

## ***Sixth Missionary Paradigm in Church History***

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David Bosch in his magnum opus *Transforming Mission* which is regarded as the most important text book available today on Missiology, has a sub-title which reads *Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*.

Writing in 2008 I observe that Bosch is forty metres higher than any other writer in the field of mission. I give three reasons why Bosch's book leads the pack. First he provides a brilliant exposition of what the Scriptures teach on mission. For instance if you have wondered why his home-town kinsmen tried to kill Jesus when he spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4) read Bosch page 108ff. Second he reviews the whole of Church history from the standpoint of mission, and third he analyses accurately and fully where we stand internationally on mission today. It is not as though I am entirely uncritical of David Bosch. He is ecumenical in his approach. The reader always needs to bear in mind the huge differences between the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and churches which proclaim faithfully the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

In discussing the manner in which the Christian Church has through the ages interpreted and carried out its mission, Bosch follows Hans Kung who submits that the entire history of Christianity can be subdivided into six major paradigms. By paradigm is meant character. Each paradigm has its own character. The change from one to another is gradual but each epoch has its own characteristics. The six major paradigms according to Kung are:

1. The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity
2. The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period
3. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm
4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm
5. The modern Enlightenment paradigm
6. The emerging ecumenical paradigm

Each of these six periods Kung suggests, reveals a peculiar understanding of the Christian faith. To this Bosch adds that each also offers a distinctive understanding of Christian mission.

As we look back over the whole of Church history we should note that there is only one Church of those who are united to Christ by faith. It is one united family from beginning to end. There are changes in emphasis but the same desires for the glory of Christ indwell believers from century to century. There are times such as the medieval Roman Catholic period, when the Gospel was almost extinguished and when we have to search for those who exhibited the indwelling sanctification power of the Holy Spirit. He, the Holy Spirit, is the Spirit of mission. The compassion and missionary concern of the Head of the Church lives in all his disciples but with different degrees of power and passion and intelligence (John 15:7). Outstanding examples of true Christianity through history are seen in the love and sacrificial service of those who have given up everything to go out to the unreached. In doing so they faced hazards and perils of all kinds. A high proportion were martyred..

## **1. The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity**

The root of the word apocalyptic, means to uncover. Uncovered in Luke's book of Acts are the narratives describing the first missionary journeys from which we can extract missionary principles. The New Testament is intrinsically a missionary book. The four gospels describe Jesus' mission to this world from heaven and then back again. The book of Acts describes mission which begins in Jerusalem, then reaches out to Judea, to Samaria, to Antioch and then to the uttermost parts of the Roman Empire which formed the parameters of the world for the apostles. But there was to be no limit as the extent of gospel proclamation. That was never in doubt. Mission was to be to the ends of the earth (Is 49:6; Acts 13:47). Luke begins his book by describing the formation of the Church in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. He concludes with a description of Paul's ministry in Rome, the capital city of the Empire. The apostle Paul planned to go to Spain (Rom 15:28) which shows the extent of his vision for mission.

Acts 13:1-4 describes the church practice from which the first missionary journey was initiated. The vision for mission was and is born out of prayer. It was while the church at Antioch was engaged in prayer that the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'. In every place where the apostles laboured they sought to plant churches. Leadership is essential. Elders were elected in each church. We observe that when a missionary journey was complete the missionaries returned to base, that is the church from where they had been sent, to report on their work. They never acted in private independent capacity.

We note too is the fact that missionaries went out two by two. Paul trained a team of workers. For instance in Colossians 4:10-13 he tells of 'fellow workers' one of whom Epaphras, was the instrument in planting the church at Colossae. Capable ministers were sent to areas of special need: Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia and Tychicus to Ephesus' (2 Tim 4:10-12). In Philippians chapter two Paul tells of his sending Timothy to Philippi and also Epaphroditus whom he calls his fellow soldier and fellow worker. In the book of Acts there is only one Church, not denominations of churches. As we see in the glaring instance of the Corinthian church the New Testament reveals that there was a tendency always to ignorance and error. The battle for truth was constant just as it is today.

As we will see there is much to learn from the vast missionary experience of the Church over 2000 years but the apostolic period must always take precedence. Acts is our basic handbook and guide for missiology.

Common grace is the precursor to effectual saving grace. Time and again missionaries have been barred from entering pagan nations because of hostile rulers or because of the chaos of civil war. For instance for centuries missionaries were barred from entering China. The Roman Empire by reason of law and order and by the construction of a network of well engineered roads which ran straight over hill and dale provided conditions amenable to Christian missionaries. Travel was safer and faster in Roman times than at any later period up until the nineteenth century. Missionary work was also facilitated by a common language, Greek. The apostle Paul's policy was to go to the principal cities and then work out from there into the country areas. The Church

was established in Antioch where believers were first called Christians and later in the cities of Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth

It is clear from Acts that the gospel was preached first to the Jews. There must have been hope that Israel would repent and be saved. That was not to be. Relationships deteriorated to the point where the very mention of the name Gentiles resulted in a violence and hatred (Acts 22:22). This enmity toward God's Son and the saving gospel of his Son provoked God's wrath. In AD 70 judgement fell upon Jerusalem. Judaism was crippled at that time.

As the Jews became more vehement in their rejection of Christ so God's wrath toward them accumulated reaching an apex in AD 70 (1 Th 1:15-16) At the same time the Gospel was carried to the Gentiles (Rom 11:11).

## **2. The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period (100-500)**

In spite of terrible persecutions which came in ten waves under different Roman emperors the Gospel spread rapidly so that Justin Martyr by 150 could say 'there is not one single race of men whether barbarians or Greeks of wandering tribes who live in tents among whom prayers are not offered through the name of Jesus.' This is surely an exaggeration but it does reflect the manner in which the Gospel spread with success across a wide area.

Denial that Caesar was Lord carried with it the death penalty. During the second century Polycarp an 86 year old bishop was put to death when he refused to deny Christ. He was burned at the stake. Many young people were martyred because they refused to deny Christ. There is the saying that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Another well known martyr of this time is Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who was taken to Rome for execution in 135.

Bithynia was a fairly remote province on the North East side of Asia Minor (Turkey). Pliny the Roman governor of Bithynia in about the year 112 in a letter to Rome expressed dismay at the rapid spread of the Christian Faith. He spoke of 'many in every period of life, on every level of society, of both sexes—in towns and villages and scattered throughout the countryside' (Neill p. 28). It is estimated that by 300 roughly half of some urban areas had turned to the Christian faith. (Bosch p. 192).

This advance is typical of many places. Egypt became a stronghold for Christianity and churches sprang up all across north Africa where nearly every town and village had a bishop. By the end of the third century there was no area of the Roman empire which had not been penetrated to some extent by the Gospel (Neill p. 35).

What are the characteristics of this period of Christian expansion in spite of severe persecution? Stephen Neill gives six reasons. First there was a burning conviction which filled the believers with zeal. 'A great event had burst upon them in creative power'. Second the good news which was carried forward by the believers concerning the absolute reality of Jesus, the resurrection, and the judgement to come was in many ways welcome to the hearers in an age of uncertainty. The highly imaginative mythologies of Greece were incredible and provided no foundation for

life. Third the Christians commended themselves by the evident purity of their lives. It is not as though the churches were free from scandalous sin but the teaching of the New Testament about holiness which did shine in the Christians was like to darkness compared with the utter sordidness and corruption of society. The fourth factor was a sense of community and of belonging for everyone in the Church, male and female, slave and free, rich and poor, Greek and Barbarian, Jew and gentile. Here was a body of people bound together by one Lord, One faith, one Baptism. Fifth was the reality of love and compassion in a Roman world of cruelty and the misery it produces. There was care of orphans care for widows, and prisoners and deprived people. Sixth although the magistrates were loath to proceed to harsh measures of repression when persecution broke out martyrdom was attended with the utmost possible publicity. The calm and beautiful testimony of martyrs made an unforgettable impression and it is evident that the Holy Spirit used these testimonies to create conviction of sin, repentance and faith.

Eventually with the conversion of the emperor Constantine persecution receded. A completely new scenario developed with a whole set of dangers to imperil the testimony of the Church of Christ. The Church has been more hurt by infestation inside than by persecution from without. Philip Schaff writes 'From the time of Constantine church discipline declines; the whole Roman world having become nominally Christian, and the host of hypocritical professors multiplying beyond all control. Yet the firmness of Ambrose with the emperor Theodosius shows, that notable instances of discipline are not altogether wanting' (vol 3, p.8).

Other dangers in the form of heresy threatened the Christian Church. Great Councils were convened to clarify doctrine. The fourth century is important not only because of Constantine but because of the Council of Nicea in 325 convened to preserve the unity of the Church and to clarify doctrine.

*What do we learn?*

From this period we note that the Holy Spirit blesses courageous bold testimony. Persecution failed to destroy the Church. Persecution can have very adverse effects and can stifle the gospel as we see in many Muslim countries today but it is not always so. In those early centuries Christians multiplied in spite of persecution.

### **3. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm (500-1517)**

With the Edict of Milan in 313 Christianity became the State religion of the Roman Empire and many flocked into the Church. Far from being an advantage this development brought a lowering of spiritual standards. There was a crucial loss of clarity as to the nature of true conversion and a loss of personal commitment. This was a time of increasing superstition and spiritual confusion. There was an accretion of human tradition which either distorted the gospel or smothered it completely. Nevertheless in spite of this the Holy Spirit has always been at work calling our a people Christ preserving and them

In time there was a reaction in which dedicated believers became disgusted with the worldliness of the Church. They withdrew to monasteries with the purpose of preserving and culturing godliness. Different monastic orders for both men and women developed.

The monastic movement seems a strange inverting of God's order for he commands to go out into the world to make disciples but here the dedicated were withdrawing from the world to bury themselves in monasteries. Yet our God is gracious and he over-ruled this strange arrangement and ordered it for much good. In a time of great political upheaval the monasteries proved to be places where the Scriptures and libraries were preserved. They also served a purpose to promote education care for the sick and disabled and places where compassion was shown to the poor and needy. Furthermore some monasteries trained missionaries and send them out in groups of 13. Some regard Boniface (680-754) as England's greatest missionary. He and his companions evangelised extensively and successfully in Germany. With 51 others Boniface was martyred in Holland when he was preaching the Gospel in that land which at that time was in pagan darkness.

From about the middle of the third century the Roman Empire found the work of military defence of the Empire increasingly problematic. The high standard of discipline required to maintain a first class large army faded. There simply was not adequate willingness to make the sacrifice needed. In 410 Alaric the Goth sacked Rome. The Old order of the Roman Empire which at one time seemed invincible collapsed completely. The period commonly known as the Dark Ages, 500-1000, began.

In 622 a prophet by the name of Mohammed moved from Mecca to Medina. Born into the world was a new monotheistic religion which is in our news daily. Muslim domination spread with astonishing speed. Jerusalem fell in 638 and the ancient empire of Persia in 650. In 642 Alexandria was captured and then the whole of Egypt. Advance took place across the whole of North Africa Carthage being taken in 697. By 15 most of Spain was under Muslim dominion. Pressure increased on the Eastern Roman Empire. The fall of Constantinople to Islam in 1463 is a major event in history.

This relentless advance of Islam came by the sword. Stephen Neill writes 'The most surprising thing about these invasions is that the loss of life was so small and the collapse of Christian civilisation so rapid. A great many Christians lived on as Christians. They suffered certain hardships, and had to endure loss of equality and privilege. They were second-class citizens and tax-payers, and could never hope to rank with the Muslim overlords. But the last thing the Muslims wished to was to exterminate or to convert them all. The Arabs were not farmers; they needed peasants to cultivate the land. They were not administrators, and they needed educated Christians to serve as clerks and translators and to carry out the all the moral obligations of government. A number of Christians rose comparatively high in government service, though there was ceaseless pressure on them to improve their position by turning Muslim, and a great many of them yielded to this pressure' (p.55). This description is certainly relevant in England today where evangelical Christians form a mere one percent of the population and where nominal, sacral Christianity is in a state of collapse. The majority are biblically illiterate. Society is saturated with Postmodern thinking and this results in ever lowering moral standards.

The rise and dominance of the Roman Catholic Church is central to understanding missiology in this period. Missionaries like Boniface were zealous for the Pope and hostile to any form of independent Christian expression. Boniface and his like believed that unity was essential for the well-being of the Church. Christianity became largely secular. Often mission was to turn pagan peoples from superstition to the Christian faith but that faith was notional rather than a personal union with Christ. The brand of Christianity to which they were brought was external rather than spiritual regeneration. Whole countries in Western Europe were 'converted'. One example must suffice as representative and it is the instance of Olaf Trygvesson (969-1000). Olaf was in the Scilly Isles when he was so impressed by a hermit that he accepted baptism. On return to Norway he was crowned king. Olaf then made it his business to use every means to bring the whole nation from paganism to Christianity. He employed flattery, guile and persuasion. When those means failed he used sheer coercion.

The idea that everyone can be conformed, by force if needed, prevailed.

A major episode in Church history which has resulted in irreparable damage to missions to the Muslims was the Crusades. These can be described broadly as a struggle in Palestine between Christianity and Islam. Between 1096 and 1291 there were eight crusades. The name crusade is derived from the emblem of the Cross woven into the clothing of the crusaders. These armies consisted of a motley band consisting of some professional soldiers together with merchants set upon gain, unfrocked monks, malcontents, beggars and dropouts. It was a time of widespread deep seated superstition which was evidenced in the veneration of relics. In the Holy Roman Empire there were 1036 shrines. Someone suggested that there were so many pieces of wood from the Cross that if brought together an ark could be constructed with them. The greatest relic of all was Jerusalem. The ambition was to recapture that city from Islam. The Crusades were misguided and ended in appalling carnage and barbarity. This epic failure of nominal Christianity brought a wall of separation between Christianity and Islam. To this day Muslims regard the West as the aggressors. Those responsible for mounting and organising the Crusades are more culpable than the extremist Muslim suicide bombers of our day because they had access to the Bible but ignored it. The Crusades, on account of their violence and rapacity also widened the gulf between the Eastern and Western Churches.

Bosch points out that it is impossible to regard the crusades as 'missionary wars' (p.225). He writes as follows, 'the precept that killing even in a just war occasioned guilt (a tenet that was basic to Augustine's thinking) came increasingly under pressure. One church leader after another - Brun of Querfurt, Manegold of Lauthenbach, Bernard of Constance, Bonizo of Sutri, and others - who had persistently paved the way for the first Crusade (1096), differentiated less and less between pagans on the one hand and heretics or apostates on the other. Anybody belonging to any of these categories could be killed with impunity and, in Manegold's judgement, the one who killed such a person would incur no guilt but rather deserved praise and honour. The killing of a heathen or apostate, it was now suggested, was exceptionally pleasing to God. (references in Erdmann 1977;12,236,238).

When the Church became nominal in character the spiritually minded sought to find each other and form bodies within the body by which they could preserve the truth and encourage each other. This concept of a church within the Church is termed *Ecclesiola in Ecclesia*. Dr Martyn

Lloyd-Jones in a valuable study of this theme concentrates on *Ecclesiola in Ecclesia* in post reformation times but from the earliest monastic movements this principle was in vogue. [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, Banner of Truth, p. 129ff] In national churches the spiritual core is often found at the weekly prayer meetings. It is out of these spiritual cores that many missionary movements have had their birth. Monasticism illustrates the principle of *Ecclesiola in Ecclesia*. It was deemed impossible to separate from the big body. The next best thing was to foster groups of believers within the body.

The Roman Catholic Church became increasingly apostate. More and more tradition was added by papal decree: the doctrine of purgatory in 593, celibacy of the priesthood 1079, the rosary (mechanical praying with beads) 1090, sale of indulgences 1190, transubstantiation 1215, cup forbidden to the people at communion in 1414, and tradition declared to be of equal authority with Scripture in 1545.

True believers learned to survive in spite of increasing difficult conditions. Gerhard Groote (1340-1384) is an example. He was born in Deventer, Holland. Groote's parents were wealthy. In his youth he behaved so badly that the local priest refused to give him communion. But in 1374 he was converted. He died aged only 44 but during the last five years of his life he laid foundations from which sprang a widespread movement that was known as the Brethren of the Common Life. Groote founded a semi-monastic order for women and promoted and provided for the education of boys. He preached repentance and denounced the sins of the clergy. He translated portions of the Bible. His disciples multiplied some of whom were very gifted such as John Cele (1360-1419) and Hegius (1433-1498). Under Cele a school at Zwolle attracted 1200 students. Under Hegius a school at Deventer provided for 2,200 students. These disciples, even though they did not attack Roman dogma head-on, were nevertheless persecuted but survived and this movement laid foundations by way of Bible study and prayer for the 16th Century Reformation.

*What can we learn from this period?*

The unbiblical error of enforced celibacy for the clergy developed. Celibacy for the priesthood was decreed by pope Gregory VII in 1079. Terrible sin is prone where celibacy is enforced. In due course many priests kept a concubine and this practice was winked at. More than ever the evils which result from enforced celibacy are being uncovered in the Roman Catholic Church today. After we have come to terms with that reality we must still say that that is only one side of the story. In both the medieval Church and in the modern Protestant Church there are outstanding examples of total commitment which God has greatly blessed. If you are single and committed it is possible that the Lord will call you to service in which your singleness is an advantage. Singleness is regarded in some places as a tragedy. This too is unbiblical. Our Lord was single. In the medieval period many gave themselves totally to the Lord's work and sacrificed everything to that end, including marriage

#### **4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm (1517-1700)**

It has often been pointed out that the Reformers were indifferent if not hostile to mission. Catholic scholars have judged them harshly in this respect. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine in criticising the poor Protestant missionary record wrote, 'Heretics are never said to have converted either pagans or Jews to the faith, but only to have perverted Christians' (Neill p.188ff).

The nub here is what we define as a Christian. We need to keep the criticism of the Reformers in perspective and one way in which we can do that is to recall what was achieved by them. We will look at Luther.

For about 1000 years before the great Reformation of the 16th century the Christian Church was in a state of steady decline. By 1517 when Luther sounded the alarm that brought spiritual awakening to the Church after centuries of decline and corruption, the situation was desperate. Indulgences to free people from purgatory were sold on authority of the Pope. The cash was used to build St Peter's Cathedral in Rome. A priest by the name of Johan Tetzel was the chief salesman hawking these indulgences. It was this deception and wickedness in particular that aroused Martin Luther to write 95 statements exposing the corrupt practices of Rome. Luther nailed the 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The Printing press had only just been discovered. The 95 theses were translated immediately by the media of the day from Latin into German and rapidly and widely spread. In a very short time Luther was spoken of everywhere as the monk who had defied the Pope. The Reformation had begun. Luther pulled the rope which rang the bell which awoke the world from a thousand years of sleep.

As we look back at the history of Germany at that time we note that Martin Luther was God's man for that hour. Not only did he set the 16th century Reformation in motion so that the Church and the world would never be the same, but he translated the Bible into German for his people. He gave to them the clear biblical message of salvation, that is, justification by faith alone, and by grace alone. He took Christianity out of the domain of the monastery and provided the common people with a pattern of godly family life. He gave the German people catechisms and needed expository works to make the Bible relevant. 57 large volumes of writings came from his pen. He also contributed generously to music used in the churches by magnificent psalm renderings and hymns.

Within the short space of five years 1517-1521 the Western Church was radically altered.

Were the Reformers missionary minded? With regard to their immediate environment they certainly were. Students learned theology at Wittenberg and went out all over Europe. For instance two students, brothers Olaus and Laurentius Petri set off for their homeland of Sweden and through their preaching turned the entire nation to the Protestant faith. John Calvin trained 88 missionary pastors for church planting in France. They laboured with tremendous success in spite of persecution and eventually a Church of over two million members emerged. Bosch evidently was unaware of Calvin's work into France otherwise he would never have asserted that 'the Reformers could not conceive of a missionary outreach into countries in which there was no Protestant (Lutheran, Reformed, etc.) government' (p.246). Many missionaries trained by Calvin were martyred in France.

But Bosch is at his lucid best when he asserts; 'It is absurd to summon the Reformers before the tribunal of the modern missionary movement and find them guilty for not having subscribed to definition of mission which did not even exist in their time' (p. 244).

The Reformers must be given credit for shaking the fabric of the Roman Catholic Church which in due course resulted in the counter reformation and an extensive purification and purging away of much corruption. Little if any doctrine was changed. A new spirituality emerged which produced an army of missionaries. We recall that the Vatican had command of a vast political and ecclesiastical machine. Virtually the whole of South America was divided between the Spanish and Portuguese and many other parts of the world were taken over and jealously guarded against the entrance of Protestant missionaries. Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique were allocated to the Portuguese, other nations to the Spanish, and yet others to France and Belgium.

We should take note of the fact that the while the Reformers no longer considered the Great Commission as binding the Anabaptists certainly did. Textual references to the Great Commission are frequently quoted in their Confessions of Faith. Itinerant Anabaptist evangelists travelled everywhere preaching the gospel and giving no respect whatever to parish boundaries. There simply was no limit to the missionary field as far as the Anabaptists were concerned. G H Williams in his monumental book *The Radical Reformation* shows that the Anabaptist movement was extraordinary in its extent was diverse in doctrinal character.

Francis Xavier (1505-1552) was the most famous missionary of 16th Century Roman Catholicism. We are critical of the doctrinal baggage that he carried but nevertheless can learn much from his pioneering work. He stayed 27 months in Japan and established a base there. How much the converts understood initially is subject to question. Nevertheless the work expanded and when in 1617 violent persecution broke out there were many prepared to die rather than renounce their faith. On one occasion 70 Japanese at Yedo were crucified upside down at low water, and were drowned as the tide came up. An accurate assessment is that over a period of 24 years 1,900 were martyred in Japan. Xavier also made progress in China and in India both those nations having a history of Christianity, though very small, in ebb and flow over the centuries.

The 16th century was a time of zealous missionary outreach for the Roman Catholic Church. Many missionaries especially of the Dominican and Fransiscan Orders, settled all over the world. The Philippines is a notable example. The first missionaries, the Augustinians, seem to have landed in 1565; by the end of the century a number of other Orders, including the Spanish Jesuits, had settled. The islands were well stocked with Roman Catholic teachers. Here there was no powerful and ancient civilisation to oppose the progress of the Christian teaching; nor was there potential wealth to attract the demoralising influences of the Western traders. The tribes were simple, disunited, and easily accessible. Spanish discovery was followed by Spanish occupation; by the end of the century the islands as a whole had come under Spanish control. The inhabitants were treated kindly; there are few tales of massacre or atrocity.

As we look back over the time of the 16th Reformation we observe that there were three wings, the German (Lutheran), the French (Genevan) and the English (Anglican). At first the Anglican reformation looked the least likely to succeed and make progress. However the Reformed

movement in England gave birth to three generations of Puritan pastors. Theirs was a missionary theology which formed the foundation or seedbed out of which the great missionary movements of the 18th and 19th centuries were to come.

It was a Dutch Puritan, Gisbertus Voetius (1558-1676), who wrote the first comprehensive theology of mission. Voetius regarded the foundation of mission to be primarily theological - flowing from the very heart of God. Voetius regarded the Pope, religious orders, institutions, as well as secular authorities, as inappropriate agents of mission. Only the Church could plant churches (Bosch p.257).

*What do we learn from this period?*

The 16th century brought with it the primary questions, What is a Christian? and, What is a Church? The Reformation brought back the primacy of truth especially the importance of justification by faith alone and by grace alone. On the question, What is a church? the Anabaptists believed that the magisterial Reformers fell short of the biblical pattern that a church is a gathered body of believers called out of the world. In this way they regarded the Reformation as unfinished. According to the book of Acts missionaries go out to make disciples, baptise them and form local churches. The Roman Catholics did not deny the need for personal conversion but they worked for the Christianisation of society and too readily baptised whole communities with scant regard to the necessity of personal regeneration by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. Assent is a very different thing to a new heart and new mind.

## **5. The modern enlightenment paradigm (1700-1970)**

The term enlightenment (modernism) - we are now post-modern, is unpacked by Bosch (p.266ff). He succinctly and briefly outlines the Enlightenment as the Age of Reason and an age of increasing scientific confidence as though man can ultimately know everything. Linked with that was the gradual elimination of purpose, a subject tackled head on by Jonathan Edwards was, 'By whom and for what purpose did the universe come into being?' Replacing God was the idea of a mechanistic universe. A further feature of the Enlightenment was confidence in human progress. The maximum was: 'all problems are in principle solvable'. The Enlightenment regarded people as emancipated, autonomous and liberated from the tutelage of God and the Church.

The transition from one paradigm to another is not abrupt. It is gradual. Against this background of human progress, discovery and confidence we must examine the extraordinary developments in mission.

*The time of spiritual revivals*

The Church was coming into an age of revivals. On record is the Moravian Revival in Herrnhut in 1727. This remarkable 'Pentecost' was to have an enduring effect on mission. In 1727 the Moravian Church commonly reckons its 'birthday' to be August 13, 1727, the 'day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Congregation', 'its Pentecost', in the words of Zinzendorf

(cited in Benham 1895:103ff), 'They were baptised by the Holy Spirit himself to one love', according to August Gottlich Spangenberg, Zinzendorf's successor 'from that time on Herrnhut became a living Congregation of Christ'. What took place at the service on that Wednesday morning none of the participants could fully describe. 'They left the house of God that noon, "hardly knowing whether they belonged to earth or had already gone to Heaven". [Ron Davies, *I will pour out My Spirit*, Monarch, 1992. p. 76]

A true revival is not a matter of emotion or intense experience. It must be measured by the fruit it produces. Over the next 150 years over 2,100 Moravian missionaries went to the ends of the earth.

Count Zinzendorf became the leader of the Moravian movement. He shaped their development according to the basic idea of 'a little church within the Established Church'. Zinzendorf was a zealous and generous promoter and supporter of missionary endeavour. When it was important to avoid the stigma of being called a sect Zinzendorf secured for the movement Episcopal succession. He travelled widely and laboured ceaselessly for the Gospel.

A few years after the revival at Herrnhut in 1735 Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) witnessed an extraordinary revival in the town of Northampton where he was minister, and along the Connecticut valley. Again in 1740 to 1741 there was a powerful revival which spread across the New England States and is associated with the itinerant ministry of George Whitefield. A further profound influence on Edwards was the life and testimony of missionary to the Red Indians, David Brainerd who, when he died in 1747 in the Edwards' home, left his diaries. These formed the basis for Edwards to write the biography of Brainerd, which for over a century was the most popular missionary biography in print.

Edwards was fascinated by God's purpose to glorify his name through the advance of the Gospel throughout the earth and he believed that this would be accomplished by outpourings of the Holy Spirit [cf Jonathan Edwards, [\*The History of Redemption\*](#), Banner of Truth]. Furthermore he believed that these outpourings would be preceded by intercession. Of the six books he wrote concerning or related to revival, one was devoted to a call to special prayer which was called a 'A Concert of Prayer for Revival'.

The abbreviated title reads of this short book reads: '[\*An humble Attempt to Promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people in extraordinary prayer for revival and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom on earth pursuant to the Scripture promises and prophecies concerning the last time.\*](#)' He refers to several Scriptures in this connection, such as Micah 4 and Isaiah 60:2-4.

The call to prayer was the main thrust of his treatise He began with an exposition of Zechariah 8:20-22.: 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty. I myself am going.' And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to entreat him." ' Edwards asserts of this passage: 'There never happened anything, from the time of the prophet Zechariah to the time of Christ to answer this prophecy.'

Do the Scriptures promise great revivals in this dispensation? That is a very important question. Some relevant Scriptures are Psalm 2:8,9; 22:27-31; 67; 72; 110:1, Daniel 2:35 and 44; Hab 2:14; Zech 8:20-23; Isaiah 2,11, 42:4; Malachi 1.11. Do those Scriptures promise that the gospel will be victorious over all opposition? That question too is vital. If we believe that the descriptions apply to the extension of the Messiah's kingdom then we should feel constrained to explore their meaning. All Scripture has a moral application. As we view the prophecies they create hope and vision which in turn lead to intercession. A bright future prospect for Christ's kingdom on earth inspires missionary zeal and enterprise. When the way is hard and exacting, the ultimate victory envisaged will engender courage and impart perseverance.

Jonathan Edwards corresponded with ministers in Scotland and it was through one of them, John Erskine (1721-1803), that Edwards' book '*An Humble Attempt...*' was posted to John Ryland (1753-1825), a pastor in the Northampton Association of pastors. The call to prayer was implemented and the subsequent great awakening of 1790 to 1840 called the Forgotten Revival can be traced to this source. The call to prayer has a distinct missionary emphasis that 'the gospel be spread to most distant parts for the habitable globe.'

A caution must be made with regard to revival. David Smith warns against a preoccupation with revival that limits the possibility of decline, loss and recession. He warns against euphoria in the marvellous blessings that accrue from revival but which ignore the reality of setbacks, sufferings and periods of decline and loss which seem to form an integral part of the wider purpose in the world. He also warns about the real danger of optimism which overlooks the reality of divine holiness. Smith cites Kenneth Scott Latourette who wrote a magisterial history of Christian missions but was a realist who recognised that 'advance and recession, not irreversible progress, was the pattern of Christian expansion, just as John Bunyan saw that there was a way to hell even from the gate of heaven'. David Smith also warns against false prophets who tell us that we are on the verge of a mighty revival when that is not the case. He cites Michael Riddle of New Zealand who said that he 'lost count of the number of revivalist movements which have swept through New Zealand promising massive influx but a year after have faded. The Christian community seems largely unchanged, apart from a few who have grown cynical through the abuse of their goodwill, energy and money'.

William Carey's call and subsequent pioneer missionary work in India is one of the most enthralling sagas in Church history. Carey's example stirred not only the Baptist denomination but many other groupings as well. Carey's ability to persevere against the most formidable odds including the incapacitating illness of his wife fascinates readers those who read his life story. Carey from England and pioneer Adoniram Judson from America mark a new epoch in the history of missions. From the beginning of the 19th century missionary societies proliferated and an ever increasing army of missionaries went to the furthestmost parts of the earth.

It is not as though there was no missionary activity before this. For instance before the advent of William Carey Christian Friedrich Schwartz (1726-1798) laboured in India for 48 years without a break. He built up a church of about 2,000 members but in spite of the care that he took there were unworthy members and the church fell into a state of decline and collapse after his death. Schwartz mastered several languages including Tamil and Persian. During his life he was

saddened by the sad lack of interest in mission. The surge was to come in the 19th century as stated above.

*The time of beginnings and forming bridge-heads*

Like some Muslim nations in the 21st century much of the unreached world was virtually impregnable in the early years of the 19th century. The most difficult part was to make a bridge-head and to forge a way into nations for the Gospel. Mention has been made of the famous Carey and Judson but there was an ever increasing army of missionaries that spread across every part for the world that was accessible. Three examples, Robert Morrison, John Williams and Alfred Saker must suffice.

Robert Morrison (1782-1834) first British missionary to China by his sterling example of patience in the face of danger was used to increase knowledge and interest in the great challenge of mission. Such was the enmity in China to foreigners that Morrison had to work from the Portuguese island of Macoa off the coast of China or at Canton where the British had established a base. The Chinese authorities threatened with death penalty to anyone tampering with their language which meant that it was extremely difficult to find helpers willing to risk their lives in translation work. As Judson translated the whole Bible into Burmese, (which translation is still in use in Burma today), so Morrison succeeded in translating the whole Bible into Chinese.

After six years Morrison baptised the first convert and recorded this prayer 'May he be the firstfruits of a great harvest; one of millions who shall believe and be saved from the wrath to come!'

John Williams was the best known of all the pioneer missionaries to the South Sea Islands of the Pacific. He was sent out by the LMS in 1817. He was firm in his belief that the evangelisation of the Islands could only be successfully achieved by indigenous believers. By 1834 he reported that every island of significance within 2,000 miles of Tahiti Samoa was particularly encouraging. In 1830 John Williams entered and left eight Tahitian teachers. When the first European missionaries came to live there they discovered a Christian community of about 2,000. Within a generation the greater part of the population had become Christian. In the early 20th century a leader observed that for its size Samoa had probably given more missionaries to the mission field than any other and that at great sacrifice in martyrdom. In 1839 John Williams together with a young companion Harris was attacked on the island of Erromango, speared to death and then dragged away to a cannibal feast. (Neill p. 253ff).

Alfred Saker (1814-1880) as a child was physically so feeble that the old family nurse suggested he was not worth raising. When he attended junior school only three quarters of a mile away his brother had to carry him at least part of the way. As he grew his gifts became apparent and by 16 he had built a small steam engine. This weak specimen turned out to be the most universally gifted and versatile all round missionary in the history of the Church. He was converted in a Baptist church aged 19. The Baptist Missionary Society was active on the West Coast of Africa which was on account of its hostile climate and malaria was renowned as the grave yard of missionaries. From 1843 to his death in 1880 Alfred and his wife Helen laboured in Cameroon a

land lying directly under the tropical sun. Alfred was an able pastor, preacher, linguist, Bible translator, explorer, engineer, town planner (there is a monument to him at Limbe which town he designed), statesman, politician, brick and cement manufacturer, builder, carpenter, bricklayer, physician, educationalist, technician and printer. He possessed a gift of intense concentration and zeal. All these gifts were necessary in Africa which was primitive and suffering especially because of the need of medical knowledge. Saker highlights the changing face of Africa which is a mixture of the still primitive and those parts which have been modernised. [For life of Alfred Saker see *Reformation Today* issue 135]

### *The time of expansion*

The first pioneers were used to find a way past iron barriers and crack open seeming impossible barriers. Adoniram Judson's example of perseverance is an example of Herculean endurance and Job-like patience. He endured the opposition of the British East India Company which was determined to keep missionaries out of Burma. Judson had to find a back door of entrance. He faced the hostility of an all powerful arrogant Burmese emperor as well as imprisonment in a stinking and dangerous jail. These obstacles did not break his resolve and nor did the most heart-breaking bereavements, the death of his children and his wife Anne. However his pioneering work led to the sending of many more missionaries to Burma. There the tribal peoples have been largely won over to Christ but the central core of Buddhism is still mostly impervious to the gospel. [Erroll Hulse, *Adoniram Judson and the Missionary Call*, Chapel Library, USA, 1996]. The pioneers believed that their efforts would eventually result in a great harvest. Time and the grace of God has proved that to be correct.

In our reckoning explorers like [David Livingstone](#) (1813-73) must be included. Livingstone opened up areas of Africa formerly hidden from common knowledge. and opened up avenues down which missionaries could penetrate hitherto unreached peoples.

To attempt a global perspective it is important to observe that the missionary surge in the 19th century came out of Western Europe. For instance Latourette writes of Germany: 'In the nineteenth century not only did more voluntary movements emerge than ever before from the Protestantism of Germany to minister to those within the country suffering from the ills of society and to reach the rank and file of the population with the Gospel. From it also issued more extensive efforts to carry the Gospel to the entire world than at any previous time in the nation's history' (vol 2, p.114). the Scandinavian countries, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland have generous records of missionary endeavour. The following table with striking features is extracted from OW and gives approximate statistics for Protestant missionaries

- Germany (82m) 4,090 to 150 countries
- The UK (58m) 10,654 to 198 countries 148 to Nepal
- Norway (4.5m) 1,060 to 82 countries 87 to Japan
- Finland (5m) 1,494 to 84 countries 87 to Ethiopia
- Sweden (9m) 1,106 to 100 countries 158 to Tanzania
- USA (278m) 60,200 to 220 countries
- Canada (31m) 7,094 to 180 countries
- Australia (18) 4,388 to 134 countries 260 to PNG

- New Zealand (3.8m) 1,836 to 114 countries

#### *Semi Western nations*

- South Africa (40m) 2,622 to 100 countries

#### *Emerging nations*

- Brazil (170m) 4,754 to 100 countries 66 to Guinea Bissau
- S Korea (46m) 10,464 to 156 countries 546 to Japan
- Philippines (75m) 2,829 to 77 countries 138 to Thailand
- Nigeria (111m) 3,700 to 50 countries

#### *A complex nation*

- India (1,013m) 44,000 missionaries of which 60 percent are working cross-culturally in India which has more and larger people groups with no Christians, churches of workers than any other part of the world.

From this overall sketch we return to China which with 1,262 million is the most populous nation in the world. Robert Morrison's exploratory efforts marked the new beginning for mission in China. The term 'new beginning' is used because Christianity had been introduced three times to China and twice had completely disappeared. The first in the seventh century was by Nestorians Christians who were zealously evangelistic and who were not heterodox as is commonly believed. The second was in the thirteenth century by Franciscan missionaries but this came into decline and Jesuits in the early seventeenth century could find no existing Christians. [Latourette. vol 3, p433] Morrison's missionary labour in terms of the number reached by him is microscopic compared to the eventual multiplication of believers that has come in recent years in China which at the dawn of the 21st century is evaluated to the most spectacular in Church history. This has come about through a long patient work backed by prayer around the world. As with other pioneers interest was stirred and the flow of missionaries increased steadily.

A later pioneer missionary Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) was inspired with the vision of evangelising the vast inland regions of China. Taylor went to China in 1853. He overworked and returned to England with broken health. He sailed a second time for China in 1866, this time accompanied by fifteen missionary companions. Through persistent effort Hudson Taylor established the China Inland Mission. By 1931 the total number of missionaries in the field exceeded 1,300, the largest missionary agency in China. When the Communist regime seizure of power and by 1951 all missionaries had been forced to leave.

The missionary policy established by Hudson Taylor which is full of instruction. The China Inland Mission was to be interdenominational. conservative in theology it would accept missionaries from any denomination if they would sing the simple doctrinal basis of faith. Every missionary would have to live by faith and find his or her own funding. That sounds pious but in actual fact is fraught with all kinds of misguided practice. The door was open to those of little formal education and this turned out to work well as many became first class scholars. The

direction of the mission would take place from within China and not from England which was an excellent principle as ever so much misunderstanding had taken place when leaders in England did not really grasp the situation as it was on the ground on the mission fields. Missionaries would wear Chinese dress and as far as possible identify themselves with the Chinese people. Here we have contextualisation which today has become a major issue in some missionary societies especially to the Muslims when it is perceived that the Gospel is seriously compromised. Those of Baptist and non-Baptist persuasion amicably separated so they could plant churches without internal conflict.

The work in China has been tested in the fires of persecution. In the Boxer rebellion of 1900 there was a widespread violent uprising to rid China of all foreigners. 'destroy the foreigner' was heard everywhere. On 24th June 1900 an imperial decree ordering the killing of all foreigners was issued from Peking. The most reliable figures suggest that 135 Protestant adults and 63 children were killed. This exceeded in number the loss of missionaries up to that time. Many Roman Catholic Chinese Christians were martyred at this time but the loss of life among the Roman Catholic clergy was not as severe as the Protestant losses. [Neill p.287]

The Boxer rebellion provoked the indignation and wrath of foreign countries. In August a mixed force fought its way to Peking to relieve the embassies which had been besieged. By the end of the year China had been conquered and severe terms were imposed including the restoration of property. No mission had suffered as much as CIM. Yet Hudson Taylor in order to show the meekness of Christ decided that nothing would be asked or claimed.

New societies entered the field and old ones were strengthened until in 1914 there was a total of 5,462 Protestant missionaries in China.

The next onslaught on the Christian cause in China was far greater in scale and severity than the Boxer rebellion. It came with the rise of the Communist regime. By 1949 the Communists prevailed and have continued to rule with an iron grip in China to this day.

By 1951 all missionaries had been expelled. After their exclusion from China the CIM now called the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) re-deployed in nine countries (Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia).

The Communist leaders viewed Christianity as a religion of the West. They were convinced that the expulsion of the foreign missionaries would result in the extinction of Christianity in China. The regime devised every possible method to strangle the Church both Roman Catholic and Protestant. The scale of this effort is illustrated by the closure of all but between 12 and 15 of 200 church buildings in Shanghai. In Peking it was reported that only four of 65 church buildings remained and these allowed as show cases. [Latourette vol 5, p.403] The Communist regime sought to control the Church. Satan had a heyday when believers who submitted to the regime came into conflict with those who went underground. Similar to the Stalinist holocaust in Russia millions of Chinese suffered, not only Christians but any who would not toe the line. Christian leaders were either killed or imprisoned. Some were sentenced to twenty years in prison. This campaign has not yet ended. Everything diabolical was hurled at the Church in China.

What was God's answer to this anti-Christian onslaught? Writing in the 2001 edition of [OPERATION WORLD](#) Patrick Johnstone writes 'the growth of the Church in China has no parallels in history. The 1,266,000 Protestant members and 1.8 million affiliates in 1949 have become 17 million members and maybe 26 million affiliates as well as a much larger number uncounted, but estimated 45 million house church Christians. The Catholics grew from three million to twelve million over the same period.' Concerning the Catholics in the face of such a high cost of discipleship and personal danger it is unlikely that there are many of nominal character.

This extraordinary is not confined to China. The second half the twentieth century was a time of gradual and accelerating expansion for evangelical Christianity in many countries. This is surprising then we recall that the 20th century began under the dark clouds of two world war holocausts. While civilised nations warred at enormous cost in lives and property the spiritual life of the major denominations was drained away by liberal theology. Nearly all the seminaries were taken over and destroyed by liberal theology.

During the 20th century there was an amazing increase in the evangelical constituency. For instance in Latin America this there were about 200,000 Protestant evangelicals at the beginning and by 2000 this had increased to about 34 million. A similar increase has been noted in many African countries. In South Korea there was only a handful of believers in 1907 but through revival growth has been remarkable so that now 15 percent of the population profess faith. In Indonesia the increase of Bible believers has grown over the last 40 years from 1.3 million to 11.5 million. Nations like Nepal (the world's only Hindu kingdom) was tightly shut. Since 1960 believers have multiplied to about 400,000 this growth having taken place in spite of severe persecution.

These increases have kindled the vision that the work of the great commission can be completed. Now more missionaries are going out of countries like the Philippines and Brazil than are going in.

*What do we learn from this period?*

Seeming insuperable obstacles lie before pioneer missionaries. The ship's captain mocked Robert Morrison on the voyage to China for attempting the impossible. 'Who despises the day of small things' (Zech 4:10). The first efforts often seemed futile. 'He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him' (Ps 126:6). How great the harvest that is being reaped after centuries of prayer and sowing. The greatness of the task led to co-operative effort. Many inter-denominational missionary societies were established with the purpose of reaching unreached nations right across the globe. The outstanding example of this is the China Inland Mission. Hundreds of missionaries from the CIM and many other societies penetrated inland China sowing the seed and laying the foundations for what was eventually to prove a massive growth of the Church in China. Some may not approve of the extra-church status that some missionary societies have assumed but that has to be weighed against the pragmatic reality that if the work is to succeed then specialisation is inevitable. A local church on its own is not going to evangelise the whole world. Yet we should contend that all missionaries be responsible to the oversight and discipline of their local churches. It is sad that

some churches can be doctrinaire to the point of discouraging genuinely called missionaries by barring them from missionary societies. Inevitably and regretfully the genuinely called have been impelled to change their local church base into order to fulfil their vocation.

## **6. The emerging ecumenical paradigm (1970-**

The 1970s mark the upsurge in Western society of Postmodernistic thinking which now dominates education, politics and the media. The 1970s also marks the time of a new epoch in evangelicalism and in evangelical mission.

The strength of the work of David Bosch is his massive scholarship. In his historical survey he keeps in focus the entire body of professing Christendom. Bosch's weakness is that when he comes to the modern era he continues along the same lines and makes no distinction between evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox and the World Council of Churches which is thoroughly liberal in theology.

This is confusing. I can illustrate the problem with the experience of a life long friend. He is an extraordinarily gifted Serbian pastor, a powerful preacher and courageous evangelist. For twenty five years he laboured at Pec, Kosova, living in harmony within a Muslim community which constituted 90 percent of the population and outnumbering Serbians ten to one. When the civil war began my friend fled for his life with his family to Serbia. There he began his work all over again. But in Serbia he experienced persecution from the Orthodox Church far worse than he had ever known from the Muslims at Pec. Yet again for the sake of life and limb he was forced to move and start yet again. There is no way that we can equate Orthodoxy with evangelical Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church was challenged to its roots by the 16th Reformation. A minority of Catholics desired a thorough doctrinal reformation. It is tragic that this did not take place. The dictums of the Council of Trent (1545-63) are a disaster. Nevertheless when all is said and done a spiritual renewal took place in the Catholic Church in the second half of the 16th century. The Eastern Church has been characterised by icons, incense, candles, and has never been challenged with reformation. As a body it is not governed by Scripture but by accumulated tradition. It is impossible for evangelicals to relate to that. Presently we will look at the vital issue, 'What is an Evangelical?'

Leading characteristics of the sixth missionary paradigm are:

1. A increasing sense of unity of evangelicals across the world
2. A increasing appreciation of the place of evangelical theological education and the value of evangelical and reformed books
3. An increasing appreciation that the Church is multi-racial and that the great commission will be fulfilled by international co-operation and unity
4. An increasing awareness of the need of compassion and good works - relief of pain and suffering accompanies the gospel
5. An increasing realisation that the completion of the missionary task is actually within reach - a re-appraisal of eschatology
6. An increasing awareness that Christians cannot ignore the subject of ecology and politics  
Revelation 21:1-8

## **1. A growing sense of unity of evangelicals across the world**

The 20th Century is regarded by Church historians as the century of ecumenism and of the World Council of Churches. John chapter 17 was repeated over and over again. Yet that wonderful and vital unity prayed for by our Lord is a unity of those who belong to him and who are in union with him. It is a unity of believers. It is an evangelical unity and not a unity of denominational leaders many of whom never preach the saving Gospel of Christ. The organisational unity of the WCC was doomed to failure. The Lord defines unity as union with the three persons of the Trinity (John 17:21). It is a vital living spiritual unity which can only be known by those who are born again of the Spirit of God. True Christians have no affinity with those who are in fundamental opposition to the Word of God.

The message of John 17 is dynamic and irresistible calling all those who are in a living relationship of union with Christ to put that first, so that we always say we are Christians first and hold our denominational affiliation in second place. It may well be that the unity that our Lord prayed for will become more evident in the 21st century as evangelical believers across nations and across the world find earth other under the leadership and inspiration of the Holy Spirit of truth. .

The primary basic question is, 'What is an Evangelical?' That issue was addressed by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones at the [International Fellowship of Evangelical Students](#) (IFES) in 1971. His three expositions were brought together into a small paperback by the Banner of Truth and published in 1992. About 300,000 evangelical students of 145 countries are in fellowship in the IFES which has a doctrinal statement which in brief compass spells out what an evangelical is.

### *IFES Doctrinal Basis*

What we believe:

We rejoice in the central truths of Christianity as revealed in Scripture, including:

- The unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
- The sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgement.
- The divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of Holy Scripture, as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- The universal sinfulness and guilt of all men since the fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- Redemption from the guilt, penalty, dominion and pollution of sin, solely through the sacrificial death (as our representative and substitute) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.
- The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and his ascension to the right hand of God the Father.
- The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.
- The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith alone.
- The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

- The one holy universal Church which is the body of Christ and to which all true believers belong.
- The expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To deny any one of these tenets is to be less than evangelical. An evangelical Christian is one in who is indwelled by the Holy Spirit. This results in a spiritual affinity which immediately crosses denominational lines. Denominationalism has become increasingly confusing because in some denominations there are liberal churches and at the same time some evangelical churches.

There are many evangelical organisations and missionary societies such as the [OMF](#) (Overseas Missionary Fellowship) which have similar bases of faith to the above.

This is not an easy matter for some independent churches which have had to battle for their place under the sun. There is an inborn tendency which may have come from the fall of Adam to think that we are so very right and that those who do not run the way we do are ever so wrong, so wrong as to preclude unity. That is not healthy, rather like the retired Scottish couple in rather isolated and he says to his wife, “Everyone is odd except ye and me and ye a bit!” While I personally believe in what is called Confessional Christianity (the need to spell out truth in detail) and hold to all of the [Second London Baptist Confession of Faith](#) I am often encouraged and privileged to participate in conferences in which Pentecostals, Presbyterians and Baptists come together. This is a trend which is growing. It is evangelical unity. It will never be perfect but it is what our Lord was praying for.

## **2. A growing appreciation of the place of evangelical theological education and the value of evangelical and reformed books**

Since the 1960s there has been a phenomenal increase not only in the number of evangelical believers round the world, but in the quality and quantity of nourishing biblical expository books, systematic theology. Biblical theology, historical theology, commentaries, dictionaries and Bible helps.

Reference has been made to the rapid increase of evangelical believers over the last hundred years. This increase has been even more rapid over last fifty years. An example is Guatamala (population 11 million) where 3 percent evangelical was registered in 1960 but 25 percent in 2000. Another example is Chile (population 15 million) where growth has increased over the 20th century to 16 percent of the population. Nigeria which is the most populous country in Africa, has seen phenomenal evangelical transdenominational growth since 1960 when there was an estimated 2.1 million to 26 million in 2000.

The provision of doctrinal expository materials for so many new believers and the provision of trained leadership presents a challenge of staggering proportions. Superficial doctrine leads to shallow compromised lifestyle. Corruption in Nigeria is rife. If the Church is not light and salt in society corruption will go unchecked. The health and wealth movement in Nigeria illustrates corruption which could cause irreparable damage to the witness of the Church. Typical is a pastor who receives a sum of money as a payment to pray for one who asks him to pray that he will be healed of his sickness. When the sick person is not healed he returns to the pastor who

then says that the sum of money was inadequate. He requires double the previous payment! When the sick person returns yet again unhealed, the corrupt pastor does not return the money but rather puts all the blame on his patient and tells him that it is his lack of faith that is to blame.

Shallowness can tempt us to discount all the statistics recorded in OPERATION WORLD from which much information has been drawn in this study. The statistics in OW are the best available. More to the point is the shallow nature of much of the Christianity recorded. Before we give way to cynicism we should remember that nobody cares more for the needy and the weak than our Lord himself. Help is on the way. The quantity and quality of reformed evangelical literature is unprecedented. It is difficult and expensive to transport literature to where it is most needed. Rapidly we have entered a new world of electronics which will help provide materials. Books can be downloaded by e-mail and printed abroad. Reformed teaching conferences are multiplying. By this means large quantities of expository books are distributed. An example is the ministry of FIEL in Brazil which organises conferences in Mozambique and Portugal. Thousands of books in Portuguese are distributed this way.

As described above, China represents the largest increase of evangelical Christians in history. The challenge of providing expository literature for so many people scattered so widely is great. China has its own regulatory environment. It is officially illegal to traffic in unapproved literature. This is a hard rule to maintain and a fair proportion of Christian literature gets through and is distributed without the necessary ISBN coding. There are many blurred areas. The internet is a means of obtaining and using materials and represents an industry on its own.

### **3. An increasing appreciation that the Church is multi-racial and that the great commission will be fulfilled by international co-operation and unity**

During the 19th and 20th centuries, but decreasingly so since the 1970s, the Church was conceived of as European and Western. With the coming of the industrial revolution it was the Europeans who possessed the money and the knowledge. I have described Alfred Saker who not only took to Gospel to Cameroon, but hygiene, building, skills, education and much more besides. Now the Church is no longer Western. It is international. Increasingly more missionaries flow out of countries all over the world and not from the West.

Racism which has been endemic in some areas has diminished. I grew up in the apartheid regime of South Africa. Soon after the 1994 revolution in South Africa I had the opportunity to talk to Nelson Mandela. I explained to him that my conversion brought an instant and radical change in my outlook about race. In Christ all barriers are broken down (Gal 3:26-29). While South Africa is beset with the problem of high crime levels, a marked improvement has taken place in race relations. This is evidenced in some churches. For instance the Durban Central Baptist Church which was planted by one of Spurgeon's students in the late 19th century, is now one third European, one third Indian and one third Zulu.

In some countries teams of missionaries represent different ethnic and national backgrounds.

### **4. An increasing awareness of the need of compassion and good works - relief of pain and suffering accompanies the gospel**

The saying that God the Father has only one Son and he is missionary raises the question, What kind of missionary was Jesus? He was a missionary who preached good news to the poor, bound up the broken-hearted, proclaimed freedom to the captives. Jesus combined his preaching ministry with works of healing and compassion. Constantly his life touched those in desperate spiritual or physical need.

Isaiah promises revival to those who expend themselves for the needy. 'If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday (Isa 58:10-12)'.

In a discourse with his disciples Jesus pointed out he had come to serve and not to be served. The spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of mankind were the concern of Jesus and they should be the concern of all Christians. Jesus had compassion for the people, so should we! Works of compassion are often the subject of extraordinary blessing. Such was the case when Francis and Edith Schaeffer kept an open house at L'Abri in Switzerland.

### **5. An increasing realisation that the completion of the missionary task is actually within reach - a re-appraisal of eschatology**

In 1791/92 William Carey published his 57 page work with the short title [\*The Enquiry\*](#). He included a 24 page survey of the world with regard to mission. [This work is included as an appendix in the [excellent biography](#) of William Carey by Timothy George ISBN 1-56309-025-2]

This could well be regarded as the first edition of OPERATION WORLD (OW). Carey followed the journeys of Captain Cook and recorded as much information as possible. The knowledge gathered is remarkable when we consider the limited resources available to Carey. OW together with additional website information provides 10,000 times more information than was available to Carey.

The human race has spread into such remote places that it has only been during the last ten years that a reasonably accurate and full survey has been achieved. It is helpful to define a little of what is meant by an unevangelised people group (UPG). In 1982 a group of mission leaders made this definition:

'A significantly large ethnic or sociological grouping of people who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class, or caste. As suggested above it comes down in almost every case to ethnicity and language.' [cited in [OPERATION CHINA](#) p. 7]

OPERATION WORLD divides the world into twelve affinity sectors of peoples which add up in all to an aggregate of 12,000. The presentation is overwhelming. It is a shock to see how many UPGs there are and just how large some of them are such as the Sunda people of Java. For instance there are 773 in South Asia which includes much of Pakistan, all India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and part of Burma. A reader of OW can follow this up in more detail to find that in

the state of Bihar Jharkhand in North India there is a population of 75 million. This is about the most neglected mission field in the world. There are 80 UPGs in this area.

OW has served to stir up the creation of other agencies zealous for prayer and world-wide evangelisation. One is OPERATION CHINA edited by Paul Hathaway. It is his fifth ethnographic book. OC is the result of a team working for ten years with researchers travelling to the remotest areas of China. This included more than 100 trips into the interior by Paul Hathaway himself. There are 704 original photos.

Woven into the largest population on earth is the 'hidden China', non-Chinese people groups making up more than 100 million. OC introduces the reader to hidden minority cultures as diverse as the pale, blue-eyed Muslims of Xinjiang and the tribal peoples of the jungles of Yunnan with their intricately embroidered costumes; the Tibetans in the west, proud of their heritage, and nomadic hunter tribes, related to the Eskimos located in the extreme Northeast of China.

The invaluable OPERATION CHINA describes 574 UPGs.

Although numerically the minorities of China account for only 6.7 of the overall population, they inhabit 62.5 percent of China's territory. From this 700 page book of small print published in 2000, I will refer to two UPGs which are typical. All the UPGs are diverse in character and language.

There are the A Che people, about 35,000 in number with their own language. They live in the Yunnan province which borders Vietnam. They have their own customs. They are polytheists. There are no known Christians among them.

The Buriat number about 65,000 living in China but overlapping into Mongolia and Russia. In religion they are Shamanists. There are no known believers among them.

Another book modelled on OW is devoted to the UPGs of Indonesia. This volume published in 2001 highlights 155 UPGs in 23 clusters. 70 UPGs are found in Sumatra, an island of 473,000 sq km, three and a half times the size of England (130,400 sq km). England has a population of 50 million and Sumatra 40 million.

If the Church experiences revivals as in the past, and continues to multiply in terms of effective missionaries, it is conceivable that the great commission could be fulfilled within the next 200 years. Our Lord gave his Church the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the supervisor of mission. Will the work to reach all the UPGs be achieved? The Scripture promises indicate that it will and that provides motivation of a high order. To illustrate the point, we are celebrating the fiftieth year of the D Day landings of the allied forces in Normandy, a military operation unique in history. The obstacles seemed insuperable. The price in human life was very agonisingly high. Such an undertaking as D Day would never have been undertaken without the conviction of the military commanders and political leaders that eventual victory was certain.

Bosch writes, 'During the past three or more centuries Protestant missions have always revealed strong millenarian elements. It remains notoriously difficult, however, to define precisely what is meant by millennialism' (p.313). Simply stated a period of a thousand years which few take literally, a long period when Christianity will predominate. 'Pre-' means that Christ will come back to earth to initiate that period. 'Post-' means that he will come only after that period has taken place. 'A' means non, that is there is no such thing as a millennial period

A false kind of postmillennialism prevailed at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. It was false because it was not rooted in Scripture but rather in the idea of human ability and human power. That optimism was swept away by the two world wars. Premillennialism came to dominate especially in America. This was allied with the movement known as Fundamentalism which sought to preserve the supernaturalism of the Christian faith. Premillennialism holds that the Scripture promises such as we find in Isaiah chapters two and eleven will only be fulfilled when our Lord returns to earth to supervise affairs himself and that for the period called a millennium. The problem with this view is that it inverts the economy of the Trinity. The work of mission from beginning to end has been entrusted to the Holy Spirit. Those of Amillennial persuasion rightly or wrongly tend to spiritualise the promises and regard them as metaphor or poetry. Another view which in the minority today is the one held by the majority of English Puritans and which was enshrined in the Westminster Larger Catechism. This view holds that through revivals and missionary labour the world will eventually be permeated with the Gospel.

As part of the sixth missionary paradigm I believe the merit of the latter view will be seen increasingly realised and become a powerful motivating factor as it was with the pioneer missionaries of the 19th century. If there is a spiritual awakening among the Jews that too will stimulate a re-appraisal of what the Scriptures teach about the future. The eschatology of the English Puritans motivated the pioneer missionaries of the 19th century and it is likely in the sixth missionary paradigm that that will be repeated.

## **6. An increasing awareness that Christians cannot ignore the subject of politics and ecology - Revelation 21:1-8**

In tracing out this part of the emerging paradigm a warning is needful. It is very easy to become so involved in political or social or issues that the primary place of the Gospel is neglected or toned down.

With the rapid take-over of society and of the media of postmodernism has come an increasing amorality and that includes legislation that conflicts with Scripture. For several generations Western evangelicals have opted out of politics on the basis that religion and politics can be separated. To some extent that is true of party politics in which policies do not affect human behaviour. Increasingly Christians across denominational barriers will have to stand together against anti-Christian immoral legislation. This is evangelistic since we cannot divide the Bible into separate parts, that is morality on the one hand and godliness on the other. Ungodliness leads to and is the cause of unrighteousness. And we must assert what most Post-modern pluralistic politicians dislike intensely which is, 'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

How does this affect mission? Moral issues apply universally and what takes place in government in the West is likely to travel abroad. In countries like the Sudan the world-wide Christian movement is affronted by the genocidal practices of the Sudanese government. That is a political issue. Another instance is the effete government of Indonesia which offers scant protection to Christians who are massacred by Jihad mobs in places like the Moluccan islands. Christian leaders have to lobby fervently in the hallways of political power to bring pressure to bear on corrupt governments.

Closely allied to politics is the subject of ecology and conservation. Concern to preserve the planet from destruction is the increasing concern of all mankind as well as Christians. Believers have an added interest because they believe that the Lord is making all things new (Rev 21:1-8). The next world will not be something we cannot recognise. Rather this present cosmos will be purified and everything which is to God's glory will be part of the resurrection and the redemption (Rom 8:20). This perception is increasing and is replacing the 'vapoury' concept of the new world.

Over the last ten to twenty years 'Green issues' have become prominent. Concern for the environment or 'Green Movement' continues to grow and attracts a wide range of support. It is said that Holland is politically a 'Green Country'. The threat of global warming threatens them in a radical way. Young people are taught about environmental matters such as recycling. Encouragement to active involvement in environmentalism is present in the school syllabus, through the sciences, geography and social studies. What does the Bible say about ecology? Our answer to that is the Bible is a book in which the central theme is redemption but at the same time the Bible represents a world view in which God is sovereign over every realm. Obviously that includes his creation and care of the cosmos. The Bible begins with creation and ends with the new creation. That there will be a new creation does not absolve us from caring for and preserving this one. While evolutionists attribute the glories of creation to blind chance we extol God for his glory displayed in creation. Hopefully the time is drawing near when macro biological evolution will be recognised as mythology. As Christians we extol our God for the marvel of his creation and that cannot be separated from evangelism as we see illustrated by Paul's preaching at Athens when he began with the words, 'The God who made the world and everything in it is Lord of heaven and earth' (Acts 17:24).

## **Conclusion**

There is a negative conclusion and a positive. The negative has to do with compromise. The positive has to do with our hope in God for the completion of the missionary task.

Statistics for missionaries from the leading sending nations have been cited above. But how many of these missionaries are absorbed only in social work, in famine relief and so on? How many believe in the literal doctrine of eternal hell? How many have watered down that truth? How many under pressure have toned down the call for repentance from sin and the necessity of faith in Christ for personal salvation? I hope that in this study many will be inspired by the great missionaries who I have described examples of those who have kept the balance of compassion for the needy but always kept to the priority of verbal Gospel preaching and church planting.

On the positive side reference has been made to the important place of heaven sent revival. Prayer and effort is the fibre of mission. Our narrow expectations are not the measure of the entire work of God. When the Spirit came down at Pentecost, the people were ‘utterly amazed’ (Acts 2:7). In fact they were ‘amazed and perplexed’ (v 12). God is full of surprises. This is why A Skevington Wood, the historian of the First Great Awakening, proposes:

‘The next great spiritual awakening may be utterly unlike any that has gone before We must beware, then, of an undue fixation in our concept of revival. The Holy Spirit is not limited to a stereotype. He enjoys and exhibits an unconditional liberty.’

‘The Lord Jesus may at any time and under any circumstances grant us a fresh bestowment of his Spirit. And we can be certain that nothing will defeat God’s purpose whenever he chooses to renew a season of unusual richness. How can any opposition down here on earth restrain the outpouring of the Spirit from on high? ... At any time, in any measure, upon any church, the Sovereign Lord is able to send the showers of his Spirit, for his greater glory, our richer joy, and the salvation of the nations.’ [cited in Raymond C Ortlund, Jr, [\*Revival sent from God\*](#), IVP, p. 27 and 93]

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