and planting communities of believers in the Gentile world. He especially seeks to carry the gospel to places where it has not been heard, according to Romans 15:20:

And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation.

As Paul writes this passage, he is preparing to go to Rome where a Christian community had already been founded. Yet, Paul wants to visit Rome not only because of its importance as the imperial city, but also, as Senior explains, because it was "a significant milepost on the apocalyptic missionary journey that would carry him and the world to the triumphant conclusion of history."⁷⁵

It is evident from Romans 11:11-16 (v. 14 in particular), that Paul believed that it was his calling, by God, to spread a passion for the gospel among the Gentiles. He hoped that one result of this would be to stir up jealousy in Israel. In this strategy, he hoped to encourage Israel to come "to their senses," so that the whole world might know Christ. Romans

⁷⁴ Donald Senior, "Correlating Images of Church and Images of Mission in the New Testament," *Missiology: An International Review* 23, no. 1 (January 1995): 7.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

11:14 reads, "If somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them." Senior's studies are consistent with this, and he writes:

For Paul, missionary proclamation was rooted in God's sovereignty as God of Jew and Gentile, a sovereignty paradoxically and radically exercised through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Crucified Messiah. This gospel was literally a word of salvation; thus the hearts of the Word were compelled to repent...visibl[y], within the Christian community.⁷⁶

Senior is convinced that mission is about proclamation of the gospel, which must lead to faith and repentance.

Continuing, Paul seems to be convinced that the focus of his mission must be preaching and letting people *hear* the gospel, after all (Romans 10:14),

How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?
How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And
how will they hear without a preacher?

To understand Paul's picture of mission, we can follow his logic in v. 14 in reverse. The only way to lead unbelievers to "call on the name of the Lord and be saved,"⁷⁷ is to preach to them, that they might hear, that they might believe, that they might call on Him.

1 Corinthians 15 also is a testimony to Paul's understanding that the proclamation of the gospel is the ideal form of mission. Paul proclaims, to the church in Corinth, the importance of the resurrection (vv. 1-11), the consequences of denying the resurrection (vv. 12-19), the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

hope for Christians (vv.20-24), the resurrection of the body (vv.35-50), and finally the Christian's victory through Christ (vv. 51-58). This constitutes the majority of the message of the representational model. Its purpose is to bring the gospel message to those who have not heard it and convert them to follow Christ. Senior concludes, "the sending community is a missionary community, a community that forms apostles and sends them on the road to cross new frontiers and to proclaim the gospel."⁷⁸

The same ideals of the representational model can be found in Mark's theology. In his discourse in Mark 13:10, Jesus instructs his disciples that, "the gospel must first be preached to all the nations," before the end time. Mark 13 emphasizes not only this, but that the gospel must be preached even among those who are hostile to its message. The image of mission found in Mark and Pauline literature is simply one of disciples proclaiming the gospel. Senior writes that missions involves "a community of disciples...schooled by Jesus and sent by him out into the world, crossing boundaries of place and culture to proclaim the gospel."⁷⁹

Similar ideology can be found in the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:19-20. While, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus' mission during

⁷⁷ Romans 10:13.

⁷⁸ Senior, "Images of Mission," 7.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 9.

his lifetime is confined to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel,"⁸⁰ the mission of the risen Christ of the Great Commission has an altogether different focus:

Go therefore and *make disciples* of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, *teaching them* to observe all that I have commanded you.

In this passage, the community of believers is empowered to take mission beyond the boundaries of Israel to all nations to make disciples. Here, Jesus also gives the means by which disciples will be made, namely, *teaching*. Certainly, this terminology might lend itself to a kind of "teaching by example," which would allude to the incarnational model. But such a claim would be difficult to substantiate from the text.

Finally, let us examine the Gospel of John. John 20:21b, which reads, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you," seems to be the point of departure for incarnational model advocates, when engaging in this debate. In the incarnation of God in Jesus, it is argued, God likened himself to humanity. He condescended to our level and came to serve us, and in this he became our model. Kostenberger represents this train of thinking: "In our mission, we should therefore emulate Jesus' example and become like those we seek to serve."⁸¹

However, Kostenberger argues that in studies of John's Gospel, it is plain to see that "John's concern in his treatment of Christ's

⁸⁰ Matthew 10:6.

⁸¹ Kostenberger, "Missiological Insights," 453.

incarnation is demonstrably to highlight Jesus' uniqueness, not to set forth a model that links Christ's incarnation with the way every Christian should missionize."⁸² In other words, while the gospel of John, in some ways, seems to support an incarnational model, it would be against the very nature of John's theology to suggest that Jesus' followers attempt to become like him. To support this idea, Kostenberger cites John 1:14, which reads:

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

He also cites John 1:18, which reads:

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Therefore, we might say that believers are not called to necessarily emulate Jesus' incarnation, but to witness to him (cf. 15:26-27), and to spread the gospel of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ (cf. 17:20, 20:23). In a word, they are to be his *representatives*, commissioned by him to go into an unbelieving world to preach forgiveness and salvation. John seems far too concerned with preserving Christ's unique characteristics to make Christ the model of the church's mission.

Thus, the role of Jesus' disciples is characterized as being messengers. As Kostenberger writes, they are "witnesses to their sender, Jesus," and "great care is taken not to blur, much less obliterate, the

⁸² Ibid., 454.

ontological gap that forever separates Jesus and believers."⁸³ So, in 20:21 Jesus is not instructing the disciples to become imitators of him in his incarnation, but simply to go (or be "sent") into the world, as Jesus was sent into the world. We must not see v. 21 as a call to adopt a profound likeness to Christ, as the incarnational model would suggest.

To conclude this argument, let us examine, for a moment, the post-resurrection addresses of Christ. There are four accounts that I would like to cite and all of them focus on the post-resurrection will of Christ for his disciples. It seems that in some cases, as in the Gospel of Matthew, as described earlier, Jesus' earthly mission is considerably different in focus than that of the commission with which he leaves his disciples. While Jesus' mission offers us significant insight into the methods by which witness and preaching might be enabled, I would like to propose that had Jesus intended for his followers to emulate him and witness exactly as he had, Jesus would not have left them with seemingly contradicting instructions. I would like to very briefly examine each text. First we examine Matthew 28:19-20:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, *teaching them* to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Jesus' instruction in this passage is to make disciples, who publicly express their faith through baptism, by *teaching* them to observe all the

⁸³ Ibid.

thing that he had commanded the disciples. The emphasis in disciple making is teaching. Next, we consider Mark 16:15-16:

Go into all the world and *preach the gospel* to all creation.
He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.

Jesus' instruction in this passage is to *preach the gospel* to all nations, in order that those who hear may believe, be baptized, and be saved. In other words, the means by which people are saved begins with preaching the gospel. Third, we look to Luke 24:47-48:

And that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be
proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning with
Jerusalem. *You are witnesses* of these things.

Jesus' instruction in this passage is to *proclaim* the forgiveness of sin by repentance, to all nations, and to be witnesses of the same. It should be noted that in this case the word "witness" is the same word used in Matthew 28. Luke's use of this word seems to indicate that it has at least something to do with proclamation of the gospel. Thus, the commission should be understood as a call to proclaim or preach the gospel. Finally, we reflect on the last words of Christ, recorded in Acts 1:8b:

And you shall be My *witnesses* both in Jerusalem, and in all
Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Jesus' instruction in this passage, once again, is to be witnesses to the risen Christ throughout all the earth. Once again, "witness" should be understood as the proclamation of the gospel message. In all four passages, it is apparent that Christ's intent for the mission of humanity is to witness to, teach, and proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus

Christ, the Son of God, and the forgiveness of sin and salvation that is extended to each new believer.

Chapter 6: Conclusions – Moving Toward a New Understanding

I have shown that missions theory, as it now exists, has many different problems that are detrimental to the ongoing practice of missions. The overarching problem, under which all problems lie, is that of the unfaithfulness of the Church to the biblical teachings on missions. As the Church continues to ignore the biblical images of mission, and refuses to implement them in their own theory of mission, the effects of secularism and other external pressures threaten to pervert the practice of missions in its truest biblical form. At the very least, these problems are preventing missions from taking full advantage of the boundless possibilities for global outreach, made possible by incredible strides in technology, travel, and communication.

The solution to these threats seems evident. In once again utilizing biblical images of mission, the Church can correct this unfortunate trend. Proclamation of, or witness to, the gospel is at the heart of the New Testament. There is no lack in biblical literature to utilize in attempting to understand right missions work. Correctly understanding biblical theories of mission is vital in understanding the appropriateness of the representational model of ministry being more central in missions than the incarnational model, which is the substance of my thesis.

I have also shown that all who claim to be followers, or disciples, of Christ are the responsible bearers of the gospel. To say that all who believe in Jesus should think that proclaiming the gospel is important, and should give the undertaking some thought, would be a gross understatement. When Jesus calls us to believe in and follow him, he also inseparably calls us to proclaim the gospel, which leads to hearing, which leads to repentance, faith, and salvation. Not only this, but Jesus also calls his followers spread this gospel throughout the entire earth. As I have shown, from Matthew 28 and Acts 1, all nations are in need of proclamation of the gospel. Thus, missionary journeys can take place almost anywhere, as long as they do not have culture and language in common with the native people, lest it becomes an endeavor in evangelism. Surely, however, this does not go to say that evangelism is any less important of an undertaking.

The key issue in this paper has been coming to an understanding of the incarnational and representational models of missions. The incarnational model of mission consists of adopting the characteristics, attitudes, and actions of Christ incarnate. As I have shown, this kind of ministry can encompass an incredible variety of traits and activities. These traits include the missionary embracing a role of servant to all people, and adopting the struggles and hardships of the people to whom they wish to minister to. They include ministries of empowering the weak and lowly, or marginalized, as seen all throughout the Gospel of

Luke, in particular, and healing the sick. Above all, the incarnational model teaches its adherents to adopt the characteristics of Christ himself, which may include servanthood, suffering, persecution, humility, and may even include martyrdom.

The representational is concerned only with preaching the gospel, and through this preaching, making disciples of Christ. I showed that throughout the gospels and in Pauline literature, proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers is paramount. According to Romans 10:14, proclamation is necessary for unbelievers to hear the message of forgiveness of sins in Christ, and to believe in Jesus Christ as their savior.

The Gospel of John might offer the strongest argument for the representational model's importance over the incarnational model. John's gospel is extremely concerned with maintaining the uniqueness of Jesus' character. It seems that, while the Gospel of John may be used most by advocates of the incarnational model, it would be against the nature of John's gospel to suggest that we, as finite individuals, might become like Jesus. I

I also briefly examined the post-resurrection addresses of Christ, in hopes that they might help determine the calling Christ has left his followers to carry out. It is clear from these passages, that the priority of missions throughout the world needs to be proclamation of, and witnessing to, the gospel of Christ, regardless of whether or not Jesus'

post-resurrection idea of ministry is different from that of his ministry before his death.

We must ask the question: Where, now, do these things leave us in our discussion of representational and incarnational models of mission? Kostenberger maintains that the term, incarnational, "is often used in missiological circles in a broad sense that transcends biblical-theological categories, as connoting the need to identify with people who should be reached with gospel."⁸⁴ I would argue that missionaries should be encouraged to become, in a sense, like those they are seeking to evangelize by adopting certain customs, such as learning the native language and other cultural peculiarities. This would definitely aid in "build[ing] common ground, remov[ing] needless obstacles, and facilitat[ing] the kinds of relationships within which the gospel can be best communicated, both by way of verbal proclamation and by the example of a godly, Christ-like life."⁸⁵ After all, the strength of the testimony of a witness is most often based on the strength of their character. So while these procedures may be desirable, it must be recognized that this kind of incarnational model is not taught in the scriptures in those explicit terms.

The analogy between the theological necessity of Christ's becoming a man in order to atone for the sins of the world and a contemporary missionary's practical expediency to build common ground between himself or herself and

⁸⁴ Kostenberger, "Missiological Insights," 454.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 455.

prospective converts to Christianity simply breaks down.⁸⁶

It proves difficult to find *any* place in the New Testament where a connection between Christ's incarnation and Christian mission methods is made explicit in this way.

Thus, once again, while it is not the objective of this study to provide an entirely new scripture-based model for missions, I hope this paper has made it clear that one needs to be developed. The incarnational and representational models in isolation from each other are entirely inadequate, not to mention impractical. Therefore, I suggest that this new model incorporates the biblical characteristics of both models, while recognizing the paramount concept that the first and foremost focus of mission must be to teach, preach, proclaim, and witness to the Gospel of the risen Christ.

I hope to understand and apply this model in my own life, as I continue going into the mission field. I believe that, in practical application, this new model would give excellent credibility to the witness of those who are teaching the gospel. Acts of servanthood in endless forms, such as feeding the hungry, assisting the weak and poor, teaching the uneducated, building homes and shelters, might build a close trust and feeling of community with the native people. Furthermore, learning the native languages, living among the people, and identifying with their struggles and fears may open the people's minds and hearts to the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

radical message of the gospel. Given the study done in this paper, I would, again, hope that the priority of the work on a mission would be teaching and preaching. However, this does *not* mean that it must necessarily be the most time consuming activity. Surely, activities such as building shelters *with* the native people, serving and *sharing* food, and living and working along side the people would allow for simultaneous witnessing to the gospel.

Personal Comments on Missions in My Life

I would like to add, here, a few personal notes. J. Campbell White, of the Laymen's Missionary Movement said, in 1909:

Most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives. Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ's purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans. The men who are putting everything into Christ's undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards.

Joy and person fulfillment are the rewards of a life lived in the execution of the task of winning people to Christ. White would agree with Barth in that a Christian does not exist apart from his or her commission to preach the gospel of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, through Christ.

The Joy of Working with God

"Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ's purpose toward the world he came to redeem." J Campbell White spoke authoritatively on the satisfaction of the life of Christ in His followers because White had adopted Christ's purpose as his own. In fact, I would venture to say that it would be safe for me to add a word or two to what White's quote above. Might White say further "nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption *and adoration* of Christ's purpose toward

the world he came to redeem." Had White not held an adoration or a passion for Christ's purpose, he would likely not have risen to such a position of leadership in one of the most successful missions organizations of the early 1900's. Lottie Moon, who might be considered the "patron saint of Baptist missions," said in 1887, "Surely there can be no greater joy than that of saving souls." An opponent of this kind of "Christian Hedonism" would say that by pursuing joy and pleasure in a pursuit, we become mercenaries and the act ceases to be God-honoring. However, we must not shy away from important tasks that have rewards inherent in them. We should, rather, rejoice in such a blessing! C.S. Lewis holds a similar understanding, and writes, "We must not be troubled by unbelievers when they say that this promise of reward makes the Christian life a mercenary affair."⁸⁷ Of course, situations do exist in which a reward is sought that is not related, or fitting, for the activity. This perverts both the reward and the activity. Lewis writes, "Money is not the natural reward of love; that is why we call a man a mercenary if he marries a woman for the sake of her money."⁸⁸ However, there are many activities in which the reward is an innate characteristic of the undertaking. Lewis concludes:

But marriage is the proper reward for a real lover, and he is not a mercenary for desiring it. The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation.

⁸⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 2.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

In other words, God blesses us in many duties that we perform in His service. In fact, as Lewis would say, the reward is inherent in the consummation of the task. Thus, we are not guilty of being mercenaries if the task God asks of us has reward inherent in it. In fact, the Bible commands us to seek joy in serving him. Though none of the following passages relate specifically to missions, we might derive that even in missions we are to seek joy in serving God in the same way. John Piper illustrates some of these passages:

- to "love mercy" (not just *do it*, Micah 6:8),
- to "show mercy *with cheerfulness*" (Romans 12:8),
- to suffer loss "*with joy*" in the service of prisoners (Hebrews 10:34)
- to be a *cheerful* giver (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- to make *our joy* the joy of others (2 Corinthians 2:3)
- to tend the flock of God willingly and *eagerly* (1 Peter 5:2)
- to keep watch over souls "*with joy*" (Hebrews 13:17).⁸⁹

I have found joy in the service of God. It has been laid very firmly upon my heart that all who are called to be followers, or disciples, of Christ are called to be witnesses of God and His son, Jesus Christ, to all nations. This is a large part of the reason I have written this thesis paper on the doctrine of Christian missions.

In the introduction of this paper, I cited Robert C. Tannehill and his comments about the failure of the Methodist Church in its missions capacity. To state some of these comments again:

Our mission has become stuck... there is a strong

⁸⁹ John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1996, original 1986) 21.

temptation to define the group's purpose in light of the desires and the needs of its present membership. Yielding to this temptation, the church [has turned] inward and mission to the world [has become] a minor activity.

This might be considered the most important reason I have written this paper. I fear that many congregations are in danger of turning inward and neglecting their call to bring the gospel to unreached peoples. It is incredible that in this day and age of advanced technology in transportation and communication, there are still nearly 200 unreached people groups in the world. This should be an alarming figure to us, urging all congregations of Christians to respond to Christ's calling. At the very least, I have written this paper in order to further my own understanding of God's will for *me* in missions. I endeavor to seek out the people of the world who do not know Christ, to witness to them and to convert them. I pray that I will be able to do this with vigor, with biblically appropriate methods, and above all, with love.

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