

CHRISTIAN MISSION THEOLOGY: TODAY'S APPLICATIONS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL'S THEOLOGY

Religion Senior Thesis
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Fall 2004

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THE HISTORY

The concept of Christian missions has continually grown and developed throughout the history of the church. For centuries, there has been a desire to maintain the Christian faith. Even in the days of the Old Testament the missionary theme had begun to emerge. God's sending of Jonah to Nineveh in order to share His message demonstrates this theme: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."¹ The concept of missions continued to develop in the New Testament during the life of Jesus and is represented by the commission he gave his disciples:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.²

First of all, it is necessary to understand what exactly the word "mission" means. The Encyclopedia Americana describes the term as: "organized efforts by religious bodies to send forth men and women to propagate their faith."³ Webster's Dictionary defines mission as: "a ministry commissioned by a religious organization to propagate its faith or carry on humanitarian work" and "a body of persons sent to perform a service or carry on an activity."⁴ The Jesuits developed the popular definition for "mission" in the 16th century, which followed with many varied connotations.⁵ During recent times, mission has come to mean "the geographical movement from a Christian locality to a pagan locality for the purpose of winning converts and

¹ *The Full Life Study Bible: New International Version*, ed. Donald C. Stamps and J. Wesley Adams. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, Jonah 3:2

² Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

³ "Missionary Movements." *The Encyclopedia Americana: International Edition*. vol. 19. Danbury, Connecticut: Grolier Incorporated, 2003.

⁴ "Mission." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2002.

⁵ Phillips, James M. and Coote, Robert T. eds. *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission*. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Eerdmans. 1993. (176)

planting churches in that area.”⁶ For the purpose of this paper, mission will be defined as the sending out of one or more persons with the purpose of spreading his/her faith in order to gain adherence to the Christian communities of faith and to assist in matters of social dilemmas.

A heavy importance is placed upon the missionary theme within the New Testament. The phrase “to send forth” (*pempein* and *apostelein*) is used 206 times in the New Testament, while “apostle” or “one who is sent” (*apostolos*) is used 79 times, and “apostleship” as “task” (*apostolē*) is used four times.⁷ Nonetheless, the term “apostle” does not evenly replace the term “missionary.” Like a missionary, an apostle also is a person who is called to preach the Gospel; however, the main difference in the two terms can be traced to their connotations. The growth and development of missions brought connotations, both positive and negative, along with the missionary term. One negative connotation was seen because the word “mission” was developed at the same time as much colonial expansion was occurring. The definition for mission began to blend with colonialism. A positive connotation was seen through all the assistance that was being given to those in need. The differences between mission and apostleship can be equated with those connotations. Overall, the terms are very close to being interchangeable. Since they are similar enough, the terms mission and missionary can still be used throughout this paper, while still referencing the original sources of apostleship.

Since such a heavy emphasis is placed upon mission within the New Testament, there must be a great importance to the theory of mission. The concept of mission is quite central to the Christian gospel message and can be seen by Jesus being sent to save the world:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him.⁸

⁶ Phillips and Coote, 176

⁷ Ibid., 177

⁸ John 3:16-17 (NIV)

Jesus' life itself could be defined as a mission. Jesus was sent into the world to share the Gospel message. Jesus continued the message found in the Old Testament that revolved around faith in God. This missionary concept was then transferred through Jesus' message to his disciples, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."⁹ As the disciples accepted this commissioning, they further developed the mission message to include the concept of Jesus' death and resurrection. For early Christianity, the notion of mission was important in order to keep the message of Jesus' life spreading out into the world.

There has always been a tension within this "world vision" concept of missions because of Jesus' own words: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."¹⁰ Jesus gives himself this self-limitation to the Jewish world not to exclude people from the mission field, but rather to establish a starting point for his mission. Jesus wanted to create a wave effect when sharing the Gospel message. He had a larger vision for his Gospel message, but he simply started with the "lost sheep of Israel" in order to create the next group to go out and share the Gospel message. In fact, Jesus instructs his disciples to do just that: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."¹¹ Under the command of this commission, Jesus' disciples continued sharing the Gospel message throughout their lives. A foundation was established for the continuation and future theology of missions. Even though it seems to be an obvious goal for Christianity to keep this message alive, the propagation of missions has not continued as strongly as it needs to.

The lack of successful missions is presently exemplified in the population of northern Africa and southern Asia. Most of this population has not accepted the Christian Gospel, and

⁹ John 20:21 (NIV)

¹⁰ Matthew 15:24 (NIV); The "world-vision" concept will be described later through Paul's theology

¹¹ Mark 16:15 (NIV)

some have never even heard the message. This rectangular area has been coined the “10/40 Window” by Christian missions strategist Luis Bush. This name originated from the actual location of the area, because it stretches from 10°-north latitude to 40°-north latitude. The “10/40 Window” also contains 97% of the population from the 55 least evangelized countries. If current patterns continue, most of these people will still never hear the Gospel message.¹²

Considering the prominence and validity of mission within the New Testament, the fact that there is currently such a large population the Gospel is not reaching, is problematic. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries missions flourished under the leadership of the Protestant community.¹³ Protestantism prided itself on its successful missions throughout the world, and they were a prime example of the continuation of Jesus’ commissioning to his disciples. However, as the “10/40 Window” illustrates, this success has not continued. The Protestant community has not forgotten missions, nor has the importance of missions decreased. One of the biggest problems in missions comes from the fact that they have become stagnant. They have not continued to change along with a changing world. The mission community has not grown and developed as much as the world population has, which has led to unevangelized communities, such as those within the “10/40 Window.” Some other problems that have developed include the negative connotations that can come with the expansion of the church, the difficulties in choosing missionaries, and some difficulties in terminology. These problems have become so prominent that they have plagued the missionary world.

¹²Culbertson, Howard. “10/40 Window: Do you need to be stirred to Action?” 30 June 2004. Southern Nazarene University. 3 Oct. 2004. < <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert.fs/1040.htm>>

¹³ Protestantism will be defined later on.

Where Does This Lead?

The result of the problems in missions can be seen by example in the lack of evangelization in the “10/40 Window.” There are many factors that lead up to problems such as this one. The church itself can be source of such problems, because there are many negative connotations attached to the church along with other issues such as the lack of enthusiasm and commitment to serving. Other categories of problems include varied cultural issues, the missionaries, and the missionary terminology. The developing world has brought many new situations into the mission field. Overall, there are many problems, and these problems are clearly evident through areas such as the “10/40 Window.” Unfortunately, this is not the only location where this problem exists, for it is clear that the mission field has a considerable amount of issues within any vicinity. In order to work on solving these problems and benefit more people, I believe the answer lies within first century missiology. I think the apostle Paul’s mission theology would be beneficial for the development of the Christian community. In this paper, the mission strategies of Protestant Christians in North America will be held in comparison primarily to the apostle Paul’s theology, while also in reference to other first century perspectives. This theological comparison offers a unique viewpoint from which to address how Protestant missions from North America should be conducted today. It would be beneficial for Protestant churches in North America to refocus their values and perspective on mission because it would aid in the development of the Christian community. I believe this newly directed theology, based upon Paul’s model, will be valuable to the Protestant churches and to the people the churches will potentially reach with a renewed focus on mission.

NORTH AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM

Today, there are approximately six billion people in the world. Roughly, two billion consider themselves Christians, of which 340 million are Protestants.¹⁴ It is the North American, Protestant members that will be studied throughout this paper. This paper will examine missions within the scope of North American Protestantism in order to allow for more definable information. The North American Protestants were chosen because North American missions have greatly flourished with the growth of the country. The specific reasons for choosing Protestantism will be outlined shortly.

Protestantism encompasses the Christian churches that separated from Rome during the Reformation of the 16th century. The term “Protestant” initially applied to the followers of Luther and other prominent reformers such as John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Knox. The separation occurred because some people rejected the belief that God’s revelation was connected directly to earthly institutions, such as the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, they firmly adhered to the idea that God’s word was the only final authority in issues of faith and practice, and each believer could directly understand that word. A central belief throughout the rise of Protestantism was the idea of justification of the sinner by faith alone. Also, reformers understood the church as a fellowship, and the priesthood of all believers was emphasized. The major divisions of Protestantism include: Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), Presbyterian, and Anglican (Episcopalian), along with many other denominations that evolved from those initial

¹⁴ Culbertson, Howard. “Statistics: The 21st Century World.” 2 June 2004. Southern Nazarene University. 5 Oct. 2004. <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert.fs/world.htm>

roots such as: Quakers, Baptists, Pentecostals, Congregationalists, Methodists, and “Free” churches.¹⁵

Protestantism has been chosen for specific reasons. First of all, the fundamental doctrinal belief of “justification of the sinner by faith alone” directly aligns with the apostle Paul’s theology that will be discussed shortly. If these two had extremely different theological beliefs it would cause complications when dealing with the theological perspectives on issues. Another reason that Protestantism was chosen was because many modern definitions of mission include the Protestant denomination. One present day definition of mission expanded with the development of Protestantism in the 16th century. When the Jesuits developed the term “missions,” it actually referred to the re-conversion of Protestants, among others. Since the Protestant denomination has such a long history with missions, the Protestant churches should have a solid grasp on the significance of mission. Finally, the specific North American Protestants were chosen because missions also happen to accompany the connotations of colonial expansion of the Western hemisphere.¹⁶ By studying a precise group it becomes easier to truly identify the correct characteristics of the situation.

Although North American Protestants were chosen partly in order to reduce the number of differences within theological understandings, many differences do still exist. The main variation within the Protestant denomination is the separation between the ecumenical perspective of mission and the evangelical perspective of mission. Ecumenical refers to a more liberal perspective, while evangelical refers to a conservative perspective. The evangelical perception of mission understands the ecumenical perspective to be dominated by denominational power structures, while the ecumenical perception of mission perceives the

¹⁵“Protestantism.” InfoPlease. © 2000-2004. Person Education, InfoPlease. 3 Oct. 2004.
<<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001467.html>>

¹⁶ Phillips and Coote, 176

evangelical perspective as trying to cling to an outdated mission strategy in a changing world. The evangelical perspective believes that the power structures de-emphasize the importance of overseas missions and want to use the funds on national situations instead. They also believe that people are only looking for political or social change instead of the deeper intentions of mission. On the other hand, the ecumenical perspective believes the evangelicals are using an obsolete model of missions. The ecumenical group believes many countries have rejected this older style, and that it is presently more important to focus on missions within America.¹⁷ This focus implies that the ecumenical group supports local indigenous missions. This variance within Protestantism does not mean that these two groups have completely opposing doctrines; they are simply trying to solve the same problem in different ways. Both groups have struggled with issues that revolve around a changing world and have merely attempted different paths towards a solution. For this reason, the differences between these two groups do not cause large enough problems to eliminate the benefits of using the limited, chosen group of North American Protestants.

¹⁷ Hutcheson, Robert G. Jr, "Crisis in Overseas Mission: Shall We Leave It to the Independents?" *Christian Century*, March 18, 1981, <<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1740>> (21 Oct. 2004).

THE APOSTLE PAUL

Who Was Paul?

Paul was an apostle of Jesus whose understandings of the Christian faith have developed into the foundational theologies for a number of Christian denominations throughout the centuries. His authentically authored letters (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans) are the best sources of information that exist for the study of Paul. Some historical information, however, can be obtained from Acts, the deutero-Pauline epistles (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), and even other New Testament books such as James and 2 Peter.¹⁸

Paul is most commonly known by his Greco-Roman name, *Paulos*, and throughout the New Testament he always identified himself this way, but he also had the Jewish name of Saul. It is the Jewish name that connects him to the tribe of Benjamin.¹⁹ However, according to the book of Acts, his Greco-Roman name gives him the connection with his citizenship of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia where he was born.²⁰ His ancestral ties and citizenship connections are important throughout the development of Paul's career.

The only legitimate information regarding Paul's education comes from the book of Acts where Paul states: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today."²¹ Even from that information, it is difficult to truly understand Paul's education because little is known about Jewish education at that time. Because Paul's career involved first being a Jewish ambassador and then a missionary for Christ, he must have had a

¹⁸ *Anchor Bible Dictionary*: "Paul." Ed, David Noel Freedman. New York: Double Day, 1992.

¹⁹ Philippians 3:5 (NIV)

²⁰ Acts 21:39 (NIV)

²¹ Acts 22:3 (NIV)

strong Hellenistic education. Those careers required a strong education. Examples of this education are demonstrated throughout Paul's journeys, which included giving speeches, writing letters, and also being involved in theological debates.²²

It is also critical to fully understand Paul's career before his conversion to this new Christianity. Paul considered himself a zealous Jew, and he was passionate about eliminating apostasy. He even became a member of the Pharisaic sect and began persecuting members of the new Christian movement that followed Jesus.²³ After his conversion, Paul spoke of his life before becoming a missionary of Christ:

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.²⁴

According to the book of Acts, on a specific trip into Damascus, Paul experienced a vision of the risen Christ.²⁵ The book of Acts clearly shows the situation as an external event, while in his letter to the Galatians, Paul simply reports it as a revelation: "I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ."²⁶ Although it remains uncertain whether this was an internal or external event, it is certain that this experience changed him from a persecutor to a preacher of Christianity. According to Paul, Christ had commissioned him to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. This experience is usually labeled Paul's "conversion," however, that term developed much later because at that time Judaism and Christianity were not yet separate religions.²⁷

²² Anchor Bible Dictionary "Paul"

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Philippians 3: 4b-6 (NIV)

²⁵ Acts 9:3-8 (NIV)

²⁶ Galatians 1:12 (NIV)

²⁷ Anchor Bible Dictionary "Paul"

After his conversion experience, Paul began to embark on missionary journeys. He started by going immediately into Arabia and then later returning to Damascus. Paul also traveled to Jerusalem, Syria, Cilicia, and Judea during the early days of his ministries.²⁸ However, because Paul's career drastically changed, the other apostles had a difficult time accepting the authenticity of Paul's missionary work. For example, the book of Acts reports, "when he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple."²⁹ Fortunately for Paul, the disciples found a faithful man named Barnabas truly trustworthy. Barnabas stood at Paul's defense and defended Paul's authenticity:

"But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus."³⁰

Barnabas continued alongside Paul on his missionary journeys and became Paul's mentor.³¹

What Did Paul Do?

Although the topic of Paul's trade is never extensively discussed, theologians have generally assumed that Paul had acquired the trade of tentmaking throughout his lifetime. In relation to this subject, Paul himself simply states, "We work hard with our own hands."³² However, in the book of Acts the accepted belief that Paul was a tentmaker stands out: "Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them."³³ The leading belief is that Paul had a trade in order to follow traditional rabbinic custom

²⁸ Galatians 1: 17-24 (NIV)

²⁹ Acts 9:26 (NIV)

³⁰ Acts 9:27 (NIV)

³¹ Anchor Bible Dictionary "Paul"

³² 1Corinthians 4:12 (NIV)

³³ Acts 18:2-3 (NIV)

of combining study of Torah with practice of a trade. Because Paul was so widely known for his theology and his missionary life, little investigation has actually been done on his tentmaking trade; however, it still holds importance to Paul's missions. Since tentmaking is no longer a common career, it is important to note what activities could be included under such a career. Possibilities include maker of leather bed cushions, shoemaker, maker of leather thongs for bridles, and stitcher of tents. It was also possible that Paul was a weaver of tentcloth. The most dominant view was simply that Paul was a leatherworker who mostly made tents.³⁴ Paul possibly learned his trade from his father, in order to conform to the rabbinic maxim "whoever does not teach his son a craft, teaches him to be a robber."³⁵ However, Paul most likely acquired this trade during his study under Gamaliel in order to honor the common Jewish practice to combine study with the practice of a trade.³⁶ Rabbinic thought believes that, "Excellent is the study of Torah together with worldly occupation."³⁷

Paul's trade was important, because it was his primary source of income during his multiple missionary journeys. Although some of Paul's journeys involved fairly short visits, many of them were extended stays. Paul believed he should never become a financial burden to his hosts, so he used his trade to remain self-supporting. Through this, Paul was able to be a model for his congregations. He was able to exemplify the virtue of hard work:

Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.³⁸

In order to avoid relying financially on others, Paul often lived without many of the daily comforts that most people enjoyed. Paul refers to these experiences of suffering:

³⁴ Hock, Ronald F. *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980. (20-21)

³⁵ Geoghegan, A.T. as cited in Hock, Ronald F, 22

³⁶ Hock, Ronald F, 21

³⁷ Mishnah: Abot 2:2 as cited in Hock, Ronald F, 22

³⁸ 1 Thessalonians 2:9 (NIV)

I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.³⁹

Paul's desire to be financially independent led him to survive without a surplus of material benefits.⁴⁰

What Did Paul Preach?

Although varied, Paul's letters provide great descriptions of his beliefs, including insights into his theology of missions. The letters are directed at specific issues and situations, but there are some major themes revealed throughout the whole of his letters. At first glance, it may appear as if Paul's letters contradict each other on a surface level, however, it is important to remember that these letters were written to specific congregations with specific problems. Also, as each letter was written, time had passed allowing Paul to further develop and clarify his own theology. Understanding the purpose of the letters, along with how they were written, allows the apparent contradictions to disappear and the process of Paul's theology to become clear.

Paul's theology becomes more defined from his first letter through his last. Paul's first letter was 1 Thessalonians, which was possibly written around A.D. 49, and was followed by Galatians and 1 Corinthians. The second letter to the Corinthians followed shortly. Ephesians and Philippians were probably the next letters. Philemon may have been written very close to Philippians, as they were both letters written from prison. Finally, Paul's theology became the most well defined in his last letter, Romans, which was most likely written around A.D. 56.⁴¹

One of Paul's main concerns was Christ's death and resurrection from the dead:

³⁹ 2 Corinthians 11:27 (NIV)

⁴⁰ Hock, Ronald F, 29-35

⁴¹ Anchor Bible Dictionary "Paul"

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...⁴²

The reason Paul focused on this event was the importance it has on the way that God deals with sin. Paul believed that Jesus' death had become the final atonement for sins:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.⁴³

Not only did Paul believe Jesus' death was atonement, but he also perceived this as an act of love and grace straight from God: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."⁴⁴ Paul began to construct this theme in the book of Galatians, though it became one of his prominent theologies in his letter to the Romans:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it was written: "The righteous will live by faith."⁴⁵

Paul's belief in justification of the sinner by faith alone remains central throughout his writings.⁴⁶

The significant issue that developed from this belief was the relationship between the new Christianity and the traditions of Judaism.⁴⁷ Paul's belief in justification of the sinner by faith alone caused him to assert that the Gentile converts could enter into this new Jewish-Christian religion without circumcision or strict adherence to Jewish law.

⁴² 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NIV)

⁴³ Romans 3:23-25 (NIV)

⁴⁴ Romans 5:8 (NIV)

⁴⁵ Romans 1:16-17 (NIV)

⁴⁶ Keck, Leander E. *Paul and His Letters*. Ed. Gerhard Krodel. 2nd ed. Proclamation Commentaries. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988. (36)

⁴⁷ It is important to note that the term "Christianity" had not yet been developed, but in order to create a distinction between Paul's theology and Judaism, the term "Christianity" will be used.

Paul's main defense in his belief of justification by faith was founded in the life of Abraham. The Scriptures say that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.⁴⁸ The crucial aspect of this statement is that it came before Abraham's circumcision and the new law. This proves that it was not his circumcision, nor his adherence to the law, that made him righteous, but simply his faith in God. Paul argues that God's promise comes by faith so that it may be offered to all of Abraham's offspring – those who follow the law and those who follow Abraham's example of faith.⁴⁹

Since the belief that the Gentile converts were able to partake in the Sinai covenant without circumcision was not initially and widely accepted, Paul and Barnabas attended heated debates on the topic in Jerusalem. They desired to provide supporting evidence stating that it was not necessary for the Gentile converts to be circumcised. Paul took Titus, a Greek, along to the conference in order to firmly establish this perspective. By the end of the debates, the people had decided that others could join this Christian movement without undergoing circumcision. However, the conference did separate the missionary field by sending the apostle Peter out to the Jews and Paul out to the Gentiles. The issue that kept Paul and Peter connected in their missions was their agreement to collect money for the poor in Jerusalem.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, soon after the conference, Peter was unable to continue eating with the Gentile Christians based upon pressure from those around him. Many people did not accept the decision that the leaders at the Jerusalem conference had concluded upon. Obviously, Paul disagreed with this response.⁵¹ Paul wanted to demonstrate that it was no longer necessary to live by the law; however, it was also not necessary to abandon the law. He simply wanted to

⁴⁸ Romans 4:3 – This quote is taken from Genesis 15. Paul prefers Genesis 15 over Genesis 17 because it is before the requirement of circumcision for the covenant. (NIV)

⁴⁹ Romans 4:9-15 (NIV)

⁵⁰ Galatians 2:1-10 (NIV)

⁵¹ Anchor Bible Dictionary "Paul"

confirm that justification was not received through adherence to the law, but rather through faith alone. Paul points out that people should still be able to continue in their Jewish lifestyles, as long as they understand that rituals of the law are not needed to attain salvation. Paul felt that Peter was not supporting this belief through his actions, which caused Paul to completely break away from all Jewish-Christian missionaries, including Barnabas, and simply tend to the Gentile Christians.⁵²

The unity of the church is also a focal point for Paul.⁵³ This issue can be observed throughout Paul's theology from beginning to end and is clearly shown by the fact that Paul desired to include the Gentiles in God's promises. He yearned for the Jews and the Gentiles to respect each other and become one body in Christ. Paul did not require any to live by the Jewish law for salvation, but he asked all people to respect those who followed the law in order to gain unity in the church:

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.⁵⁴

Paul wanted this unity to be so complete that even through minor differences, people would acquire great amounts of respect for each other. For Paul, unity was central to his entire missiology.

Another way that Paul shows his hope for unity is through his world-vision for mission. In Paul's day, Spain was nearly as far west as a person could travel; yet, he planned on traveling that great distance to share the Gospel message: "So after I have completed this task and have

⁵² Galatians 2:11-20 (NIV)

⁵³ Anchor Bible Dictionary "Paul"

⁵⁴ Romans 14:19-21 (NIV)

made sure they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.”⁵⁵ Paul shared the Gospel message with multiple cities and as far across the world as he could bring it. He preached to cities that welcomed his message, and he preached to cities that wanted to persecute him for his message. He preached to cities that were already familiar with his message, and he preached to cities that were unfamiliar with his message. No matter where Paul was, he treated every community the same.⁵⁶ Under his world-vision, he desired the followers of Christ to all share in one body of unity:

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁷

He believed that this unified body of Christ would be the most successful in supporting each other and receiving the blessings of the kingdom of God together.

Paul’s eschatology also influences his missiology. Paul believed that the kingdom of God would come to earth very soon.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.⁵⁸

This belief gave Paul a sense of urgency when he was preaching the Gospel message. He felt it was important to spread the Gospel as quickly as he could to whomever he could. It was this concept that also influenced the significance he placed upon his world vision for missions. Paul wanted to be able to provide people with the opportunity to hear and accept the message he was preaching before the coming of the kingdom of God.

⁵⁵ Romans 15:28 (NIV)

⁵⁶ Reference to 1 Corinthians 9:19-21 (NIV)

⁵⁷ Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)

⁵⁸ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NIV)

Another vital matter for Paul was the necessity of nurturing the communities he had already developed. This issue is seen more clearly through his actions rather than his words. During Paul's journeys he usually established a church, visited again (or sent someone else to visit) if possible, or at least kept in contact by writing letters, for example:

But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you – certainly I, Paul, did again and again...So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith...⁵⁹

It is through such examples that Paul shows his true, heartfelt commitment to these communities. The continued nurturing of these communities shows Paul's extreme compassion.

There are many minor themes that develop throughout Paul's letters. The communities all have specific issues that Paul encounters and discusses. There are issues such as turning away from idols and the importance of relying upon the Spirit in order to resist the temptations of the flesh. He ponders concepts such as his potentially impending death, his viewpoint of participating in Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, and the concept of the wisdom of God. It is these issues that enabled Paul to carefully refine his theologies throughout his letters.⁶⁰ There are beliefs and strategies intertwined within the epistles that provide an excellent model for Paul's method of missions. His letters show just how much Paul cherished the communities that he preached to. Paul's mission was so wrapped up in the actions of his life that it became impossible to distinguish between his mission work and his life. This rests at the heart of his model of missions because it is where everything else begins. Paul's theology will be more deeply investigated, but this has described the fundamental aspects of Paul's missiology.

⁵⁹ 1 Thessalonians 2:17- 3:2 (NIV)

⁶⁰ Anchor Bible Dictionary "Paul"

21ST CENTURY MISSIONS

Are Missions Still Important?

There are many different perspectives on the importance of missions today. Some would argue that it should not be one person's choice to interfere in another's life for any reason.

Others would argue that it is their responsibility to share the Gospel message, because it has been shared for generations, and it is central to the Christian faith. However, if missions are central to the Christian faith, the fact that the issue has become so controversial illustrates that problems have developed. Overall, most North American Protestants believe that some form of missions is still needed:

It is thus of the very nature of the Church that it has a mission to the whole world. ... Our work until His coming again is but the result of our share in the work which He is doing all the time and everywhere. The Church's mission is thus the most important thing that is happening in history.⁶¹

This statement may be approximately 50 years old, but it still clearly portrays the beliefs of the World Council of Churches. The WCC still considers itself a “missionary, diaconal and moral community of churches.”⁶² Another common understanding is that “the church doesn't have a mission; the church *is* mission.”⁶³ In accordance with this conviction, Emil Brunner states, “the Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.” This metaphor originates in Luke 12:49 where Jesus declares, “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already

⁶¹ World Council of Churches 1954:442 as cited in Phillips and Coote, 200.

⁶² “Towards a Common Understanding of the World Council of Churches.” Policy Statement of the World Council of Churches. ©2000. 24 Nov. 2004. < <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/cuv-e.html#introduction> >

⁶³ Knitter, Paul F. *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996. (115)

kindled!” The connection here shows that just as the fire that stops burning becomes nothing, so also the Church that no longer shares its treasures becomes nothing.⁶⁴

Theology of Today’s Missions

Missions have developed along with the continued growth and establishment of the Christian faith throughout the world. For a long period of time, missions flourished. However, the 21st century has brought difficult circumstances to the mission field. The biggest adaptations result from Christianity attempting relations with the changing culture and other religions. These changing circumstances have forced people to rethink missiology. Over 30 years ago, Gerald Anderson, a wise theologian, stated:

The underlying principles and theological presuppositions for the Christian mission have been called into question and Christians are challenged to rethink the motives, message, methods, and goals of their mission.⁶⁵

This prediction has proven valid, as old theologies have continued crumbling, and the need to redefine the theology and model of missions has only increased. There were many factors that assisted in the dissolution of the old foundation, including many problems that are still relevant today. However, before the problems are introduced, it is important to look at the central characteristics to the present mission theologies.

There are many concepts to consider when dealing with the mission theologies. First of all, the whole world is God’s mission field. There are not specific areas that are specialized or limited; it is a universal concept. Keeping this in mind, there are always more people to reach out to. Not only that, but even those who have already accepted the Christian faith could always use more growth support, instruction, and knowledge into the faith they have just accepted.

⁶⁴ Trueblood, Elton. *The Validity of the Christian Mission*. New York. Harper & Row. 1972. (91)

⁶⁵ Anderson, Gerald. *The Theology of the Christian Mission*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc, 1961. (3)

Secondly, a world vision for missions requires a unified church. Since the Gospel message being shared is of love, forgiveness, and peace, it would be very difficult to justify church divisions among those believing the same message. These attributes will not completely overcome the divisions in the church; however, the divisions may be softened. Also, in order for the Gospel message to appear valid, the church needs to try to exemplify those qualities. Finally, if missions are truly oriented towards the whole world, it will take entire communities to share the gospel and not just individuals. There are different ways each member of the community can be in support of missions, but all need to be involved.⁶⁶

There are many places throughout the Bible that show mission as being central to Christianity. Many instructions and characteristics for missions are often portrayed, especially in the New Testament. When Jesus spoke, he often used metaphors for his message. Not only did he use the metaphor of fire, which has already been illustrated, but he also spoke about “salt,” “light,” and “leaven.”⁶⁷ At surface level, these concepts seem to share no commonality; however, upon a deeper inspection one can see that “all are figures representing penetration.”⁶⁸ Penetration of faith means that Christianity will become embedded into every aspect of the communities. It is within these metaphors that one critical characteristic of mission theology is found: Christianity needs to penetrate communities throughout the world as the metaphors have exemplified.

As has been illustrated numerous times, mission is at the very heart of Christianity itself. While the theologies of mission and the church are beginning to be understood, it becomes more obvious that the church is not simply for the benefit of its own members. The church is a call to

⁶⁶ Richardson, Alan. “Theology of Mission.” *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press, 1969.

⁶⁷ One example of Jesus using “salt” and “light” can be found in Matthew 5:13-16 and an example of Jesus using “leaven” (yeast) can be found in Matthew 16:5-12 (NIV)

⁶⁸ Trueblood, Elton, 92.

an active commitment to the Christian faith. The church is in place to be an instrument for the redemption of the whole world. This means that missions should not be an extra activity, but rather essential to the nature of the church. The theology of mission becomes intertwined with the theology of the church.⁶⁹

In order for missions to truly succeed, it is imperative that distinctions be made between the primary and secondary foci of the mission work. The primary focus of missions has been sharing the Gospel, while other areas requiring focus have been the need for the establishment of schools and hospitals. While these are both important aspects, the primary aim of missions needs to be the sharing of the Gospel. Without the Gospel message, the act of missions transforms into simply kind acts of service. This does not mean that the secondary foci are not important, however. There are some instances where dangers prohibit the missionaries from being able to share the Gospel message. These dangers will be discussed later on, but in these cases, it is just as important to focus on the secondary aim of missions. The secondary focus also provides the opportunity for people to accept the Christian faith. The church needs to be concerned with a person's eternal life as well as his present, existing life. However, if the Gospel message is being shared, the secondary foci will follow as a consequence to the acceptance of the Gospel. It is Christ's teaching that reminds the church that primary and secondary foci are all essential if correctly categorized.⁷⁰

At this point, many characteristics of Christian missions have been outlined. These characteristics have been pieced together in order to form a basic skeleton of the present Protestant missiology. In its ideal state, this present theology could provide a strong framework

⁶⁹ Trueblood, Elton, 93 –94.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 97-98.

for missions in the 21st century. However, the previously mentioned statistics (such as the “10/40 Window”) clearly demonstrate that there are still problems that are occurring.

Mission Strategies

Strategy 1:

There are multiple ways to comprehend the methods under the theology of mission. One understanding breaks up the method of missions into six categories. One category is “Mission as Response.” This explains missions as the reaction of a Christian to a loving God. This perspective labels missions as the Christian communities’ reaction to the Gospel. A second way to interpret mission theology is “Mission as Dialogue.” Dialogue can simply be looked at as conversation with others. Dialogue refers to an openness with others, which allows a person to cross all boundaries: geographical, racial, social, or cultural. Another way to understand mission theology is “Mission as Translation.” In theory, God’s revelation through Jesus needed to be translated into terms that men could understand. In response to that theory, missionary activity involves translating the Gospel into terms that every group of people can understand. This does not only involve a lingual translation, but also a cultural translation. Mission theology can also be perceived in terms of “Mission as Service.” It is through the action of serving that the Gospel becomes a reality, and not just words on a page. Christ provided this example by serving whether people responded or not. “Mission as Presence” is another way to interpret mission theology. A Christian can accomplish the mission of God by simply being involved in situations without actually “preaching.” The Gospel message does not always need to be shared through words, but it can also be seen through the actions and responses of others. Finally, mission

theology can be interpreted as “Mission as Fulfillment.” The ultimate aim of mission is the high expectation of unity and reconciliation of all people in Christ.⁷¹

Strategy 2:

Another perception on mission strategy shows the Western influence on mission. This viewpoint outlines a mission strategy utilizing the commonly known “scientific method.” Most Americans have been taught that nearly every situation can be investigated by using this method. By applying a Biblical perspective to the scientific method, another theological framework for mission strategy develops. This viewpoint divides the strategy into five different sections. The first one is “The Source.” The ultimate source and purpose of mission is God. The saving purpose of God is sending His son into the world. This was His mission and what all other Christian missions have adapted from. The second section is Jesus Christ as “The Embodiment.” Jesus’ existence provided a new way to envision life. Jesus came as a leader to the world, yet in a role reversal, he was most commonly seen serving others. It is this mentality that exemplified what missions should be about. The third section integrates the Holy Spirit as “The Power.” The Spirit is seen as the “primary agent of the mission of the Messiah.” The Holy Spirit is the force behind it all. The fourth section includes the church as “The Instrument.” Combining the first sections leads to a new community of faith that can extend across borders of race, class, sex, and nationality. It is now the church that is in the position to build these communities. Finally, the last section is “The Context.” Any culture can be the means through which other people can hear the Gospel message.⁷²

⁷¹ Dictionary of Christian Theology “Theology of Mission”

⁷² Phillips and Coote, 219-223

Strategy 3:

An alternate view divides missions into two different models with a few possible images. The first model, the “Crusader Model,” developed from century-old theories. At one time, many envisioned missions to be essentially militant. This perspective included the concept of people being “conquered for Christ,” as well as bringing the ‘benefits’ of Western culture to other lands. This model has not endured and often faces large amounts of critics. The next model was coined the “Alternative Model.” Because society has changed so drastically since the formation of the Crusader Model, the Alternative Model reflects those changes. First of all, the missionaries under this model may be seen as explorers instead of crusaders. Another attribute of this model is that the desire to completely change people has decreased.⁷³

There are also a few images that could influence the way missions are looked at. The first image is the “Sending Out Image.” This is an older image, yet it has a very strong Scriptural basis. This image could be associated with a hierarchical perspective of the church. The ‘higher-up’ members of the church would go out to the ‘lower’ population to share the Gospel. This image may not present the most positive perspective, but it is not completely irrelevant, either. There is still a sense that people are sent by the calling of God. The second image is the “Gathering In Image.” This image was developed in contrast to the “Sending Out Image” in order to emphasize the notion of expanding the church. This perspective envisions missions as bringing all into a Christian fellowship. This image also has a strong basis in Scripture, and can be beneficial when combined with other images. The third image is the “Solidarity Image.” This viewpoint visualizes Jesus among the people. The “Solidarity Image” is also not in contrast with the other images, it simply further develops the beneficial aspects. When Jesus walked this earth, he came to live among the people. Jesus did not take over and

⁷³ Dorr, Donal. *Mission in Today's World*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000. (186-188)

control everything; he provided an example from within the community. According to Christian theology, Jesus had the power to come to earth and become a leader in the traditional hierarchical setting; however, Jesus did not utilize this opportunity. Instead, he simply led by example to those around him.⁷⁴ These strategies and images provide a continually changing and developing perspective on the model of missiology.

Where Is The Problem?

If the basic *theology* of missions is investigated, it is likely that no significant problems would be found. However, according to the previously mentioned “10/40 Window” statistics, there are more than 3.2 billion people living in that area, and 95% of these people are unevangelized.⁷⁵ It is extremely evident that there is a noteworthy crisis somewhere between the theology of missions and the actual application of mission work. Since there are not major problems found within mission theology itself, the problems must rest in the actual actions of missions. There are multiple categories that contain problems for missions today. The goal will be to categorize the issues broadly and then define the specific concerns within each category.

The Church:

First of all, there are severe problems within the church itself. As previously illustrated, the church is designed to be mission in and of itself. If this foundation crumbles, multiple problems consequently follow.

The first problem derives from incorrect presumptions about the church. The church that belongs with these assumptions is the visible church, not just the Christian community. Most

⁷⁴ Dorr, Donal, 188-192

⁷⁵ Howard Culbertson “The 10/40 Window”

people automatically connect being of the Christian faith with belonging to the church. This assumption is not erroneous as long as the correct connotations are carried with the church. The first assumption is that if the Christian faith is where salvation is found, then it is also true that there is no salvation outside of the church. Such a bold, exclusive statement automatically causes hostility to arise both within and outside the church. This audacious claim supposes that the organization of the church is indispensable for salvation and that only this organization understands God's motives. The hostility from such exclusive claims arises from inaccurate assumptions about the church itself.⁷⁶

The church and missions are supposed to be intimately connected in order to fulfill the true purpose of missions. A central focus of missions is to share the love of Christ. This ideal love should be self-sacrificing, unconditional, and given without expectation of anything in return. Although this ideal will never be met, this shortcoming highlights another problem. This sets very high expectations for the mission of the church, which displays a lack of genuineness when the church continually fails to reach the ideal. Since an earthly institution cannot meet this ideal, it should be realized that the church cannot be held responsible for this shortcoming. Instead, it is the efforts of the church that should be looked at. However, it is still very easy for a church to spend money on things such as monuments or other needs within its own congregation, but how much support goes out beyond the church? This is not only an issue involving monetary matters. The same situation can be evaluated with service. Most acts of service are likely to be found within the church community rather than outside the congregation. The church simply does not often reach the high expectations that have been set for it.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Anderson, Gerald. *Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967. (42-43)

⁷⁷ Trueblood, Elton, 93-94

Beyond the church that lacks the desire to meet its expectations, another problem develops when individual members lack the aspiration to truly succeed. Unfortunately, an individual can be commissioned for the field of missions without a proper commitment in his/her heart. This situation can unfold in multiple ways. One problem could be that a person has the desire to help others, but does not have the desire to share the Gospel message. This person may be a very good person, but he/she does not truly exemplify the purpose of missions. Another problem could be that the person has the desire to share the message without a deep enough knowledge about how to go about doing so. Either way, it is important for the church to be certain in its choices when commissioning people for missionary service.⁷⁸

Protestantism also has to deal with many problems within its own body. The aforementioned divisions of the ecumenical group and the evangelical group often collide to create negative circumstances. In fact, these groups have made little effort to reconcile because the perceptions of the missionary situations are seen so differently. One alteration that caused this extreme division was the changing of the terminology of “missions” in 1969. The term changed to simply “mission” because it was easier for non-Western churches to pronounce the word without the extra ‘s’. However, as the terminology changed, many other perceptions changed with it.⁷⁹

Mission came to include all work and service done by the church whether it was overseas or within its own institution. Even the budgets were changed by combining the church expenses with the benevolences. Mission was now being defined as anything the church set out to do. The evangelicals accept this change but are still firm in setting a distinction between church expenses and overseas missions. The evangelical group focuses on the importance of

⁷⁸ Trueblood, Elton, 110

⁷⁹ Hutcheson, Robert G. Jr “Crisis in Overseas Mission”

evangelizing, so the distinction still remains crucial to them. On the other hand, the liberal ecumenicals have allowed the term mission to completely replace “missions.” This means that the liberal ecumenical group has completely accepted all of the changes that came with the terminology change. A main reason that none of the problems have been solved between the evangelicals and the ecumenicals is because when speaking about mission, the two groups interpret it to mean different things.⁸⁰

This division among Protestantism is a crucial problem for the church because Protestantism has traditionally been a dominant power in Christian missions. This inner-division has allowed many problems to occur. First of all, if the budgets of the churches changed along with the terminology change, then there has been a lack of resources going towards overseas missions. If the budget has combined the overseas mission and the benevolences, the spending balance has most likely become unequal. Secondly, a divided church has a difficult time preaching a message of love and unity when they cannot even get along amongst themselves. Finally, much energy has gone into arguing with each other over internal problems instead of looking at outside problems. This has caused stagnancy within the leading missionary force and led to a failure to adapt to the changing situations in the world today.

Terminology:

The terminology of missions can cause many different problems. As previously shown, the basic vocabulary of missions can involve multiple definitions. It is difficult to define the mission terminology in English, and then it becomes even more challenging when the English needs to be translated into other languages. Every term can carry multiple, different

⁸⁰ Hutcheson, Robert G. Jr “Crisis in Overseas Mission”

connotations when the vocabulary is not clearly defined. However, the problem of terminology stretches further than needing to clarify the basic definitions.

One of the most common words that is utilized in mission settings is the word “evangelization.” The general definition for evangelization is “bringing or sharing the good news.” The problem with this definition is its emphasis on “bringing.” This emphasis implies that the area did not have God or God’s message beforehand. This would be a difficult message to accept coming from a completely different culture of people. Generally a community does not want to hear that they do not have the “truth.” This evangelization problem will later be shown as even more of a culture problem than simply a terminology problem.⁸¹

Simply the expansive vocabulary of Christian missions itself can cause problems. It is in this language that the fears of Western expansion, of losing one’s culture, and of change itself develop. The surface-level vocabulary always describes missions going out into different areas to share the Gospel message. As a person being evangelized, it would be difficult to immediately accept this message thinking that it was necessary to change one’s culture in order to accept the message. This problem will also develop into a cultural issue once it extends past the simple terminology level.⁸²

The Missionaries:

Another set of problems can be found within the missionaries themselves. One problem could be the integration of values within the missionary him/herself. A missionary could have negative characteristics that could affect the mission experience. Also, a native missionary could

⁸¹ Dorr, Donal, 83

⁸² Trueblood, Elton, 92

attack the situation with harmful purposes. The concept of the “Rice Missionary” will soon be discussed. There are always risks to choosing people to share the Gospel message.

First of all, a missionary that has always lived in the Western hemisphere could have the Western values so firmly embedded within his/her own set of values that it could influence the message being shared. For example, a missionary from North America is most likely influenced by consumerism, individualism, and elitism. These are not characteristics that would generally be considered positive to share along with the Gospel message. It is precisely these values that lead to the negative connotation of “Westernization” along with missionaries.⁸³

Another problem that developed within the missionaries themselves has been termed “Rice Missionaries.” “Rice Christians” were known as people who were born and raised in the culture that the missionaries wanted to reach. These people were hired and commissioned to share the Gospel message for a variety of reasons. The benefits included knowledge of the language and customs, as well as a reduction in the chances of contracting any foreign diseases. This missionary was able to travel very easily, was able to culturally translate the message very appropriately, and was not in any political danger. On the surface, it appears that the “Rice Missionaries” could have been very successful in sharing of the Gospel message. Ideally, this would have been a positive situation; however, much corruption took place within these circumstances. The “Rice Missionaries” began taking their payments from the mission organizations without completing the missionary tasks. This use of money goes directly against part of the Gospel message itself, namely that the early Christian missionaries were not to

⁸³ Phillips and Coote, 207

“peddle the word of God for profit.”⁸⁴ Therefore, “Rice Missionaries” corrupt handling of mission funds contradicts messages within the Gospel.⁸⁵

Cultural Issues:

The next issue that exists within missions today is the gap between the wealth in the West and the poverty among many unevangelized countries. This gap has grown drastically throughout the years. This creates a separation between those wanting to share the message and those most commonly responsive to the Gospel. The wealth of the missionary, or even the support behind the missionary hurts the credibility of the message being shared. A large part of the Gospel message involves helping the poor, so if the available money is going to help the missionary instead of the people, it discredits the validity of the message.⁸⁶

Mission today definitely implies the need for trans-cultural work. Trans-cultural simply implies that there will be multiple cultures interacting with each other. Diverse beliefs will be found when taking the Gospel message into a different culture. There are many issues that develop under trans-cultural situations. Most obviously, there will be Christian dialogues with other faiths and other cultures. It is difficult to translate the Christian mission vocabulary for a culture that has not been influenced by Christianity. Another major difficulty when working cross-culturally is the fact that everyone will be biased by his or her cultural upbringing. Every person will have some form of cultural beliefs and expectations intertwined within his/her nature. It is unreasonable to believe that all people could be so set in their ways that they become

⁸⁴ 2 Corinthians 2:17 (NIV)

⁸⁵ Phillips and Coote, 297

⁸⁶ Ibid., 299; a reference for the centrality of the poor can be found in Luke 6:20

unwilling to try and understand another set of beliefs, but yet it still creates a very difficult obstacle to overcome.⁸⁷

Intercultural communication has been made much simpler during recent years. Technology has increased so greatly that there is no excuse for any lack in communication. The technology of transportation has also allowed people to continually migrate to other areas. This has changed the world because there are no longer religions or communities that need to remain isolated from others. This could open a very easy venue for communication. Another factor that this interrelated world deals with is the fact that the problems which humans face are increasingly shared among all people. It is these common problems that can either bring people together or tear people apart.⁸⁸ These technological advances bring the expectation that open communication should easily progress; however, since this does not always occur as expected it adds to the present problems.

Another main cultural issue is the fact that many nations are now completely closed to missionary efforts. Many countries only allow people with special skills into their country, such as physicians or agricultural experts that are considered important enough to allow into the nation. A missionary with no other expertise would never be allowed into many countries. Ironically, it is these exact countries that most missionaries want to enter. Some of the resistance results from rising nationalism and pride. The leaders of these nations often envision Christian missions as a form of imperialism. Missionaries are often equated with wanting to develop new areas for Western expansion.⁸⁹ It is precisely these connotations that provide such difficulties for the continued growth of missions. It becomes a serious danger to all involved to send missionaries into such areas.

⁸⁷ Trueblood, Elton, 34-35

⁸⁸ Phillips and Coote, 338

⁸⁹ Trueblood, Elton, 28

There are also cultural issues that can be found right here within America. There are many people here that also oppose the concept of missions for a couple of reasons. First of all, there has obviously been a large growth of non-Christians in the population over the last centuries. Many of these people resist the notion of sending people out to share the Christian Gospel message. The growth in the opposition numbers has made it more difficult to send out missionaries. Second of all, even some people who profess the Christian faith believe that it is not always right to send out missionaries. Their argument stems from the belief that we have done so poorly ourselves that we have no moral right to share with others. In other words, if the American nation is not exemplifying Christian values in every-day life, then it is also not capable of sharing this message with others. This controversy within the American nation itself creates even more problems for the field of missions.⁹⁰

Another inter-cultural dilemma stems from the rising belief in absolute tolerance. In other words, America should tolerate other nations' beliefs and they should tolerate America's. If this belief is taken seriously, it will lead to religious pluralism. Religious pluralism believes that there are many ways to the truth and to say that Christianity is the only way is arrogant and offensive. It also believes that there should be complete tolerance of every belief and every custom. If this tolerance is really to be achieved, the world will become one that includes no interference at all, because in order to not offend anyone, people will remove themselves from any inter-cultural or inter-religious situations. The necessary communication between cultures and faiths would not be encouraged for the sake of not wanting to offend one another. Every community would eventually isolate itself through lack of communication because there would be no common bond to keep people together.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Trueblood, Elton, 30

⁹¹ Ibid., 31-33

During this study it has become obvious that there are numerous, significant problems that 21st century missions face every day. There are problems with the church, missionaries, terminology, and cultural issues. Over the centuries, mission has gone from being critical within the theology of the Protestant church to a problem-filled dilemma full of controversy. I think the problems that have developed would be helped by the application of the apostle Paul's missiology.

APPLYING PAUL

Comparison in Theology Between Paul and Today:

There are many similarities between Paul's theology and the 21st century's mission characteristics. It makes sense that the theologies overlap, because much of mission theology originated under Paul's model, since Paul was one of the first Biblical examples of a missionary. As previously stated, the problems with missions today are not within the theology, but the actual application of missions. Many of the models and images that have already been investigated have a Scriptural basis in Paul's letters. Although there are strong similarities between today's theology and Paul's theology, there are also well-defined differences. It will be important to note where the similarities and differences lie in order to clearly define the problem and the solution.

First of all, the Gospel being preached contains an extremely similar message. The Protestant denominations focus on justification of the sinner by faith alone. Within the New Testament, Paul is the writer that deeply develops this doctrine based upon his understanding of Jesus' message. This is an important similarity when missiology is being studied. Under another perspective, many people could easily interpret mission work as "good works" to earn salvation. According to Paul, these good works are done in response to the salvation that has already been achieved, not in order to receive salvation.⁹² The fact that Protestant missiology aligns with Paul's missiology on the concept of justification provides a strong Scriptural basis on which to compare the two theologies.

Ideally, both missiologies also concur on the desire for a unified church. This was obviously one of Paul's foremost focuses, and he genuinely desired the Jewish and Gentile

⁹² Ephesians 2:9 (NIV)

Christians to come together as one body of Christ. A large concern in Paul's letters is his yearning for unity. The ideal form of unity would be one body of Christ with the same beliefs, hopes, and goals. Although a completely unified body of Christ seems quite unattainable, especially considering the many religious and denominational divisions of today's society, it is still a lofty goal that would greatly benefit the Christian community. However difficult it may be, at a theological level this is still a similarity between Protestant and Paul's theologies.

Another area of comparison is the concept of world vision. "World vision" simply means believing that the Gospel message should reach all corners of the earth. This notion looks difficult to compare because Paul's understanding of the world was much different than the world today. However, there are still enough similarities to override the differences. Paul desired to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, as he knew it. This is shown through his missionary journeys and his final desire to reach Spain with the Gospel; Paul wanted to reach *all* with his message. Although, it is purely fact that the geographical world has changed since the first century, there is still a world vision aspect to missions. Today there are separations between homeland missions and overseas missions, but there is still a desire to share in all lands. Without taking into account the geographical differences in the first century and 21st century worlds, the desire to share the Gospel with the ends of the earth has not changed.

An additional aspect that influenced Paul's missiology was his eschatology. Obviously, the kingdom of God has not arrived as quickly as Paul thought it might, but that only means that it is a concept that still remains relevant today. It has always been clear to Paul that no one except God himself knows the exact time of the coming of the kingdom of God.

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly...⁹³

⁹³ 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 (NIV)

According to Paul, the world still does not know when the kingdom of God will come. It is this exact reason that missionaries today should preach with the same urgency that Paul preached with. This is a similarity that directly influences Paul and the missionaries today. This was part of the reason that led Paul to desire to reach all people with the Gospel, and it is this same concept that should encourage the present missionaries to reach all people.

Another area of passion for Paul was nurturing the communities he had visited. This is one area where the differences prevail over the similarities. Paul had an extreme passion for the church. He whole-heartedly believed in these communities of fellowship. Paul continually desired to return to communities where he had started churches. When this was not possible he wrote letters to the communities, and he sent other missionaries to the societies. This is an aspect of Paul's missions that has not been retained as much as it should have been. It is true that any interaction with the Gospel message is better than none at all, but in today's society, short term missions have become more common than any other form. Many missionaries find it too much of a commitment to stay long periods of time with a community. Others believe that it is more important to move on and reach numerous amounts of people instead of remaining and nurturing the new communities of faith. There are increasingly few organizations that either value, or truly 'act out' the concept of nurturing within their missions. This is one of the biggest differences that can be found in the mission theologies of Paul and 21st century Protestant Christians.

Overall, the theological similarities between Paul's model and the 21st century's model are very easy to pinpoint. Even though these comparisons have been made, critics still argue that Paul's society was much too different to compare with the present situation. Some of the differences are even minor enough to be completely irrelevant to the conversation. Some larger

differences show that the world population has dramatically increased, the religious dynamics of the world have changed, and society itself has drastically altered; however, there are still many similarities to be found. It is obvious that these similarities exist because much of present-day mission theology is rooted in Paul's theology. However, I believe that the differences between the theologies are what result in the problems of today's missions.

Why Paul Would Benefit Today's Society

Dangers:

A very important societal factor includes the dangers of spreading the Gospel in many nations. The unwillingness of certain nations to allow missionaries has already been discussed briefly. However, working as a missionary in today's society simply involves learning from Jesus' example of non-violence. Missionaries need to be aware that they are in the presence of danger, understand that they cannot completely change the conflict, practice non-violence, and yet still be able to share the Gospel message. This is not an impossible feat! Though the dangers seem extreme in today's society, in reality, missionaries have always faced this form of conflict. Jesus was the first to prepare his disciples for the persecution they would face:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.⁹⁴

Paul also talked about facing persecution and the life of a martyr when he discussed his journeys:

We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Matthew 5:10-11 (NIV)

⁹⁵ 1 Corinthians 4: 12-13 (NIV)

Conflict and violence is obviously not a new subject for missionaries.⁹⁶ Only an uneducated statement would say missions today are much more dangerous than during Paul's time. Paul faced the same dangers; they simply seem amplified today due to population growth and an increase in media communications. The Gospel message includes calls into faith and trust and witnessing. It also includes acknowledgement of the dangers and persecution. The present-day dangers do not discount Paul's theology since his was built around similar dangers.

Nurturing:

Paul's missiology also focused on the continual nurturing of the communities. This is an important aspect of missions that is being completely disregarded today. Paul entered a community, generally settled into that community, lived as a Christian presence, and shared the Gospel message. After this, he did not move on and forget about the community. Paul continued in his prayer and intercession for each group of people. This involved either revisiting the communities, sending others to encourage and teach the people, or supporting through continual writing contact. If more missionaries applied this heart-felt commitment in today's society, the results of their hard work could be much different. A bigger issue is the fact that monetary support has become the easiest way to contribute in the present times. This support requires no time or commitment. It is an easy solution that many people opt to take. This is a legitimate way of helping communities that so desperately need money, but in order to continue to foster change and growth, a more nurturing setting is needed. It is difficult to definitely say that things would change under more nurturing circumstances but some educated predictions can be laid out.

⁹⁶ Phillips and Coote, 211

Today's American society is constantly active, constantly ruled by timelines and bills, and constantly in a state of change. Even though it is a strong desire for most people, it is easy to forget how important extra care and attention from another person can be. The most valuable type of support for the church does not need to be financial support. During Paul's missionary travels, he did not financially support the communities he developed; however, he also did not become a financial burden. Paul lived in the communities by supporting himself through his trade. Newly developed Christian communities could be supported through prayer and relationship. This devotion to a person's well being is needed just as much as financial support. The peace that could start flowing through the communities would be unmatched. The growing sense of community within members and with the missionaries would develop quickly. No matter what boundaries had been crossed: racial, class, gender, or age, the strength of the community could drastically increase. At that point, fellowship within a single community could extend into the surrounding communities that have also received the Gospel message.

However, it is unrealistic to believe that every community would automatically accept and join in fellowship with other communities of faith. Inevitably, there will be communities that do not accept the Gospel message, and communities that incorrectly distort the message. The reality of human sin must also not be forgotten. However, keeping a realistic grasp on the situation, and understanding how difficult it is to predict, the continual nurturing and support of these communities would in no circumstances cause harm. Nurturing from the missionaries could provide just the right amount of emotional support.

Lifestyle:

Another important feature that Paul focused on was the lifestyle of those he preached to. This was an area that could lead to dramatic change, depending on the community that he entered. It is also a tricky concept because most people find change to be scary and difficult. Most people believe the idea that along with missionaries comes Westernization. This belief is rooted in the fact that the expansion of Western colonialism happened at the same time as the development of modern Western missions.⁹⁷ Although the two events coincided, the intent of missions should never have been to Westernize the communities.

Preserving the individual identities of the communities he preached to was something Paul excelled at. Paul's model clearly emphasizes his desire for the communities to stay as close as they can to their normal routines. He did not ask for the members of the community to model themselves after him, all he wanted was for Christian morals to seep into their daily lifestyles. One of the main issues Paul yearned to change within the communities was the large amount of idolatry that occurred: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."⁹⁸ Some of the Christian morals that Paul wanted the people to develop were written in his letter to the Colossians:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.⁹⁹

By removing idolatry and adding important values, Paul believed that lives would change all that they needed to. This is a concept that has been very difficult to maintain throughout missions today. It is much easier to enter a community and completely change its lifestyle to match an

⁹⁷ Phillips and Coote, 237

⁹⁸ Colossians 3:5 (NIV)

⁹⁹ Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)

ideal “Christian” community. However, this is an area where today’s missionaries would greatly benefit from Paul’s model. Missionaries could gradually work to reverse the missions/Westernization connotation by remaining firm in *not* changing the communities’ lifestyles. The message Paul preached was not about the exact doctrines or liturgy, exact schedules or activities, or the correct hierarchy within the church. The message Paul preached was about the love of God that flows into the love of all people. This message does not force total change upon people. One difficulty with this concept of attempting as little lifestyle change as possible is deciphering where the line should be drawn between enough change to adopt God’s values and remaining in a similar lifestyle without idolatry. Even though different lines will need to be drawn in reference to each situation; in general, Paul’s model portrays a wonderful example for missionaries in reference to the retaining the basic lifestyle of evangelized communities.

Religious Diversity:

Paul was able to carry the Gospel into society after society and provide a message that multiple, varied communities became willing to accept. Not only did Paul face the Jewish communities of his time, but also more importantly, he faced the Roman communities. Christianity varied so extremely from the Greek mythology that was common among the Roman communities, that it would have seemed impossible to be able to interpret Christianity within these societies. However, even through the diversity, Paul was able to share the Gospel in these communities. Paul was also able to share the Gospel among the Jewish culture. This change in beliefs was definitely not as drastic, but he was still able to adapt to these communities also:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the

law I became like on under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.¹⁰⁰

The situation is no different today. There are religions and denominations that are relatively close to Christianity on the one side of the spectrum, and there are religions, denominations, cults, and the lack of any religion on the opposite side of the spectrum. Missionaries need to reach out to these diverse groups under the guidance of Paul's example. The way that Paul was able to preach the message in these various communities demonstrates how well he was able to relate to many people. Paul was able to enter these extremely varied communities, preach the Gospel, and allow the communities to stay as close as possible to the life they knew. Overall, missionaries today experience a similar situation. Paul encountered communities that knew nothing of Christianity, those that had heard the message and disregarded it as crazy, and those that had heard the message and simply not accepted it. This comparison is simply meant to illustrate that today's societies are still similar to the societies in the first century. This similarity allows the comparison with Paul's model to become more valid.

¹⁰⁰ 1 Corinthians 9: 19-22 (NIV)

BENEFITS

The examples from Paul's model of missions provide a strong illustration for missions today. The message he preached, the societies he ventured into, and the perspective he took are all able to relate to today's society. It has been clearly shown that there are enough societal similarities between the first century and the 21st century to be able to utilize Paul's missions model, but there also needs to be a reason why missionaries would want to learn from Paul's example.

Both the Christian community and society as a whole would benefit from utilizing Paul's mission model. The Christian community would benefit by experiencing an increasing amount of success in sharing the message. By learning from Paul's model, the missionaries would be able to better interact in the diverse communities that they enter.

Society as a whole would also benefit. Using Paul's model could ideally create peaceful world relations, and potentially reduce the negative connotations about the West. Overall, returning to Paul's model could benefit today's total society, without the risk of ruining anything. The problems today already exist, and trying something new, or going back to something old, would not negatively affect the situation, and would most likely have dramatic positive effects.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

In conclusion, many angles of missions have been studied within this paper. Mission has become so ingrained within common vocabulary and understanding that often times its true importance has been forgotten. It is clear that mission is a central focus within the Christian faith. In fact, it has been frequently stated that “the church is mission.” However, it is this central notion that has continually been causing problems throughout the last decades.

The problems that have been investigated cover a great range. Problems both within the church and outside the church have been looked at. There are problems as simple as terminology and the connotations that follow from it, and there are problems that have resulted in serious divisions under a message of unity. Either way, the statistics from the “10/40 Window” show that there is something wrong with missions today if so many people are not hearing or accepting the Christian Gospel message. In order to uncover the origins of the problem, a Biblical model of missions was examined.

First of all, the apostle Paul’s missiology was intensely studied in order to set up a quality model of missions. Paul spent the second part of his life preaching the Gospel through missions. He provided such a wonderful example for missions that his model still remains valid today. Clear characteristics derived from Paul’s example were laid out in order to compare them with the situations in the 21st century.

Next, the present missiology was looked into. The mission theology of today appeared to overlap with much of Paul’s work. This seems obvious because much of modern missions has developed based on Paul’s theology. Since this was the case, there were no major flaws that were found within the missiology itself; however, there still had to be a root to the problem somewhere.

After much research, I believe that the problem lies in the application of mission work today. The theory behind it is not wrong; it simply is not being applied to its fullest capabilities. It was after the problem was clearly diagnosed that it seemed logical to completely compare Paul's missionary example to the present day situation. There were enough similarities found, both theological and situational, to be able to utilize Paul's model in order to benefit missions today.

There are many areas in missions in the 21st century that would benefit from going back to Paul's original model. Even though the world seems completely different from Paul's day, the similarities were highlighted to illustrate that Paul's missiology is still extremely valid. I believe returning to some of the basics of Paul's theology would benefit the societies of the 21st century. If missionaries were able to better preach the Gospel message to those around the world, it would create much better communities.

Potentially, an improved mission organization could lead to more peaceful international relations, communities that have benefited from the missionary resources, and from the Christian perspective, the spreading of the Christian faith. Although these situations are extremely idealistic, it is important to see that there would be benefits for all people and not just a specific group of people or community. Even if the idealistic goals were not completely reached, there would still be benefits for those who were reached by the improved model of missions. Overall, I have concluded that Paul's first century missiology would be extremely beneficial to the 21st century world.

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