A THEOLOGY OF MISSION FOR
FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS

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GLOBAL GOOD NEWS:
A THEOLOGY OF MISSION FOR FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations. [Psalm 67:1-2]

The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. [Psalm 98:2]

Jesus said to them . . . , "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." [John 20:21 NRSV]

God . . . reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ
God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting
the message of reconciliation to us. 2 Cor. 5:18-19 NRSV

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.
2 Cor. 13:13 NRSV

THREE FOCUSING AFFIRMATIONS

On the basis of Holy Scripture and in light of the stated mission of the Free Methodist Church, Free Methodist World Missions affirms its theology of mission by declaring our faith in the Triune God of grace and truth who sends the Son into the world in the power of the Spirit and creates grace-empowered communities of holiness, truth, love, justice and compels grace-empowered mission to all peoples.

I. GOD THE TRINITY: The mission of the church is our participation in the mission of the Triune God who created the world as an expression of his love, power, and creativity, who sustains and rules the universe, and who sent Jesus Christ into the world in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit as healing, liberating Savior, and who will bring about final reconciliation and restoration. (Gen. 1:1-2:2, Heb. 1:1-4, Col. 1:19-20, 2 Cor. 5:18-19, John 20:21, Acts 3:30-21) [Love - grace - communion]

II. THE BODY OF CHRIST: The gracious, outreaching love of God the Trinity is the truth that creates and defines the church in its character, internal life, and mission in the world. The church is the community of God's people, redeemed through Jesus' reconciling work on the cross and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the visible Body of Christ and is God's ongoing mission to people near and far. It is called to worship God and bring other people to the worship and loving service of God. The church is called to be a grace-filled community growing in holiness and mutual giftedness and ministry in which all believers are ministers of the gospel of reconciliation. [Communion - grace - love] (1 Pt. 2)

III. SENT INTO THE WORLD: The nature of God and of the church as Body of Christ defines the church's message and its mission locally and globally. The mission of the church is in fact the church's obedient participation in that action of the Spirit by which the confession of Jesus as Lord becomes the authentic confession of every people, each in its own tongue. The church proclaims and witnesses to the Good News that God is reconciling the world toward relationship with the Triune God; that God has a "plan" or "economy" to bring all things into proper relationship under the headship of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10). God does this by creating "one new humanity" out of

alienated, antagonistic persons and peoples, "thus making peace" or shalom in the new community of the Spirit that is the church (Eph. 2:15-16). [Grace - love - communion/ community]

KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION

These three focusing affirmations give direction to everything the church does in mission. They provide guidance and imply practical tests for the elaboration of mission theory and practice. Though this elaboration will always be an ongoing process, we affirm the following implications as particularly important for Free Methodist Missions at this time:

I. GOD THE TRINITY: The mission of the church is our participation in the mission of the Triune God who created the world as an expression of love, power, and creativity, who sustains and rules the universe, and who sent Jesus Christ into the world in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit as healing, liberating Savior, and who will bring about final reconciliation and restoration.

1. The God of holy love and justice desires and invites all peoples to come into reconciled relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God will finally and fully establish a just reign in the restoration of creation and the judgment of all evil.
2. God has created all men and women in the Triune image with an inherent capacity to love and serve God. Though this capacity has been marred and distorted by sin, it has not been totally lost. We

therefore recognize and honor the image of God in all persons and peoples.
3. We recognize that all human cultures similarly reflect something of the truth, beauty, and creativity of God, even though in all cultures God's truth is in various ways distorted and denied. We believe that God delights in the diversity of human cultures, each of which has unique gifts of worship and service to offer to God.
4. The biblical theme of the Kingdom of God affirms God's sovereign power over and loving governance of the universe, and reveals God's firm intent to bring all creation into a peaceful, reconciled relationship, as the Old Testament prophets proclaim. We affirm Jesus' statement that there is no timeline for the fulfilling of this theme. We also affirm that the various programmatic schemes for the order of events for the end times are extra-biblical and are therefore not part of the truth we need to accept.
5. The powerful, self-giving mutual love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the source and ultimate basis of Christian mission. As the deepest, most profound reality in the universe, the Trinity defines our understanding of human personhood, the church, and God's intent for human society.
6. The deepest malady of the human condition is the moral disease of sin. Sin alienates people from God, from one another, and from the created order. Through his atoning death, Jesus Christ is the divine source of all healing. Jesus heals the brokenness that results from sin and brings persons and peoples into wholeness and communion with God, other people, and the physical environment. The healing God provides is the good news of reconciliation and transformation personally, socially, culturally, and ecologically.

II. THE BODY OF CHRIST: The gracious, outreaching love of God the Trinity is the truth that creates and defines the church in its character, internal life, and mission in the world. The church is the community of God's people, redeemed through Jesus' reconciling work on the cross and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the visible Body of Christ and is God's ongoing mission to people near and far. It is called to worship God and bring other people to the worship and loving service of God. The church is called to be a grace-

filled community growing in holiness and mutual giftedness and ministry in which all believers are ministers of the gospel of reconciliation.

1. The church is the people of God in local Christian congregations and families, in larger denominational families and networks, and as the universal Body of Christ within the world and beyond. The church in all its earthly manifestations is called into mission.

2. The church grows in its relationship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through an ongoing and deepening life of praise and prayer; worship as word and sacrament. The central relationship of God and the community of God's People is worship. In worship the church listens for the Word of God while affirming its faith in liturgy and participating in the life and intent of God through sacrament both in the liturgy of Holy Communion and as "Living Sacrifices". (Rom. 12:1,2)

3. The church is called to be a socially visible demonstration of the gospel and the mission it proclaims.

4. The church is called to a life of holiness. Holy love defines our relationship with God and one another. God sanctifies the church by the Spirit so that the church may be the visible embodiment of the character of Jesus Christ.

5. Since all Christians are members of Jesus Christ and of each other, and all are gifted by the Holy Spirit, every believer has some gift-ministry in the church and/or in the world. On the basis of the priesthood of believers and the gifts of the Spirit, we affirm that every Christian is a minister of the gospel and that believers are called to diverse ministries and areas of leadership (Eph. 4:7-12). God gives gifts and ministries, and the authority for ministry and leadership, to both men and women, so that in principle all roles of ministry and leadership are equally open to women as well as to men (Gal 3:27/28).

6. Since through the life of Jesus Christ the church enters into covenant relationship with God, the church is a responsible covenant community of mutual care and accountability.

7. Scripture speaks consistently regarding the stewardship of God's graceful provision for all human needs. The principle of simplicity sets us free to receive the provision of God as a gift that is not ours to keep, and that can be freely shared with others. We affirm therefore that our communities of faith should reflect a simplicity of form and substance that is not self-serving and a generosity that is not anxious about the future (Matt 6:25-33).

8. Scripture affirms the blessing of human families, extended families, clans, tribes, and nation. But scripture also insists that in our transformed life in Christ, "there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). We therefore conclude that our communities of faith should reflect as much as possible the unity in diversity of the Kingdom of God and an equal partnership of the whole body of Christ in mission.

9. The Church is called to be a visible expression of God's intent for "peace/shalom" on earth. (John 14:27) Central to shalom is the creation of beauty (Ex 31:2 ff.) It follows that a central calling of the church is to participate in the creation of beauty and the transformation of ugliness in all ways possible. Since beauty, glory and holy are very closely related ideas in the Old Testament, it also follows that the creation and maintaining of beauty brings glory to God and is an integral element of the life of holiness.

10. Since the church is the Body of Christ, its structure is organic (interdependent, flexible) and relational more than organizational or hierarchical. The church and its ministries are to be structured

organically, reflecting the Triune nature of God.

11. As Jesus was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," so his Body on earth enters into the suffering of others and recognizes both the pain and the potential value of suffering. The Body of Christ faces the world with both a joyous smile and falling tears.

12. Since Jesus Christ is the one who "heals all our diseases," we affirm the power of God to heal persons physically, emotionally and socially as well as spiritually, while recognizing that, beyond our comprehension, God works not only through direct and indirect healing but also sometimes through permitting unrelieved suffering. This is part of the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ.

13. We believe God has commissioned the Free Methodist Church as a part of the worldwide body of believers with a particular charism or gift to witness to and seek to incarnate the gospel among people everywhere, forming communities of love and ethical holiness, with an especial concern for poor,
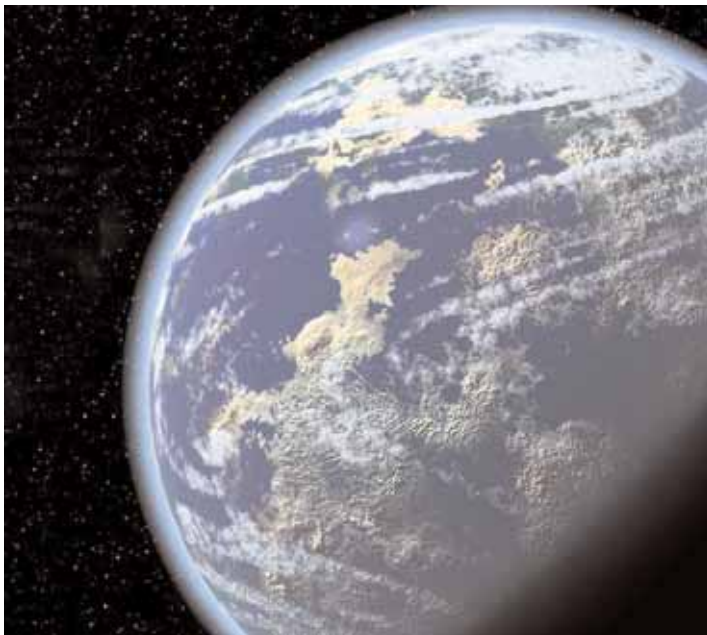
oppressed, and marginalized people throughout the world.

III. SENT INTO THE WORLD: The nature of God and of the church as Body of Christ as revealed in Scripture defines the church's message and its mission locally and globally. The mission of the church is in fact the church's obedient participation in that action of the Spirit by which the confession of Jesus as Lord becomes the authentic confession of every people, each in its own tongue. The church proclaims and witnesses to the Good News that God is reconciling the world toward relationship with the Triune God; that God has a "plan" or "economy" to bring all things into proper relationship under the headship of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10). God does this by creating "one new humanity" out of alienated, antagonistic persons and peoples, "thus making peace" or shalom in the new community of the Spirit that is the church (Eph. 2:15-16).

1. The message of redemption through Jesus Christ is good news for all persons and peoples and for the created order. We praise God for the work of salvation and marvel at the extent and efficaciousness of God's healing word.

2. We celebrate the prevenient grace of God at work in all cultures. We recognize that God's grace precedes our missionary efforts, awakening conscience and opening people to hear and receive the good news of Jesus Christ. While God's Spirit is already active in all cultures, we affirm that salvation is based solely on Jesus Christ's redemptive work.

3. The God of grace and love is working graciously by the Spirit to bring persons and peoples into a reconciled, healed relationship with God and with one another. We affirm the power of God's grace to overcome the power of evil. Because of God's grace and promises, our sense of mission is marked by courage and joyous hope.

4. As Jesus Christ came into the world in physical incarnation in a particular cultural context, so the church is to be "incarnated" among the world's peoples in particular communities that demonstrate the gracious, transformative rule of God. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

5. The task of the missional community is limited, but fundamental. The missional community is sent to lay the foundation stone of the church, and that stone is Christ. The result of that work, in other words, will be a community that acknowledges Jesus Christ as the supreme Lord of life.

6. Since God in Christ by the Spirit desires and offers healing physically, emotionally, and socially as well as spiritually, [I.6, above] in order to encourage wholeness in individuals and communities, we accept the call to a broad range of healing and enabling ministries including medical missions, preventive health care and community development

as well as judicious involvement in ministries of relief, economic and environmental justice, and intervention in behalf of "the aliens, the fatherless and the widows" (Deut. 14:29, Jas. 1:27). We believe that in such involvements many technologies have been uncritically transferred from one context to another and created unmanageable or undesirable consequences. We affirm, therefore, the responsibility to evaluate and shape such involvements with an understanding of appropriate technology, deliberately laying aside the notion that what is good or workable in one context will therefore work in another with the same or similar results.

7. Since holiness concerns all of life and God's gracious reign includes all dimensions of society and culture, part of the missionary mandate is to help disciple Christians and churches for responsible, critical, and redemptive participation in economic and political life as a witness to the justice, mercy, and truth of God's reign.

8. Because God calls people not only to justification but also to regeneration and holiness, we affirm our responsibility to invite persons to repent and accept God's offer of salvation and to enter into the community of the church. We affirm our responsibility to plant and multiply churches that authentically incarnate the redemptive love of the Trinity.

9. As participants in God's mission, the particular missional community provides the world with signs of the gospel of hope and the kingdom of God, not with definitive expressions of the form and structure of the Body of Christ or the kingdom.

10. With no compromise of the truth of the gospel as revealed in Scripture and in Jesus Christ, we affirm the efforts of people in all nations and religious traditions to alleviate human suffering, care for God's creation, and work for justice in society.

11. The ultimate goal of the church's mission is that all the nations may praise God (Ps. 67), and "that God may be glorified in all things in Jesus Christ" (1 Pt. 3:11).

It is evident from the present condition of history that God's redemptive work is not yet complete. God's purposes, however, are in the process of being fulfilled despite all human resistances. We look toward the renewing power of God the Spirit who promises ultimately to transform this world and fulfill entirely the work already begun. This hope for the future is not grounded in human optimism, but unmerited grace. Faith takes it as an elementary premise of revelation that God's grace is working reliably to transform radically the whole human condition. In the midst of God's purposes, God has called out a people to be a visible demonstration of this transformation - the city on the hill. This "called-out" people - the Body of Christ, the Church - is sent into the world, amongst all peoples, on a mission to form particular communities of faithful believers who, through holy lives and gracious service, call every person to forgiveness of sin and restoration to God's intentions.

Free Methodist World Missions convened a consultation (Oct 11-13, 2002) to develop a theology of mission that would inform the development of policy and practice for FMWM. The following people participated in this consultation:

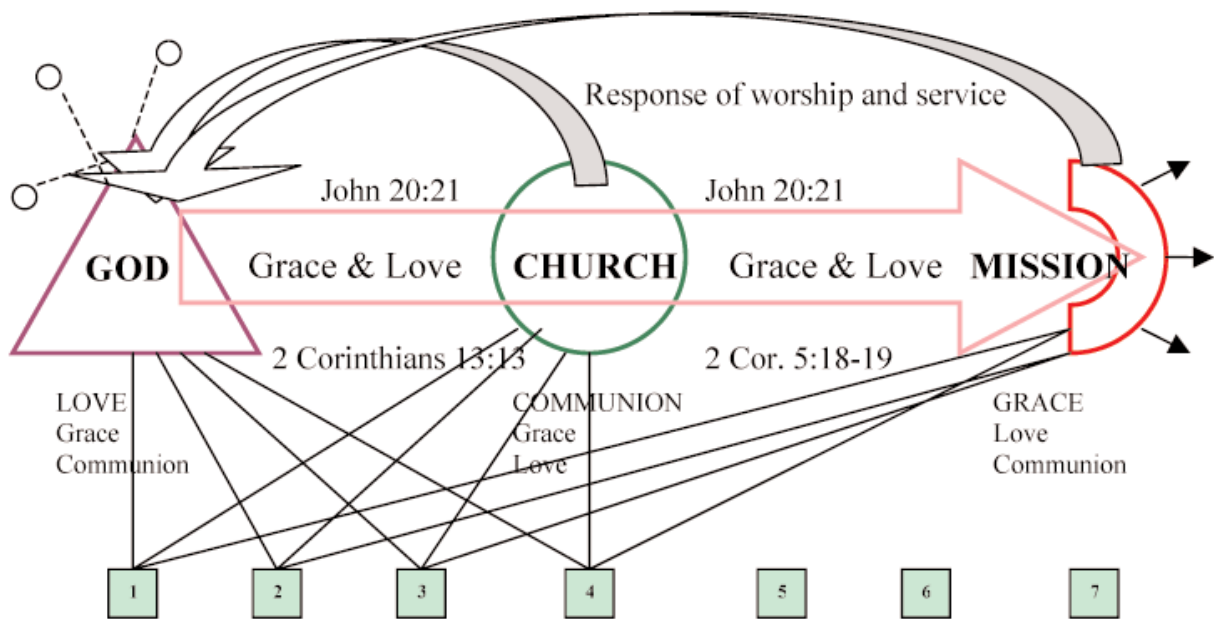|	
Rev. Dr. Art Brown	Rev. Dan Sheffield
Rev. Dr. Phil Capp	Dr. Glenn Snyder (MD)
Rev. Dr. Henry Church	Rev. Dr. Howard Snyder
Rev. Bonnie Church	Rev. Eric Spangler
Rev. Jerry Coleman	Mrs. Ann Van Valin
Rev. Polly Ho	Mrs. Kathi Walker
Rev. Gollipalli John	Rev. David Yardy
Mrs. Stephanie LeVan	Mrs. Sherrill Yardy
Rev. David Roller	Rev. Dr. Matt Zahniser
Rev. Mike Reynen	

Four papers were presented which informed the discussion:

"What's Unique About a Wesleyan Theology of Mission?"
by Howard Snyder

"Encountering World Religions: An Evangelical Response"
by Mathias Zahniser

"Shalom: God's Unreasonable Mission" by Philip Capp

"Recovering the Missional Church: Integrating Local and Global"
by Dan Sheffield

Response of worship and service

John 20:21   John 20:21

GOD   Grace & Love   **CHURCH**   Grace & Love   **MISSION**

2 Corinthians 13:13   2 Cor. 5:18-19

LOVE   COMMUNION   GRACE
Grace   Grace   Love
Communion   Love   Communion

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Ministry issues (how does an issue relate to each of the three elements?)

Affirmations and derived principles

God the Trinity	The Body of Christ	Sent into the World
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4. etc.	4. etc.	4. etc.

Diagram description:
*The Triune God (triangle), who is revealed generally through creation and prevenient presence in all cultures and religious systems (small circles), has chosen to extend a particular presence - God's experienced grace and love (large arrow from left to right) -- through the Body of Christ (large circle) into the world (half circle). The church responds to the grace (1st small arrow) and love of God through obedient participation in God's purposes for all peoples, that they might live and worship in the Spirit's presence to the praise of God's glory (2nd small arrow). The LOVE of God sends forth the GRACE-filled Jesus Christ, making possible the COMMUNION/community of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:13 NRSV).

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION:
PRINCIPLES FOR FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Cor 5:17-19

Theological Foundations

The **he mission of the church** is our participation in the mission of the Triune God who created the world as an expression of love, power, and creativity, who sustains and rules the universe, and who sent Jesus Christ into the world in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit as healing, liberating Savior, and who will bring about final reconciliation and restoration.

The deepest malady of **the human condition** is the moral disease of sin. Sin alienates people from God, from one another, and from the created order. Through his atoning death, Jesus Christ is the divine source of all healing. **Jesus heals the brokenness that results from sin** and brings persons and peoples into wholeness and communion with God, other people, and the physical environment. The healing God provides is the good news of reconciliation and transformation personally, socially, culturally, and ecologically.

We believe God has commissioned the Free Methodist Church as a part of the worldwide body of believers with a particular charism or gift to witness to and seek to incarnate the gospel among people everywhere, **forming communities of love and ethical holiness**, with an especial concern for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people throughout the world.

Since God in Christ by the Spirit desires and offers healing physically, emotionally, and socially as well as spiritually, **in order to encourage wholeness in individuals and communities**, we accept the call to a broad range of healing and enabling ministries including medical missions, preventive health care and community development as well as judicious involvement in ministries of relief, economic and environmental justice, and intervention in behalf of "the aliens, the fatherless and the widows" (Deut. 14:29, Jas. 1:27).

These "works of mercy" are not only means to extend God's love through us to a hurting world they also **serve as a "means of grace"** in our own ongoing transformation. The encounter with Christ that takes place when we feed the hungry, give a cup of cold water to the thirsty, or tend to the needs of the sick (Matt 25:40), in fact extends the sanctifying grace of God in our own lives. Deeds of kindness, in Jesus' name, toward the poor and needy become sacramental actions through which God's grace is mediated to both the giver and the receiver.

Our goal in pursuing community transformation is restored relationships with the Creator, with others in the community and with the environment. The world God made was good, but human rebellion has led to exclusion, mistrust, greed and injustice. Jesus Christ came in the fulfillment of the promise of God to restore good relationships between God, his people and creation. Through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, people are saved from God's condemnation. They become part of God's new community and experience the peace and justice of his coming rule.

We look toward the renewing power of God the Spirit who promises ultimately to transform this world and fulfill entirely the work already begun. This hope for the future is not grounded in human optimism, but unmerited grace. Faith takes it as an elementary premise of revelation that God's grace is working reliably to transform radically the whole human condition.

The peace and justice of God's kingdom are recognizable now through the power of the Holy Spirit, but will only be fully realized when Christ returns in glory. In the power of the Holy Spirit we are called to play our part in bringing reconciliation to our disordered world.

The church proclaims and witnesses to the Good News that God is reconciling the world toward relationship with the Triune God; that God has a "plan" or "economy" to bring all things into proper relationship under the headship of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10). God does this by creating "one new humanity" out of alienated, antagonistic persons and peoples, "thus making peace" or shalom in the new community of the Spirit that is the church (Eph. 2:15-16).

Priorities

As we seek to be the community of Christ's faithful followers in the world, we set the following as priorities in the way we use our time, gifts, energies and financial resources:

1. Listening to God and listening to the community

We believe that we listen to the voice of God as revealed in Scriptures and through our personal interaction with God in prayer. We believe that God's grace precedes our efforts in any community, awakening conscience and opening people to hear and receive the good news of Jesus Christ. We therefore set a priority on listening to the voices of a community, seeking to discern where God is already at work and identifying those areas of need and concern as expressed by the people whom we desire to serve.

2. Restoring broken relationships

We believe that God desires the restoration of individuals whose identities have been marred and whose sense of purpose and vocation has been distorted by sin and its various manifestations. We believe that God desires to restore our relationships with himself through Christ, with others and with the creation - to recover the shalom of his original intentions. We therefore set a priority on building redemptive relationships - relationships which point people to Christ's healing work, which enable reconciliation between estranged persons and which encourage the renewal of physical environments to God's intentions.

3. Ministry to the whole person

We believe that God created human beings and placed them in an environment characterized by harmony between God and humans, between humans, and between humans and their physical world. It is God's desire to extend his reign into all dimensions of human existence, restoring these relationships to his original intention. We therefore set a priority on developing ministries which address the needs of the whole person - mind, spirit, emotions and body. We seek to disciple Christians for responsible, critical and redemptive participation in economic and political life, as well as the spiritual and social realms, as a witness to the justice, mercy and truth of God's reign.

4. Enabling Christians to see and engage the world as God does

We believe that God sent Jesus Christ into the world in a physical incarnation in a particular cultural context; exemplifying how we should see and engage the real world. We therefore set a priority on challenging ourselves and our fellow Christians to live as responsible stewards of their God-given resources, seeing and engaging the world as God does; to see the different "other" as an equal (Gal 3:28), capable of growth to maturity, and to enter into relationships not characterized by dependency or independence but by interdependence.

Context

The context in which we do community transformation can be regarded at several different levels

People live in communities. Every human being is born into a family - we were designed by God for living in relationship with other humans. Families live in communities with other families and those communities have stories of their interrelationships built over time. We understand that both families and communities have been distorted by sin and are often places of great loneliness, mistrust and betrayal. Our redemptive engagement with communities begins with discerning where broken relationships within families and communities need to be restored.

The church as a community of believers is central to God's saving purpose. It is this body in which God lives by his Spirit and seeks to empower for ministry. The church therefore is the beginning point in our

engagement with the community outside of. Christ. In those communities where there is no body of believers (a church), Christian witnesses are sent by a church with a vision for living and proclaiming Christ in those communities. In those communities where there is a body of believers, that church is called to incarnate the life of Christ and to proclaim the good news of the kingdom in such a manner that those outside of Christ will be awakened to God's intentions for their lives and their communities.

The global village is a reality. Communities which exist thousands of miles from one another are now connected in a web of relationships facilitated by transport and communications technology, commerce, and immigration. In this globalized context the inequities in the distribution of material resources and power and the exploitation of peoples and environments, are apparent. The body of Christ represents a unique international community connected together through common belief and the presence of the Holy Spirit who points believers toward unity in spirit and purpose. This global family of believers has an especial responsibility to share their resources (knowledge, gifts, finances, etc.) amongst one another, seeking to address the inequities and exploitation inherent in our distorted world.

Forces in the spiritual realm are seeking to oppose all that we do in the name of Jesus Christ. As we seek to address the concerns of our distorted material world we must acknowledge the distortion of the spiritual realm as well. We have an active Adversary who is spreading a pervasive evil throughout all dimensions of human existence. The body of Christ must therefore, also, conduct itself as in a spiritual war for the restoration of broken relationships and broken communities. Our tools in this conflict are not human constructions but prayer, in which we call God to intervene against these spiritual forces, and the armour of God which allows us to stand firm in the midst of attack and despair (Eph 6:10-18).

Characteristics of Community Transformation

We desire to conduct ourselves in such a way that these actions/attitudes characterize our activities:

We desire to be incarnational.
When God entered the visible, material world through the incarnated Christ he demonstrated his concern for more than just the spiritual dimension of human existence. God became concrete and real, touching the real lives of real people, and we must do likewise.

Jesus came not as a conquering, problem-solving Messiah, but as limited divinity, emptying himself of powers and prerogatives, and we must do likewise.

Jesus' life was a visible reflection of the character and presence of God, to whom he continually referred those who wanted to revere him. Our Spirit-enabled lives and ministries are merely signs of the kingdom - we must point people to the King and not to ourselves.

We desire to minister to the whole person. When God created humans in his own image, he set a value and significance to every aspect of our existence. It is difficult to understand people apart from their relationships with God, self, community, those we call "other," and the environment. We conduct ourselves with people, therefore, in a manner which respects and addresses the interplay of this web of interactions.

We desire to enable a transformative learning environment. God desires that lives be transformed and restored to his original intention. Jesus' ministry gives us a picture of a transformative learning environment in which minds, values, attitudes, and actions were changed through critical encounters and incremental adjustments in worldviews. The manner in which we engage with a community should enable an environment for change and transformation.

Listening to the stories of people's lives is the beginning point to understanding where change needs to happen. Every community has a history and learning from those stories communicates respect and value. The people have been learning, coping, adapting and surviving long before we arrived. They have tried to innovate, good things have happened and there are aspects of their community of which they are extremely proud. The positive elements of a community's story can be a source of vision and energy for future possibilities.

Learning together provides the most lasting change. When we value people and their communities through listening, we indicate our desire for interdependence. We can learn from their stories and methods in ways that can be shared with other communities. When the community, then, learns from our knowledge, methods, attitudes and behaviours, we

have moved to mutuality, in which both the giver and the receiver are benefiting from the relationship. Participation involves people taking part in decisions and actions that affect their lives. It recognizes people's dignity and is one of the key ways by which people become empowered. When we model adaptation and flexibility in our methods we create space for change in the minds of those we are working with. When we acknowledge the valid contributions of others, we create networks and relationships that will sustain change over time.

Evaluation leads to accountability and durable outcomes. In a transformative model, evaluation is a fundamental means of indicating change in the community. Evaluation is not primarily for the development agent or the donors. Evaluation, therefore, is done by the community, examining goals achieved, use of budget, timeframes, identifying problems and assessing progress. These steps are necessary to determine what is working and how to best allocate resources.

Beyond accountability, however, is the question of durable outcomes. What has changed in lives within the community? Have marred identities been healed? Have people found significance in their vocations? Have relationships been restored? Have systems and structures been reconstituted toward an outward orientation and laid down their power mechanisms? Have worldviews and values been adjusted or transformed?
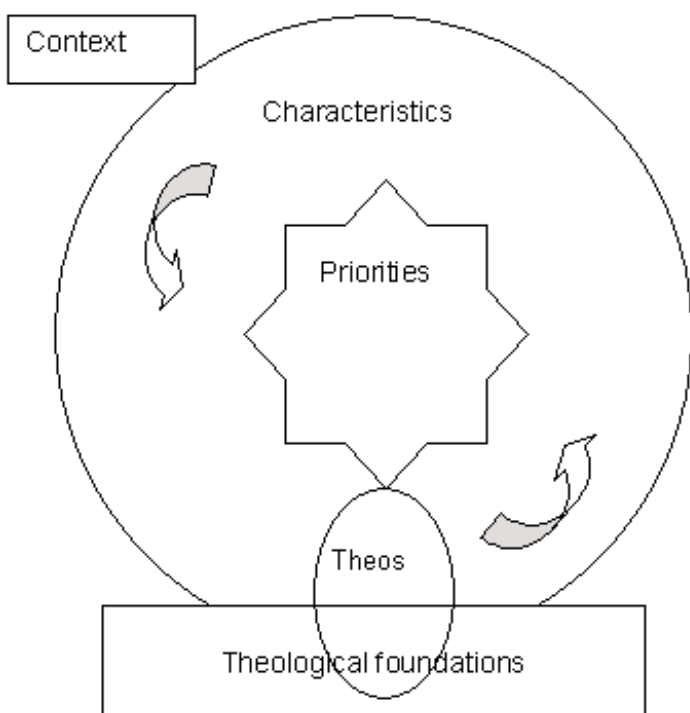
Recommended text:
Bryant Myers. Walking With the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999.

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Rev. Dr. Art Brown, Rev. Dr. Henry Church, Rev. Bonnie Church, Rev. Jerry Coleman, J. R. Crouse, Rev. Greg Pennington, Sheldon Gilmer, Dr. Bryant Myers, Hubert Normil, Vickie Reynen, Rev. David Roller, Yvonne Roller, Rev. Dan Sheffield, Dr. Glenn Snyder, Rev. Eric Spangler, Rev. David Yardy, Sherrill Yardy, Ann Van Valin,

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DEVELOPING LEADERS:
PRINCIPLES FOR FREE METHODIST WORLD MISSIONS

Theological Foundations

The document "A Theology of Mission for Free Methodist Missions" affirms:

> Since all Christians are members of Jesus Christ and of each other, and all are gifted by the Holy Spirit, every believer has some gift-ministry in the church and/or in the world. On the basis of the priesthood of believers and the gifts of the Spirit, we affirm that every Christian is a minister of the gospel and that believers are called to diverse ministries and areas of leadership (Eph. 4:7-12). God gives gifts and ministries, and the authority for ministry and leadership, to both men and women, so that in principle all roles of ministry and leadership are equally open to women as well as to men (A Theology of Mission for Free Methodist Missions, II.5).

This provides a fundamental biblical, Wesleyan, and Free Methodist perspective within which the understanding and practice of leadership in Free Methodist missions are to be understood. Specifically, it locates leadership within ecclesiology (the reality of the Body of Christ) and bases it on the nature of God and his work in Jesus Christ through the Spirit in creation and redemption. So we start with this affirmation: Biblically and theologically speaking, leadership must be understood within the context of: (1) the image of God, (2) the church as Body of Christ, and, fundamentally, (3) the doctrine of the Trinity.

In common with all humans, leaders reflect the image of God. God gave oversight capacity to all humans as an inherent attribute of being created in his image (Gen 1:27,28). Men and women are "capable of God," of deep communion and companionship with God, if the effects of sin can be overcome. Out of this relationship comes the desire to exercise leadership in restoring the whole of the created order to God's intended purpose.

Leaders emerge from the Body of Christ. A relationally connected, mutually supportive body of believers will encourage spiritual growth in which gifts, abilities and skills are recognized and affirmed, being put to use in redemptive ministry (Eph 4:16). In the midst of ministry engagement, leadership capacity will emerge.

Leadership should be practiced as a reflection of the Trinity. All members have gifts, roles and contributions that should be developed, affirmed and exercised in a relational, dialogical manner, reflecting what Scripture

reveals about the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 14:26, Gal 4:6, 1 Peter 1:2). Shared and team ministry should be utilized as much as possible.

Creative Tensions in Christian Leadership

All leadership shares some common characteristics, but Christian leadership is unique in that it is leadership in service to Jesus Christ and his mission. As head of the church, Jesus is both the leader we must follow and the model for our leadership and discipleship. The Holy Spirit guides and empowers the church to discern where Jesus is leading and to carry out its mission in the spirit of Jesus.

Christian leadership functions in the context both of the church as Body of Christ and of the multicultural reality of today's world. Effective leadership bridges several points of creative tension:

- Free Methodist - Catholic. The Free Methodist Church is a denomination with its own history, integrity, mission, and international presence. Yet it recognizes the larger Body of Church worldwide and seeks the welfare of God's people everywhere.

- Democracy - Authority. Free Methodist leadership recognizes that all members should participate in decision-making in the church but also the legitimacy of structures of leadership and authority. This tension is held together through affirming the giftedness and priesthood of all believers and also God's specific calling of apostles and other leaders.

- Universal - Contextual. Leadership is a universal need in the church, but leadership practices, expectations, and structures will vary and may be adapted according to particular cultural contexts.

- Freedom - Accountability. The "Free" in Free Methodist affirms the freedom of the Spirit in the church, including real freedom for the exercise of gifts, leadership and ministry. The church affirms individual initiative but also shared mutual responsibility. As Methodists, Free Methodists recognize the need for structure and constituted mechanisms of accountability so that all is done "decently and in order" for the effective functioning of the Body and the extension of mission.

- Tradition - Innovation. Free Methodists recognize the value of church tradition through the centuries but also the need of (and freedom for) innovation according to contemporary needs and challenges. Effective leadership is a creative blend of tradition and innovation, the old and the new.

- Conflict - Reconciliation. Free Methodists recognize that in leadership and the growth of the church, conflict is to be expected and can be positive. Conflict provides the opportunity to work toward reconciliation in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

- Skills - Gifts. Leadership is a matter of both skills and gifts. The Spirit variously gifts people for ministry, and leaders can often further enhance their ministries by learning specific skills appropriate to their tasks.

- Serving - Leading. Leaders are called to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. As servants of Jesus and the kingdom of God, however, leaders are called to provide initiative and facilitate vision for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Context for Identifying Emerging Leaders

John Wesley believed that growth in all inward and outward holiness took place in a context of genuine Christian community. As God-seekers interact with others on the pilgrimage toward Christ, the encounter with the grace-enabled, Body of Christ (ecclesia) crafts and focuses our way forward to wholeness and holiness.

Growth in holiness and growth in ministry and leadership are interrelated - practically the two sides of the same coin. Since holiness in the Wesleyan tradition is understood as the love of God expressing itself outwardly in love to others, growth in grace also means growth in ministry. Optimism that grace will lead to the inward growth/perfecting of believers means an optimism regarding the capacity of ordinary Christians to engage in effective ministry in their worlds.

The local body of believers needs to create an environment that includes and welcomes all who find their way into the community (Acts 2:46,47), where people are attended to, where they are seen, affirmed and

made whole (Matt 9:22), and where people are embraced in their diversity of needs and giftings, leading to adjustments in the Body as a whole (Act 6:1-7). As local churches become places of wholeness, leadership giftings and capacity emerge, and believers with demonstrated spirituality are released into ministry opportunities which aid further gift discernment (Acts 6:1-7). Believers who consistently demonstrate their availability and integrity will remain faithful to their identity and giftings through the process of growth and maturity, in turn providing welcome and embrace to those just entering upon the Way (John 15:7,8).

In this picture all believers are called to exercise their gifts, abilities and skills in the local churches, and beyond. In this document, prepared for FMWM missionaries and international leaders, we are particularly giving our attention to those emergent leaders with giftings for the equipping ministries of the local church and those who take up responsibility as overseers in the connectional fellowship of interrelated local churches within our conference structures.
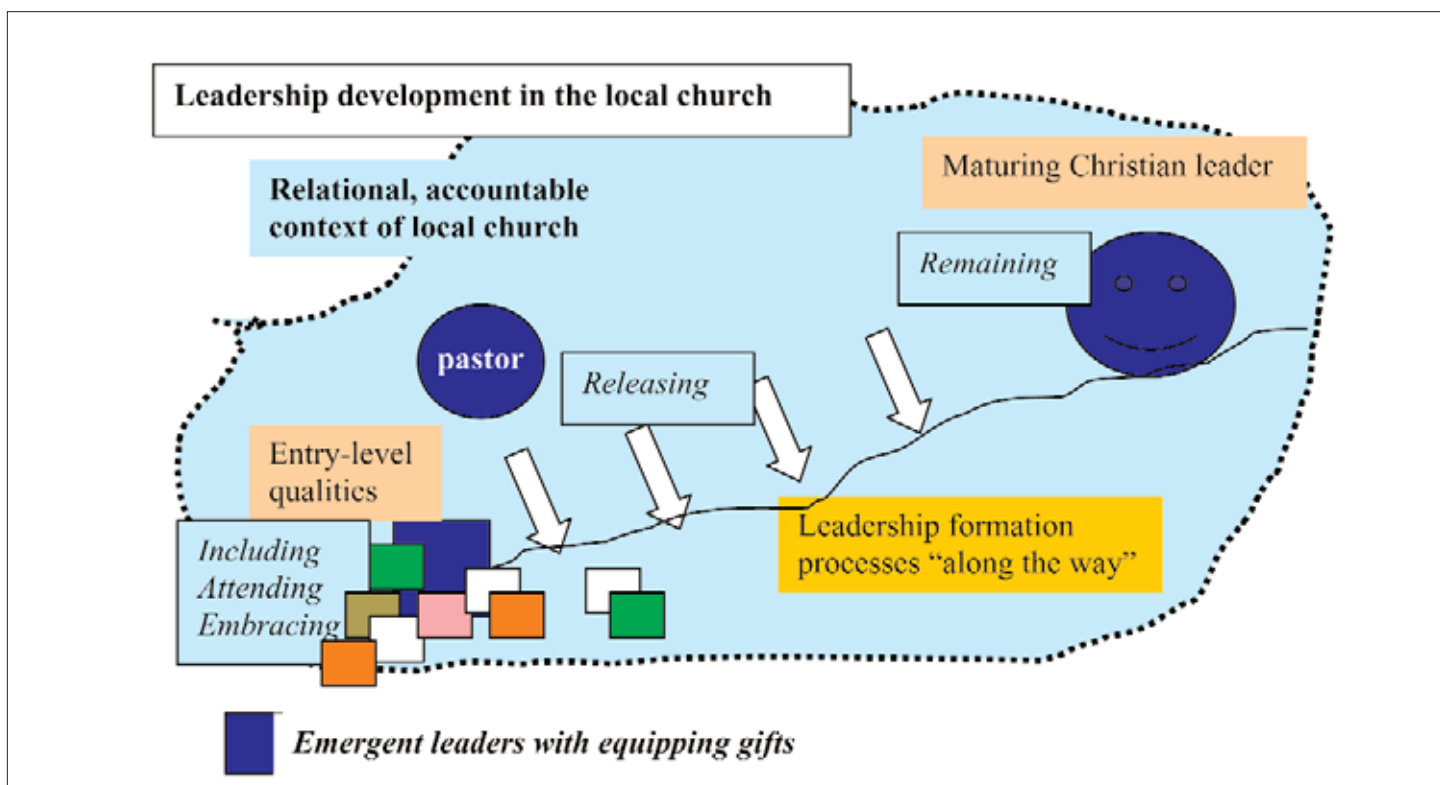
oriented horizon. That horizon gives us a picture of what we would like to see in fully formed, mature Christian leaders. This is a horizon toward which we are all moving. Even though falling short we rely upon God's grace to enable movement toward this goal. Further we see the church in global mission journeying toward the horizon of God's kingdom come in fullness.

We need to see the emergence of Christian leadership in the context of an ongoing process where character qualities and ministry skills are developed and fleshed out, where spiritual giftings and calling are discerned in a relational context, and where spiritual and theological formation continues to transform our responses to daily living and ministry.

As Christian leaders we have an assignment to identify those persons who have the capacity to take up leadership responsibility in the Body of Christ. Leaders have the task of mentoring their movement toward all that God may have for them, then releasing them into places of ministry leadership where they may continue developing toward the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Developing Leaders toward an Eschatological Horizon

As we seek to develop leaders for the life and ministry of the church we must continually see people from a future-

Leadership development in the local church

Relational, accountable context of local church

Maturing Christian leader

Remaining

pastor

Releasing

Entry-level qualities

Including Attending Embracing

Leadership formation processes "along the way"

Emergent leaders with equipping gifts

Qualities of Emerging Leaders

When the Apostle Paul appointed elders in newly planted churches, he often did not have the luxury of leaving behind fully-formed, mature Christian leaders. He did, however, seem to have a criteria for these "entry-level" leaders, people who could be developed in the context of ministry responsibility. Passages such as 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9 give us qualities of those suitable to serve as overseers.

Spirituality
All believers are called to a life of intimacy with Christ. The spiritual disciplines which aid the development of relationship with God need to be found in the lives of emerging leaders, as do the emergent forms of the fruit of the Spirit.

Character
Christlike character surfaces as one of the primary qualities of emerging leaders. Phrases such as: "above reproach, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, sincere, trustworthy" etc., describe the inherent attributes of moral and ethical strength that demonstrate an integrated person.

Drawing Power
A reputation of high esteem with both believers and outsiders was also on Paul's lists. Emerging leaders were to be tested so see if there was anything outstanding against them that might lead to disgrace. The care and management of family and household were observable to the church and the community. Respect and trust are characteristics of those leaders who are able to draw others into their sphere of influence.

Able to Teach
Emerging leaders have been taught the foundations of the Christian message and are teachable in spirit. They are prepared to be built up in the faith toward maturity and to continue to grow in Christ. They are rooted in the faith, and hold firmly to the truths of Scripture that they have been taught. They are able to teach and encourage others with sound doctrine and to respond with wisdom to those who oppose it.

Available for Ministry
Ministry involvement is the context for discerning the giftings and calling of emerging leaders. Existing leaders need to encourage those individuals who make themselves available for developing skill and experience in ministry. As they engage actively in ministry, gifts emerge and wisdom (reflection upon knowledge and experience) can be acquired.

As these qualities emerge and are found in increasing measure, leadership equippers can be assured that they are working with the right people.

Leadership Formation Along the Way

Local church pastors and other leaders with equipping gifts have a responsibility to enable the development of emergent leaders. Our model places a priority on forming leaders within the context of local church ministry - learning "along the way" (Mark 10:32). There are several activities and processes that need to be enlisted in the work of mentoring these leaders:

Discerning spiritual giftings and vocational calling
As leaders emerge with some basic qualities (like those listed above), further discernment is needed to identify spiritual gifts - those particular "grace-gifts" that provide spiritual dynamite in the conduct of ministry. These are most clearly identified in the midst of hands-on exposure to a diversity of ministries and affirmed by mature leaders who observe the emerging leader. A particular calling to leadership ministry needs to be affirmed by mature leaders and the body of Christ who have been impacted by those gift expressions.

Forming the Servant Leader
In the Christian counter-culture, leaders must learn to be servants. Jesus consistently interchanged the word "servant" for those who follow him, or his Father, or those who enter into the Kingdom (Matthew 25). Jesus said his followers must be humble servants, refraining from using a worldly leadership paradigm (Matt 23:11, Mark 9:35, John 12:26). Emerging leaders will be formed by learning to follow.

Providing risk-taking ministry opportunities
Christian leaders take risks in the midst of exploring ministry responses to people in need of Jesus. Emerging leaders need opportunities to learn by trial and error under the oversight of mature leaders, with accountability to the wider body of believers.

Familiarity with leadership models and methods
The New Testament gives us two pictures of emerging leaders being exposed and apprenticed to mature leaders in the stories of Jesus and Paul. Teaching on leadership, exposure to the nitty-gritty of leadership life, and hands-on apprenticeship alongside competent leaders is a requirement for growth and development as a leader.

**Learning the art of contextual theological reflection**
Doing theology must be the practical exercise of all believers as they search the Scriptures daily, privately and in community, to meet the challenges and opportunities of being salt and light to the world. This exercise may come at various levels of skill but, with guidance in the church and by the Holy Spirit, maturing leaders will increasingly engage in applying Christian teaching, confronting and addressing cultural context.

Catholic in spirit
Mature leaders demonstrate broad-minded, inclusive fellowship with other Christian believers. Wesley urged us not to distinguish ourselves from other families in the Christian community. Free Methodist leaders should avoid sectarian behaviour that can so easily distract seekers from the essentials of the faith that have been handed down to the whole church.

Grace-filled living
Mature leaders recognize the grace of God at work in all peoples leading them to conduct themselves with great respect and perseverance. Grace-filled leaders are characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, they regularly access the "means of grace," and the spiritual disciplines are a normal part of their life. Accessing the grace of God leads into a calm assurance of salvation and the
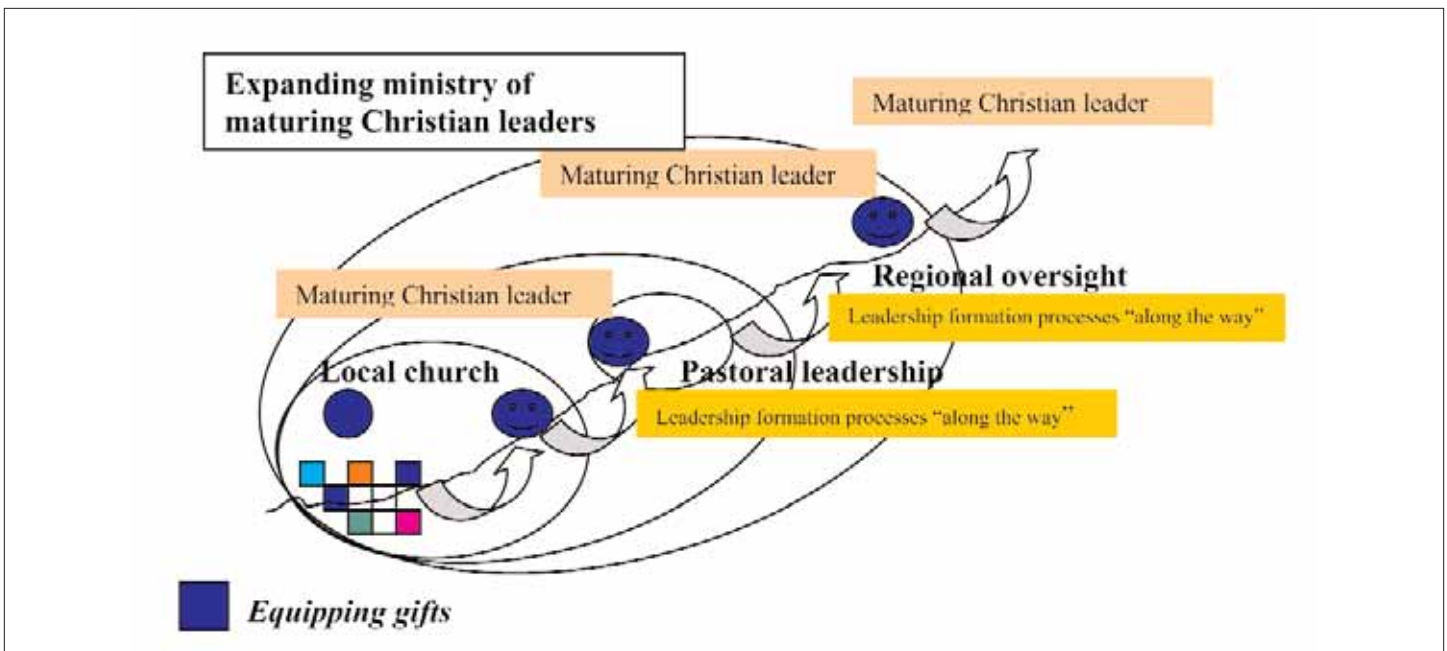
Free Methodist Leadership Distinctives

As emergent leaders are mentored and given opportunities to develop skills, experience, integrity and persistent faithfulness, fully formed, mature Christian leaders will result. These mature leaders will likewise demonstrate more fully realized character qualities and ministry skill.

perfecting/maturing of character by the infilling of the Holy Spirit which is demonstrated through the overflowing of love in all that is said and done.

Passion for seeing lives and communities transformed by the Good News
Mature leaders have a passion for people, to see people transformed in mind, body and spirit. For Wesley the scope of evangelism was never less than the fullness of the Christian experience - holiness of heart and a life that conforms to it. Simple conversion and the counting of numbers is not sufficient. There is a seamless

responsibility and accountability required between conversion and holy living. Wholistic evangelism calls us to the full redemptive intent of God in Christ, not only transforming deformed individuals but also our sin-distorted cultures and social environments. Free Methodist leaders will speak and act against the social distortions of society, and on behalf of the poor and marginalized, as a witness to the full scope of missio dei.

Connected relationships on a local and global scale

Mature leaders recognize the wider interrelationships in the Body of Christ. The Methodist movement has a fundamental value concerning the communal and connectional nature of the church. Just as individual believers are held accountable by the small groups and local church of which they are members, so local churches are part of a wider fellowship of churches within a structure of accountability. All leaders are held accountable within this model, from the local church to the international arena.

Equipping the priesthood of all believers

Mature leaders place a priority on equipping all believers for the work of ministry. The leadership gifts identified in Ephesians 4:12 are especially intended for preparing and training believers for ministry both in the local church and in the broader culture. Such leaders will have acquired specialized training, where appropriate, to accurately handle the word of God and the application of Christian scripture and theological values to particular ministry contexts, thereby enabling the effectiveness of their equipping role *(2 Tim 2:15, 16; 3:16, 17; Titus 1:9).*

Key Factors for Leadership Formation

The following principles are the key thoughts we discussed regarding the process for developing leaders. These are not, in fact, processes, but basic requirements that must be worked out in a contextual manner wherever we do ministry.

Local church context

A healthy local church offers the most appropriate place to encourage the kind of spiritual growth in which useful gifts, abilities and skills can be recognized and put to use in redemptive ministry. The local church is the fundamental building block of the Christian community.

To bypass its significance and engage with "emerging leaders" who have not explored and tested their gifts in the accountable environment of a local church, is to do a disserve to both the individual and those ministry contexts to which the individual may migrate in the future.

Train everyone, let leaders emerge

We need to practice the ministry of equipping all God's people for ministry (Eph 4:11-12). The primary function of "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers" is precisely to make the gift-ministries of all believers functional in the church. This means the central focus of missionaries and pastors will be expanding the ministry of the whole body and facilitating the raising up of leaders of various kinds through a continuous, ongoing process of discipling and leadership training.

Spirituality and Character

These are primary qualities required before all other considerations: relationship with God and relationship with oneself - identifiable to all observers.

Stages of development

A developmental model of leadership, where full maturity is not expected from day one but understood to develop over time with training and experience, seems inherently related to a Wesleyan understanding of growth in grace with increasing inward and outward transformation.

Develop practices with leaders in context

The principles and patterns identified here will need significant interaction with leaders in the diverse cultural contexts in which we live and minister. The identification of contextual responses to the principles outlined here will be the determinant of forward action.

Consultation Participants (Oct 2005)

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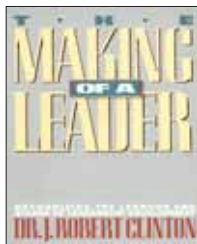
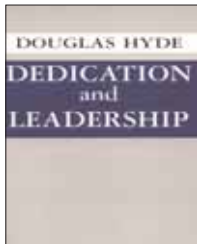## Reading List for Leadership Development

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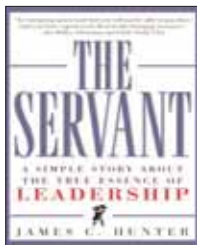
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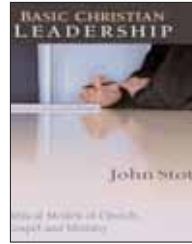
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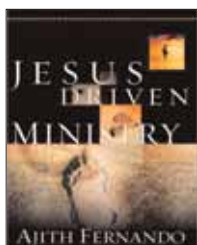
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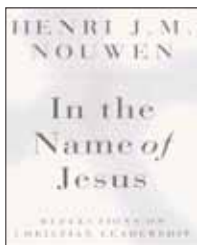
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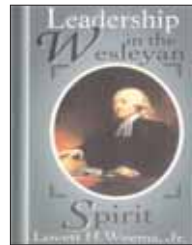
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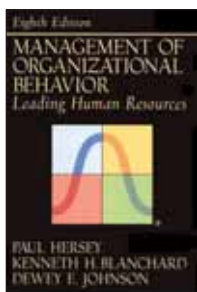
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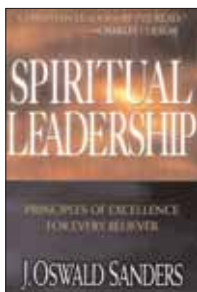
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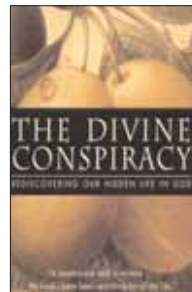
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WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF MISSION?

A WESLEYAN PERSPECTIVE ON FREE METHODIST MISSIONS

by Howard Snyder

INTRODUCTION

Here are two remarkable quotations from John Wesley that go to the heart of his theology and illustrate the key points to be made in this paper:

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning, his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by convincing grace, usually in Scripture termed repentance; which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone. Afterwards we experience the Proper Christian salvation: whereby, "through grace," we "are saved by faith;" consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favor of God, by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, show this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from

that moment, as "a grain of mustard seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds," but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we "grow up in all things into Him that is our head;" till we attain "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." -John Wesley, Sermon 75, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," II.1.

We may learn from hence, in the Third place, what is the proper nature of religion, of the religion of Jesus Christ. It is qerapeia yuchvá [therapy of soul], God's method of healing a soul which is thus diseased. Hereby the great Physician of souls applies medicines to heal this sickness, to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties. God heals all our Atheism by the knowledge of Himself, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; by giving us faith, a divine evidence and conviction of God, and of the things of God. - in particular, of this important truth, "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me." By repentance and lowliness of heart, the deadly disease of pride is healed; that of self-will by resignation, a meek and thankful submission to the will of God; and for the love of the world in all its branches, the love of God is the sovereign remedy. Now, this is properly religion, "faith" thus "working by love;" working the genuine meek humility, entire deadness to the world, with a loving, thankful acquiescence in, and conformity to, the whole will and word of God. -John Wesley, Sermon 44, "Original Sin," III.3.

This reflection on a Wesleyan theology of mission assumes several basic things: That God calls the church into mission; that the church is essentially missionary, or missional; that the gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful to reach across cultural barriers and to draw people to himself despite human sinfulness. It assumes also that any sound theology of mission, including any purportedly Wesleyan one, must be thoroughly biblical; that biblical authority takes precedence over the authority of Wesley or any church tradition.

It is also my conviction, however, that John Wesley had an unusually insightful grasp of the gospel and its mission. The Wesleyan perspective is highly relevant to the mission of the Free Methodist Church today. Much of this relevance comes from the fact that Wesley was constantly engaged in the practice of mission-preaching the gospel to the poor and all who would hear; forming Methodist classes and societies; writing letters, sermons,

and pamphlets; counseling and sending out preachers; and constantly reflecting theologically on what he was doing. Wesley was amazingly well informed about what was going on in his day intellectually, philosophically, and scientifically, as well as in the church and in the lives of the Methodist people who were his special concern.

Wesley's missionary focus, of course, was primarily Great Britain and the American colonies. He believed in establishing a vital base and then moving out gradually from that base, and thus extended the Methodist witness throughout England and into Scotland, Ireland, and America. The real father of global Methodist missions was his younger prot,g, Thomas Coke (1747-1814), who is worth studying in his own right. Wesley and Coke had different strategies, though the same overall mission. Wesley said wryly of Coke's globe-trotting missionary ventures, "Dr. Coke and I are like the French and the Dutch. The French have been compared to a flea, the Dutch to a louse. I creep like a louse, and the ground I get I keep; but the Doctor leaps like a flea and is sometimes obliged to leap back again."

Through the influence of Wesley and Coke and others, an amazing Methodist missionary enterprise developed in the 1800s. It was double-pronged, reaching in separate branches from British and American Methodism. In the United States, Methodist missions began with missions to the American Indians, the slaves, and to the west coast. American Methodist missions were expanding rapidly at the time B. T. Roberts was beginning his ministry, which is part of the reason Roberts briefly considered missionary service in Bulgaria or in the Oregon Territory.

John Wesley's own life and theology, however, are the fountainhead of the Methodist missionary enterprise. And they provide highly significant learnings that can and should instruct Free Methodist missions.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF WESLEY'S THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

We need first to understand the distinctiveness of Wesley's theological orientation. Wesley had a remarkable capacity to step outside his own tradition when doing theology -unlike, for example, Luther or Calvin. This was due in part to his personality and temperament and the nature of his intellect; in part to the hybrid Anglican tradition with its via media and its "Anglican triad" of Scripture, reason, and tradition; and in part to the revival in patristic studies at Oxford during Wesley's student days. Perhaps it owed something also to Wesley's willingness to step outside his own social class to minister to and with the poor.

I believe God used these dynamics to create what is increasingly coming to be recognized as one of the great theological minds of the Christian tradition-as well as a great evangelist, church leader, and man of mature Christian character.

The two points of distinctiveness I would highlight in Wesley's theology are, first, his broad, conjunctive approach ("both/and" rather than "either/or," but with no compromise on issues of truth and error); and his integration of multiple sources of truth (but with no compromise on biblical authority).

1. *Wesley's broad approach to theology.* Unlike most of his theological contemporaries and forebears, Wesley drew from other traditions besides Reformed Protestantism. Most importantly for the whole cast of his theology, he reached back prior to Augustine (whose theology heavily shaped Calvin and Luther) and drew from the early sources of Eastern Orthodoxy. Central here is Wesley's view of grace, of human nature, and of the nature and scope of salvation. Wesley had a key theological intuition that affirmations which appeared contradictory or paradoxical might simply testify to a deeper, integrating truth that needed to be discerned.[1]
2. *The Wesleyan Pentalateral.* Much has been written about the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience - which, however, might better be termed the Wesleyan Pentalateral of Scripture, creation, reason, tradition, and experience. It is clear that for Wesley, God's creation was a source of revelation, truth, and insight. Wesley integrated all these elements into his theology. The construct probably is best viewed as a sphere or circle, or a structure like that of the atom, with Scripture at the center and creation, reason, tradition, and experience orbiting around this center-all "energized" and made dynamic by the Holy Spirit.[2] These interrelated dynamics-Wesley's broad but biblically-based theology and his holistic integration of multiple sources-give rise to several theological themes of importance for Christian mission. I have chosen to highlight four that I think are very basic in Wesley and are especially relevant today.

FOUR KEY THEMES IN WESLEY

Wesley emphasized four biblical themes that together constitute a dynamic theology of mission. These are the image of God in humankind (and to a lesser degree in all creation), God's preceding (or prevenient) grace, salvation as healing, and the perfecting of Christian character (Christian perfection). Though these themes interweave, they have a certain logical and to some extent chronological order in the sequence I present them.

1. The Image of God

Man and woman are created in God's image. For Wesley, this was more than an affirmation about human worth or dignity (as it is often taken today). It had key redemptive implications. Since human beings bear God's image, even though marred by sin, they can be redeemed, healed, restored. Created in the divine image, men and women are "capable of God." That is, they have an inherent capacity for deep communion and companionship with God if the effects of sin can be overcome.

Among other implications, this means that the first word in evangelistic witness is not bad news but good news: Not, "You are a sinner," but "You bear God's image." Evangelism starts with good news. But Wesley does not lose his balance here, as some contemporary theology does; there is no compromise with the sinfulness of sin and the alienation, guilt, and judgment that result from sin. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). For Wesley, that is neither the last nor the first word. Sin is the defacing, but not the total loss, of the image of God. In every person there is something worth saving and something that can be restored.

In a more remote sense, the whole created order bears God's stamp and image. Here Wesley's worldview is more Hebraic and biblical than Greek or Platonic; more ecological, "both/and," than is most Reformed theology. In his mature theology, especially, Wesley did not make a sharp break between the physical and the spiritual realms. It was no theological embarrassment to him to see the interpenetration of the material and the spiritual worlds, and to affirm the working of God's Spirit in both, interactively. This provides (in part) the theological basis for recognizing that salvation has to do not only with human experience but also with the restoration of the whole created order (another key theme in Wesley).

2. Preceding Grace

In Wesley's view, all creation is infused or suffused with God's grace as an unconditional benefit of Christ's atonement. There is nowhere one can go where God's grace is not found, though people (and people corporately, as cultures and societies) can, and do, close their hearts and minds to God's grace.[3]

Based on the Latin praevenire ("to come before, anticipate, get the start of"), Wesley called this gracious dynamic "preventing grace"-because that's what

"prevent" still meant in his day. Since "prevent" has almost the opposite meaning and connotation today, the more common term has become "prevenient grace." We might more accurately call it preceding grace-that gracious, loving, drawing action or influence of God that is always at work seeking to bring people and cultures to God.[4]

Several implications of God's preceding grace might profitably be explored, and we may want to discuss them. The first and most basic meaning is that in Christ by the Holy Spirit God has gone ahead of us (ahead of every person), preceding us, counteracting the effects of sin to the extent that people can respond to God's grace. God's preceding grace is not in itself saving grace; its function is to draw us to salvation in Christ.[5]

Wesley spoke of preventing (preceding), justifying (or converting) and sanctifying grace.[6] These are not, of course, three different "kinds" or qualities of grace. Grace is one; it is the gracious, loving self-giving activity and influence of God. The threefold distinction refers not so much to the nature of grace itself but to the way people experience that grace. By God's prior grace people are drawn to God (or they resist that grace).

Responding in faith, grace becomes justifying grace, leading directly into sanctifying grace if people continue to open their lives to the work of God's Spirit. Or, put differently, the loving grace of God precedes us, draws us to Christ, converts us, and progressively sanctifies us, leading finally to "glorification" in the new creation.

One missiological implication of preceding grace is that God's Spirit is the missionary. God is already active in all persons, cultures, societies, and to some in many (not all) religions.[7] God works for good, limiting the effects of evil, and seeking to bring people to himself. While some people, responding to preceding grace, may find their way to God, the role of the church and Christian mission is essential that more people may know and respond to Christ and be saved from their sins, and that vital, outreaching churches may be formed in all societies. The work of Christian mission is so to cooperate with God's preceding grace that people may experience God's convicting, justifying, and sanctifying grace.

An emphasis on preceding or prevenient grace can be pressed too far, of course, so that the distinction between preceding and justifying grace is lost. The danger would be to lose Wesley's balance; to so emphasize that we are saved by grace, not by works, that the necessity of knowing and responding to God's grace in Jesus Christ in faith and obedience is eclipsed. The whole point of prevenient grace is that it precedes in order that there might be response of repentance, faith, love, and good works.

3. Salvation as Healing

A third key element in Wesley's theology is his conception of salvation as healing from the disease of sin. While people are guilty because of their acts of sin, the deeper problem is a moral disease which alienates people from God, from themselves and each other, and from the physical environment. So Charles Wesley prayed,

> The seed of sin's disease
> Spirit of health, remove,
> Spirit of finished holiness,
> Spirit of perfect love.[8]

Reformed theology has tended to use primarily (or exclusively) juridical models of salvation, with strong emphasis on the Book of Romans. Jesus' atonement cancels the penalty for sin so that we may be forgiven, justified. Wesley affirmed this, of course. But for Wesley the deeper issue was the moral disease of sin that needed healing by God's grace.

Randy Maddox speaks of Wesley's "distinctive integration" of Eastern and Western conceptions of

God's grace at this point. "Given their juridical focus, Western theologians have identified God's grace predominately as pardon, or the unmerited forgiveness of our guilt through Christ. By contrast, Eastern theologians construe grace primarily in terms of the power to heal our infirm nature that comes through participation in God." Wesley combines the two. A study of Wesley's preaching shows that (in contrast, for instance, to Calvin), Wesley combined in almost equal measure the accents of pardon and power in preaching God's grace.[9]

Wesley wrote in his sermon "The Witness of Our Spirit," "As soon as ever the grace of God (in the former sense, his pardoning love) is manifested to our soul, the grace of God (in the latter sense, the power of his Spirit) takes place therein. And now we can perform through God, what to [ourselves] was impossible . . . a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of soul after His likeness."[10] Maddox helpfully summarizes:

Wesley's integration of the two dimensions of grace was not merely a conjunctive one. The emphasis on pardon was incorporated into the larger theme of empowerment for healing. Thereby, God's unmerited forgiveness became instrumental to the healing of our corrupt nature, in keeping with Wesley's deep sympathy with a therapeutic emphasis like that characteristic of Eastern Christianity. At the same time, the Christological basis of grace was made more evident than is typical in the East, integrating the legitimate concern emphasized by the West.[11]

Today "therapeutic" models of salvation are anathema to many Evangelicals because they are thought to undercut the biblical emphasis on the guilt of sin and justification by grace alone. To use healing language for salvation is seen as caving in to popular humanistic psychology, an over-emphasis on "feeling," and today's moral relativism. But we are not faced with an either/or choice here. Pardon for sin through the atoning death of Jesus Christ is essential. But the point of Christ's atonement is that human beings, and by extension their societies, cultures, and environments, may be healed from the disease and alienation of sin.

This has many implications for Christian mission. The healing model underscores the personal and relational nature of salvation. It has the potential for "healing" the divisions between our understandings of spiritual, physical, social-relational, environmental, and cosmic health. God's salvation intends and entails healing in all dimensions. Salvation-as-healing makes it clear that God is intimately concerned with every aspect of our lives; yet, biblically understood, it also makes clear that the healing we most fundamentally need is spiritual: Our relationship to God.[12] Biblically grounded (and as Wesley understood it), the salvation-as-healing motif is no concession to pop psychology; it is an affirmation of who God is, what it means to be created in God's image, and what it takes for that image to be restored in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The healing paradigm is often especially relevant in mission contexts. As Philip Jenkins notes in The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity, many African and other independent churches "stress Jesus' role as prophet and healer, as Great Physician. Although this approach is not so familiar in the modern West, this is one of many areas in which the independents are very much in tune with the Mediterranean Christianity of the earliest centuries."[13]

4. The Perfecting of Christian Character

Insofar as salvation concerns our relation to God and other people, the goal is Christian perfection, or the maturing and perfecting of Christian character.

Unfortunately, the word "perfection" is easily misunderstood to mean a completed absolute rectitude, even flawlessness, rather than the process of perfecting (though the word can mean both). It is actually closer to Wesley's meaning to speak of "Christian perfecting" or "the perfecting of Christian character" than to speak of "Christian perfection."[14] Wesley, of course, was attempting to be biblical in his terminology. It is clear from his writings that by Christian perfection Wesley meant the Spirit-given ability to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and our neighbors as ourselves. The central issue is the work of the Spirit in transforming us (personally and communally, as the church) into the image of Christ; of forming in us the character of Christ, which is equivalent to the fruit of the Spirit. Christian perfection is having and living out "the fullness of Christ" or "the fullness of the Spirit."[15]

We are called to holiness, which means (as Wesley often said) having the mind that was in Christ Jesus, being conformed to his image, and walking as he walked. This is where the salvation-healing leads, if we walk in the Spirit. This healing makes the church a sign and agent of the larger, broader healing that God is bringing in Christ through the Spirit.

Wesley sometimes called this experience of the perfecting of character "social holiness." We should be clear that by "social holiness" Wesley meant the experience and demonstration of the character of Jesus

Christ in Christian community, the church. In Wesley, "social holiness" does not mean social justice or the social witness of the church. That witness grows out of the "social holiness" that is the character of the church itself and might better be called "kingdom witness" or something similar. Wesley was making a very specific and essential (and often neglected) point in using the term "social holiness": Holiness (the character of Christ) is not solitary or lone or individualistic sanctity but a social (i.e., relational) experience based on our relationship with God the Trinity and experienced, refined, and lived out jointly in Christian community. Wesley was very clear on this, and it is a disservice to Wesleyan theology to use the term "social holiness" as equivalent to "social witness" without at least acknowledging that we mean something different than Wesley did.[16]

It seems to me that the Wesleyan emphasis on Christian perfecting has two fundamental aspects that are key for the church's effective witness: First, we must emphasize (and incarnate) the fact that the goal (the telos) is always growing up into the fullness of the character of Jesus Christ as the corporate experience of the church and the experience of each member of the body. This seems to be the central import of Ephesians 4:7-16 and related passages which speak of the church as the body of Christ, animated by and filled with the Spirit.

Second, we must stress (and help Christians experience) the fullness of the Spirit- being filled with and walking in the Holy Spirit. Normally, as Wesley taught, this deeper work of the Spirit comes as a distinct experience subsequent to conversion, though (as Wesley acknowledged) it may be experienced more gradually or less perceptibly and thus, no doubt, through multiple fresh fillings (or deeper workings) of the Spirit. In today's stress on character, moral development, and growth we must not lose the essential crisis and process link. I agree for the most part with the critique that the 19th-Century holiness movement overemphasized crisis and underplayed process in the work of sanctification. But today we probably are in danger of the opposite extreme, partly in reaction to Pentecostal/ Charismatic emphases and partly in reaction to our own history. It would be un-Wesleyan as well as unbiblical to lose the crisis/process nexus.

As a practical matter of preaching, discipleship, and growth, we need to help believers understand the deeper life of the Spirit that is available to them in Christ. We should give believers opportunities to enter into that deeper life-to confront the dividedness of their own

hearts and enter into that fullness, wholeness, and integration in Christian community that is our inheritance in Jesus Christ and a foretaste of that communion we will enjoy in the heavenly kingdom. This was Wesley's concern, and it should be ours.

In sum: key Wesleyan themes for Christian mission today are the image of God, preceding grace, salvation as healing, and the perfecting of Christian character. Clearly all these themes are missional. That is, they all clarify the mission of the church and by the Spirit empower and impel the church into mission, into kingdom witness.

WESLEYAN THEOLOGY AND CHURCH GROWTH

The implications of these themes can be drawn out in several directions. They not only suggest a basic theology of mission but also give direction for issues of strategy and methods. Clearly there are social justice implications in all these themes, though I have not addressed them directly.

An area where Wesleyan theology and Wesley's own ministry provide important perspectives is church growth, and I will address this briefly.[17]

Wesley understood that the growth of the church was connected with issues of character, discipline, and shared Christian experience. A couple of examples from Wesley's Journal for 1747 are instructive. In one place he noted that "the [Methodist] society, which the first year consisted of above 800 members, is now reduced to 400. But, according to the old proverb, the half is more than the whole."[18] On another occasion Wesley learned that the little society at Tetney was giving substantial contributions to the poor. The leader told Wesley, "All of us who are single persons have agreed together, to give both ourselves and all we have to God: and we do it gladly; whereby we are able from time to time, to entertain all the strangers that come to Tetney; who often have no food to eat, nor any friend to give them a lodging."[19] These accounts reveal something not only about discipline but also about structure. For Wesley, growth was a function of a deeper issue: The vitality and character of the Christian community.

Wesley and early Methodism demonstrate a number of dynamics which today might be called "church growth principles." Some examples: (I) effectively taking the gospel to the masses, especially the poor; (2) using and multiplying unordained itinerant preachers and other indigenous leaders; (3) providing useful structures for koinonia and discipleship through the network of class meetings, bands, and other groups; (4) maintaining

accountability of designated leaders; and (5) adapting methods and structures to the cultural patterns of the people one is working with.

Wesley's theology and practice also says something about issues of diversity versus homogeneity and so-called "homogeneous unit" thinking. Although Wesley did not deal with the issue directly, it seems clear both from Wesley's theology and from Scripture that faithful churches must reject the notion that the church should be made up of "homogeneous units" so as to speed church growth. The four themes discussed above could be explored for insights in this area. Certainly the form of the church must not contradict the image of God in believers and societies. One key implication of that teaching, as well as of God's work in nature and cultures, is the vital importance of combining, not segregating, diversity and oneness. As B. T. Roberts noted, the New Testament stresses diversity in the body of Christ. "Man's work is uniform. In God's work there is unity in variety. You can make two buttons alike, but you cannot find two leaves exactly alike."[20] The church affirms diversity not as a problem but as a witness.

Wesley's stress on preceding grace and on the power of the Holy Spirit to perfect Christian character suggests an optimism of grace that should infuse our church planting and discipling. If God can transform people into the likeness of Jesus Christ, he can build communities that transcend racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural differences. Wesley's conviction that salvation is healing suggests potent possibilities for building reconciled and reconciling communities that are a foretaste of the "great multitude" pictured in the Book of Revelation. A hopeful sign today is the growing number of congregations that are demonstrating that diverse, multiethnic churches can grow healthily and reproduce themselves, just as in the days of the early church.[21]

The New Testament gospel calls the church to be a community of visible reconciliation. As Rene Padilla notes, the early apostles "sought to build communities in which Jew and Gentile, slave and free, poor and rich would worship together and learn the meaning of their unity in Christ right from the start, although they often had to deal with difficulties arising out of the differences in background or social status among the converts." Clearly the apostles "never contemplated the possibility of forming homogeneous unit churches that would then express their unity in terms of interchurch relationships. Each church was meant to portray the oneness of its members regardless of their racial, cultural, or social differences."[22] Based on a study of the New Testament,

Padilla concludes:

The breaking down of the barriers that separate people in the world was regarded as an essential aspect of the gospel, not merely as a result of it. Evangelism therefore involved a call to be incorporated into a new humanity that included all kinds of people. Conversion was never a merely religious experience; it was also a means of becoming a member of a community in which people would find their identify in Christ rather than in race, social status, or sex. The apostles would have agreed with [Edmund] Clowney's dictum that "the point at which human barriers are surmounted is the point at which a believer is joined to Christ and his people."[23] For this reason the "homogeneous unit" theory of church growth is unacceptable as intentional strategy, however helpful it may be in understanding the dynamics of church growth in some contexts and in reminding us to take seriously the important role of ethnicity, language, and other cultural dynamics.[24]

All communities by definition must have some degree of homogeneity in order to exist. The gospel in fact has its own principle of homogeneity, and it is called reconciliation in Christ. Within the church, the degree of both homogeneity and diversity will of course vary from place to place, depending on the cultural context, as we see in the New Testament.[25] But the key point of commonality, the glue that holds the church together (if it is true to the gospel), is reconciliation through Jesus Christ. Based on that reconciliation, diverse persons of diverse social situations are made one community, one body. This diversity-in-oneness is a key, unique feature of the community of the King.[26] In this sense, a church's homogeneity should be its diversity. The key "homogeneous principle" that unites diverse Christians is their oneness in Christ, and a key mark of a faithful church in most contexts is its diversity.

CONCLUSION

The themes elaborated here do not, of course, exhaust Wesley's theology and its implications for mission. In a holistic theology of mission more would need to be said about the Trinity, the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology), particularly with regard to spiritual gifts and the priesthood of believers, and the kingdom of God. In fact, however, these themes remained relatively underdeveloped in Wesley's theology.

Still, there is a coherence and wholeness to Wesley's essential theology. Mildred Wynkoop was right that his theology is like a rotunda with many points of entry-but all of them lead to the center, which is the love of God.

To use another image: One can imagine a different

sort of Wesleyan Pentalateral, one that locates the uniqueness and promise of Wesleyan theology on the larger map of the various Christian traditions. The four outer points might be labeled Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Evangelical Protestant, and Pentecostal/Charismatic. In the center is Wesleyan theology, overlapping all the others and combining the valid accents of each in a dynamic way. And, no doubt, having something to learn from each.

This is merely a hint, not a thesis. I recognize that Wesleyan theology has its own limits, both inherently and in its various historical manifestations. Still, I believe there are essential biblical notes in Wesleyan theology that the church and the world desperately need to hear and experience. I have lifted up the ones that seem to me most relevant for the Free Methodist Church today.

FOOTNOTES

1   I summarize this as "The Wesleyan Synthesis," chap. 11 of The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996).

2   Lu¡s Wesley de Souza, "'The Wisdom of God in Creation': Mission and the Wesleyan Pentalateral," in Howard A. Snyder, ed., Global Good News: Mission in a New Context (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 138-152; Howard A. Snyder, "Is all Truth God's Truth?" Spring Arbor University Journal 25:3 (Fall 2001), 4-6.

3   "For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed, preventing grace." Wesley, Sermon 75, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," III.4.

4   Often in Wesley one can use the terms "grace" and "love" interchangeably, with no essential difference of meaning. This says much, of course, about his fundamental conception of God.

5   There is a sense in which preceding grace may become salvific, Wesley taught, in the case of individuals who have never had opportunity hear of Jesus but who respond in obedience to the (preceding) grace they have received. Thus Cornelius before Peter's preaching, though "in the Christian sense . . . then an unbeliever," was not outside God's favor. "[W]hat is not exactly according to the divine rule must stand in need of divine favour and indulgence." Wesley, Explanatory Notes Upon the NT, Acts 10:4. Anyone thus saved, however, is saved by Christ's atonement, even though they are unaware of it. In these cases, then, preceding grace becomes (in effect) saving grace. See Randy L. Maddox, Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Kingswood, 1994), 32-34.

6   "By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace." Wesley, Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," II.1.

7   Non-Christian religions are not in themselves means of grace, but God's grace to some degree works in them-if in no other way, at least to restrain evil. Presumably most religions are a mixture of good and evil (as Christianity itself can be when it becomes religion). A pagan religion, like an individual person or a culture, may become totally corrupt, but even there God's grace is at work, to some degree restraining evil, or finally bringing judgment.

8   Charles Wesley, "Glorious Liberty," Hymn 442 in The Hymn Book of the Free Methodist Church, 1883.

9   Maddox, Responsible Grace, 84f. Maddox cites the dissertation of Robert Hillman which found that in 463 references to grace in 140 of Wesley's sermons, 147 construe grace as pardon (mercy) and 176 as power, and 140 references combine the two dimensions. As Maddox notes, this "two-dimensional understanding of grace" is found also in Charles Wesley's hymns. Maddox, Responsible Grace, 297.

10 Wesley, Sermon 12, "The Witness of Our Spirit," 15.

11 Maddox, Responsible Grace, 85.

12 See for example Luke 5:20-26, where Jesus both heals and forgives the paralytic.

13 Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 116. Jenkins documents the prominence of the healing emphasis in much of emerging global Christianity.

14 It seems clear to me that the terms "Christian perfection," "entire sanctification," and even "holiness" have always been problematic in our tradition, even for many who wish to maintain, with no dilution or compromise, what Wesley taught.

15 Key passages are Eph. 3:19, 4:13, Col. 2:10, among others, and those that speak of being filled with the Spirit, such as Eph. 5:18.

16 "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it. . . . it cannot subsist at all, without society, - without living and conversing with other men." Wesley, Sermon 24, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV," I.1.

17 See Howard A. Snyder, "A Wesleyan Perspective on Church Growth?" Asbury Seminarian 33 (Oct. 1978), 6-10; George G. Hunter III, To Spread the Power: Church Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1987).

18 John Wesley, Journal, Mar. 12, 1747.

19 Wesley, Journal, Feb. 24, 1747.

20 B. T. Roberts, "Officers of the Church," The Earnest Christian 29:6 (June 1875), 167.

21 See for example Manuel Ortiz, One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996); Stephen A. Rhodes, Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998).

22 C. Rene Padilla, Mission Between the Times (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 160, 167.

23 Padilla, Mission Between the Times, 166f.

24   Some church growth theorists, particularly Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner, have advocated the so-called "homogeneous unity principle" as a strategy in church growth. In fact there seems to be no such "principle" in Scripture, so this approach might better be called the "homogeneous unit theory."

25   Note the description of the church in Antioch in Acts 11 and 13. The church in Antioch was much more diverse than the early Jerusalem church, yet "a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord" and Paul and Barnabas discipled "great numbers." In large measure because of its diversity, now including Gentiles as well as Jews, "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:21-26).

26   Diversity is as much a "mark" of the church as is unity, though of course the precise demographic and sociological contours of that diversity will vary greatly according to the cultural context. (See Howard A. Snyder with Daniel V. Runyon, Decoding the Church: Mapping the DNA of Christ's Body [Baker, 2002], chapter 1.) Minimally the diversity of the church will normally include differences of age, gender, personality, and spiritual gifts, and usually much more. The greater the range of social heterogeneity united and reconciled in the church, the greater the visible social demonstration of the power of the gospel that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. (Thus the Antioch church more fully demonstrated, visibly, the reconciling power of the gospel than did the early Jerusalem church.) It would be a distortion of the gospel, however, to define acceptable diversity so broadly as to include behaviors that are incompatible with Jesus' teachings.

ENCOUNTERING WORLD RELIGIONS:
AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE

by Mathias Zahniser

My first reaction to the word "encounter" was that it was too harsh and conflict-oriented. I thought "meeting" might be better, dialogue with, or witness to, more appropriate. But on reflection, as I mulled over the unreached people groups and why we should be concerned with them, as I struggled with the whole question of the resistance to the Gospel I have experienced from Muslims and Hindus, I became fully conscious that when we work with people of other religions we are dealing with a clash of worlds.

However, sensitively, patiently, gently, wisely, and lovingly we interact with people influenced by another religion, unless our conversation is marked by inaccuracy and misunderstanding, worlds will clash. We need not espouse a confrontational strategy, we need not stage encounters for our engagement to become an encounter--for there to be a clash of worlds. In fact it is our job to work for the Christian transformation of the worlds of religious people so that their ultimate allegiance is to God in Christ and so that they consistently look to God in Christ for coping with the intimate and vital issues of

their lives. But first to the clash of worlds.[1]

Any adequate analysis of the religions we are likely to encounter in our mission to reach unreached and resistant people with the gospel must begin with religion's world constructing function. Religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam represent not only confident and global interpretations of reality, but also ways of life and not just components of life. Let's look first at a fruitful definition of religion.

A DEFINITION OF RELIGION

The definition I consider most adequate for religion as we are using the word in this consultation comes from Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist sympathetic with religion and experienced with Islamic societies in Asia and Africa. I am going to read it all first and then look at it by components to explain how it relates to our task of reaching unreached and resistant people groups. Geertz says religions is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [people] by formulating

conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[2]

This definition tells us what category religion in human experience across cultures fits into. It is a system of symbols. It tells us what function sets religion apart from other symbol systems such as art, science, ideology, and common sense.[3] Religion establishes "powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in" people. Geertz also tells how religion characteristically does this. It characteristically does this by giving its people a clear picture "of a general order of existence" and it makes this "general order of existence" "seem uniquely realistic." It creates around this vision of the way things are "an aura of factuality."

In other words, religion typically brings all of life together in order to establish and reinforce a view of the world and a way of life. It does so by such things as symbols and such orchestrations of symbols as sacred stories, rites of passage, festivals, pilgrimages, art, music, commerce, family life, courtship traditions, kinship systems, and other features of cultural life. The result of all these features that religion brings into play is that the truth and way of life of a people is encompassed by "an aura of factuality." Religion keeps the truth and the way of life appropriate so they seem obviously true and truer than other alternatives. So let's look at these components of Geertz' definition in relation to reaching unreached and resistant peoples most of whom will be inhabiting a world given them by their religious tradition-a world that clashes with that of the biblical worldview. We turn now to examining the features of Geertz' definition.

A SYSTEM OF SYMBOLS

Religion is a system of symbols. Symbols with religious significance are signs that participate in what they point to. They are not arbitrary. The triangular shape of a yield sign is arbitrary. But a cross participates in the death of Jesus. And, like other religious symbols, it points to something powerful, namely Jesus' death, in the power of that to which it points:[4] The symbol points to the death of Jesus or to my conversion in the power of Christ's cosmic act of redemption, or in the power of my transformation after a Greenville College revival in 1956. Symbols represent both models of reality, and models for how people should respond. The cross models how deeply God loves the world. It also models how deeply I should be committed to God.

Symbols include actions and gestures, such as kneeling or taking communion; colors such as the liturgical colors of the church year: purple, red, white, and green; sounds, such as the recitation of the Qur'an over a Cairo radio station or the chanting of the sacred word Om by a devotee in a Hindu ashram; objects, such as the cross, a statue of the meditating Buddha, or the tree of life with healing leaves; events and times, such as the Jewish Sabbath and communion Sunday; even spaces, such as the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock. Just about anything in God's creation can serve as a symbol: the sea participates in the immensity of the eternal; sky speaks of the sovereignty of the Creator; fire, water, earth, flowers, leaves, floods, animals, birds, insects, reptiles--anything--the leather cover and the India paper of your Bible, a relationship such as a shepherd and her sheep. The Pulpit, the altar in your church. A mother's love. Your favorite picture of Christ.[5]

Notice: a religion consists of a system of such symbols working together to create moods and motivations in people. Religious symbols occur everywhere in traditional religious societies such as those we envision reaching with the gospel. Egyptians cover their Commercial trucks with Qur'anic and Islamic calligraphy. Festivals orchestrate religious symbols. Even sports relate to the system of symbols for traditional religious peoples. Rites of passage such as from childhood to adulthood, from the single estate to the married state, or from being a living human to being an ancestor on the other side of the grave. These events that happen for the whole society and everyone in it, make up a system of symbols. Obviously any team wishing to establish communities of faith in Christ among resistant and unreached people groups needs to discern the meaning and function of symbols among these people for symbols are the building blocks of religious worlds.

Furthermore, the people we seek to reach must perceive that we are sharing something of sacred and transcendent significance, as well as something of intimate and contemporary relevance. For example, one of my students found that Hindus did not perceive Christian churches as places of worship because they appeared to be houses for societies where membership is restricted.[6]

Moods and Motivations

Religious systems of symbols create "powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations" in people. Moods are short-term feelings and attitudes created by circumstances, such as occur at a singspiration.

Motivations, in contrast, are more long-term. They relate to purpose. For example, I have found that in counseling students who lack motivation, I can be successful in helping them to become motivated if I can help them reconnect to their purpose for being in school, or help them to discern a purpose in it all. Such discovery of purpose could also come out of a singspiration or rock festival. Symbol systems create these moods and motivations. By establishing moods and motivations religions bring truth and way of life to the level of the heart and even more deeply to the level of spontaneous behavior. In so doing they render a people's world and identity uniquely and obviously true.

A General Order of Existence

Geertz says they create these moods and motivations in part "by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence." By this he means they convey conceptions of how things really and truly are. They paint pictures of the unseen world, of judgment and the afterlife, of gods and ancestors, of demons, and angels. They sing of the meaning of life, of what it means to be human. They teach and remind a people of who they essentially are. That is they give the people of their religious tradition a world--a cosmic home--to live in and a sense of identity--they tell us who we are.

An Aura of Factuality

And they create these moods and motivations in part by "clothing these conceptions with . . . an aura of factuality." That is religions do not depend upon persuasion alone, but through such means as we mentioned already they make these conceptions of world and identity look, feel, and sound true. When a religion of a people group is working well, what they believe seems obvious. It takes a transforming act to instill doubt in them. The result, again in Geertz's words, is that these "powerful" and "pervasive" moods and motivations "seem uniquely realistic." By uniquely I think he means that, among all other possible feelings and purposes that a person could have, these seem the most appropriate because they are congruent with valid interpretations of the world and the self.

In other words, religion is a network of interrelated symbolic objects, events, qualities, acts, and relationships that helps people feel the world the religion teaches them about is not only true but very real. Confidence about these things is their default position. Furthermore, they become convinced over generations and centuries--in some cases millennia--that their way of life is the only appropriate one for them--and usually--but not always--for others, if these others only knew and accepted the truth. Furthermore, for most of the unreached and resistant peoples we are commissioned to reach, the whole of their lives--every aspect, not just their worship and moral aspects, but their domestic, economic, political, educational, and vocational aspects--relate intimately to the world and self as given them by their religion.

A former student of mine works among the Malay people in Malaysia. He asked a Malay whom he had gotten to know well if he--that is the Malay friend--had ever met a Malay follower of Jesus. The Malay friend had no idea what he meant. It was not that he did not know what a follower of Jesus was. It was not that he did not know of Malaysian nationals--for example, of Chinese ethnic origin--who were followers of Jesus. It was simply that being an ethnic Malay was so closely identified in his mind with being Muslim that he had no place in his world or sense of self for a Malay follower of Jesus. A Malay Christian amounted to an oxymoron. This provides us with a glimpse at the incredible power of religious worlds to shape identity and interpret reality. So lets look at some of the characteristics of religious worlds relevant to us as people planning to reach the people who inhabit them. It will help us to realize in part at least why they are resistant and thus unreached.

THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS WORLDS

In preparation for embarking on our journey toward making the gospel known among unreached and resistant people groups I want to make some more specific observations about the self and world as given by religion. I will use the term world, keeping in mind these religious worlds contain an understanding of individual and communal identity as well.

First,

Religious Worlds are Sacred

It is of course obvious that religious worlds are sacred. But it needs to be emphasized nevertheless. Traditional religious people have a greater sense of the sacred than do Western missionaries. For example, I know of a missionary in a Muslim country who completely lost the interest of a very serious Muslim seeker because the missionary in one visit took her Bible--not her Qur'an--out of her back pack and placed it on the floor. The relationship ended as far as spiritual inquiry was

concerned. This violation of the sacrality of scripture ended the person's interest in the gospel!

Essentially, however, to say that religious worlds are sacred is to say that a people's view of reality and sense of identity has the sanction of the most powerful transcendent and ultimate spiritual realities. If we take this analysis of religion seriously, we will be ready to understand why people for whom religion is working well are resistant to the gospel--why missionaries are involved in an encounter, a clash of worlds.

Second,

Religious Worlds are Communal

Traditional religious societies are much more communal than are Western secular societies. Religion is not understood by these people as an aspect of life that can be replaced, modified, or innovated by individuals. Changes made by individuals have to be disguised usually as a revival of tradition. The community considers people who change religions as either insane or treasonous.

One of the soundest Islamic traditions, according to Muslims, identifies three acts warranting capital punishment: married persons committing adultery; murder; and when someone "forsakes his religion and abandons the community."[7] Whether we are dealing with Thai Buddhists, caste Hindus, Malay Muslims, or even expatriates from traditional Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim societies, we need to be aware--appreciatively aware because identity is a sacred and truly human reality--of both the potential impact of our gospel on their world and communal identity and the impact of their world on the gospel, should they accept it. It also provides us, as I have already said, with part of the reason why they are in fact resistant.

Third,

Religious Worlds are Constructed

From what we have said thus far, one would get the impression that the worlds and identities of unreached and resistant peoples descended from heaven in one whole piece, completely unified in their impact and unchanging in their nature. In fact this impression is appropriate for our discussion because such worlds do in fact clash with ours as though they were unified, invulnerable, and unchanging. This apparent invulnerability represents a major reason these peoples are unreached and resistant. These people have been found difficult and not visited. It is crucial for us to

appreciate the fact that these worlds are sacred and communal. They may be more vulnerable than we realize, but their vulnerability will not be open to us unless we respect their invulnerability--and prepare for it.

But sacred, communal worlds given and maintained by religion are in fact constructed.[8] They result from human activity and interpretation and they change and evolve. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians have significantly different conceptions of what Geertz calls a "general order of existence"--conceptions of what I have called self and world. They are all based on what their forbears perceived to be revelation: the Vedas were heard by the ancient Rishis in a state of spiritual receptivity; the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha were perceived in a state of deep meditation; and Muhammad received the Qur'an impressed upon his heart or dictated by the Angel Gabriel. But these revelations do not agree on the general order of existence they espouse as real. Unless you are a complete relativist, it seems obvious that these visions cannot all be true. These visions have come down through the centuries, they are reinforced by their symbol systems, but they are ultimately constructed by human beings in community.

These visions are not only constructed; they are also under construction. They gradually or suddenly change and develop. For this reason we can never assume that what we learn about the culture or religion of a particular people group is actually true in every detail of that group. This represents good news for us, because we wish to introduce significant innovation as we bring the story of Jesus to match up with what the Holy Spirit is actually trying to accomplish in this people groups--or in persons from it--already.

While I was at Cambridge University working on a book to help Christians respond to Muslim rejection of the cross of Jesus, I met a featured speaker at a Christian-Muslim dialogue sponsored by the Muslim Student Association. To my surprise, he believed in the crucifixion of Jesus. Granted he was an unusual Muslim. He was a former Baptist missionary to Russia out of West Virginia who was teaching anthropology at the University of Stockholm in Sweden and married to a Finnish woman. He is also one of the few remaining speakers of a Native American dialect he learned from one set of grandparents. Definitely not a typical Muslim. Nevertheless, he served as a reminder to me of the way in which religious traditions go on being constructed by groups and individuals--how a variety of cultural and religious influences constantly play on people's minds--even in a tradition like Islam that looks so unchangeable

to the outside viewer. Even in the unusual Muslim speaker I met in Cambridge a number of worldviews and ways of life contend for his attention. He is under construction himself. Even as a featured, trophy, Muslim-convert speaker he also sews a few seeds of challenge to the established world of his Muslim audiences.

Thus if we wish to establish communities of faith in Jesus Christ among unreached and resistant peoples we need to learn to be expert agents of change. The Holy Spirit has already been working diligently among these people to influence the construction of their world-working with great creativity against great opposition. We need to be able to discern where the Spirit is at work and bring the story of Jesus to that point to illuminate what the Spirit is up to and to support the Spirit's project.

Finally,

Religious Worlds are Contested

Another comforting fact as we address unreached and resistant people groups is that their sacred and communal religious worlds are constantly being contested. There would not have been a Christian gospel if Jesus had not challenged the assumptions, values, and actions of his own Jewish tradition. No Buddhism would have existed if Gautama Buddha had not challenged the truths of the caste system and Vedic scriptures of his ancient Indian tradition. Muhammad emerged from Arabian traditional religion to challenge it radically. He drew from both Judaism and Christianity as he knew them, but radically contested some of their general orders of existence and ways of life as well.

But religious worlds are not just contested by prophets and sages who catch a wider or deeper vision of reality. Religious worlds have to deal every day with challenges to their efforts to clothe their conceptions "with an aura of factuality." Factors in the lives of all individuals and groups work against the moods and motivations created by their religion's seeming "uniquely realistic."

Clifford Geertz identifies several factors that work against religious worlds. That is, they operate in every place and time to one degree or another. Chaos threatens religious worlds of people at three principal limits: at the limits of their ability to make sense of things; at the limits of their powers of endurance; and at the limits of their moral insights.

When people can no longer explain the experiences and ideas they encounter from within the framework of the world religion gives them, they experience chaos and

fear. For example, I gave a speech commemorating the beginning of the fifteenth Islamic century at a library in Baltimore. It was a very constructive speech about how monotheists can work together in a secular world to achieve benefit and order for our communities. But in the question and answer period I was almost assaulted by questions from a young Muslim man from Egypt. He started by wanting to know if I was a believer. I told him that I was a believer and not just a nominal believer or a believer because of my family background, but a believer by conviction and participation. So I felt I understood what it felt like to be a Muslim believer. But I was not a Muslim, but a committed Christian believer.

I cannot remember what his further remarks and questions were. I do remember he apologized to me afterwards during the refreshment time. He said he was not upset at what I was saying, but struggling with the fact that he had been taught in secondary school in Egypt that all Christians who studied Islam seriously became Muslims. My presence and presentation called that conviction into question. He was dealing with a certain amount of bafflement. His faith was being contested.

A more relevant experience along these lines occurred to my student, Jerry Page, while a missionary in an Islamic village in West Africa. His mission board allowed him to live and dress like the people of the village but denied his request to wear the little kippa that all adult men in his village wear. His board refused because they felt it would identify him as a Muslim. He reluctantly obeyed their directive. He discovered in the short run that the villagers all assumed he was not a believer in God because he did not wear the little head covering. The little cap functioned for them as a symbol designating the person wearing it as a male believer.

In the long run, however, having discovered that Jerry was in fact a devout believer in God, they had to change their understanding of the significance of the little kippa. They could no longer consider it a symbol of belief in God and of appropriate piety. From this and similar experiences, Jerry developed the concept in inter-cultural communication of the worldview wedge. Jerry's bare head represented a small challenge to their world and identity, it suggested subtly that they may be wrong about other things as well. As such it paves the way for the kind of innovation it takes for the people to accept the gospel. Jerry was gently contesting the viability of their world. In a vast array of ways a people's world is being contested day in and day out by new things requiring interpretation.[9]

When people can no longer endure the suffering they have to undergo, their world and identity suffer threat. Suffering also contests a people's world. One interesting phenomenon about Muslims and the cross of Christ is that, even though the orthodox Muslims of both Sunni and Shiite traditions, reject our stories of Jesus' death on a cross, contemporary Islamic poets in both Persian and Arabic societies are affirming the crucifixion using Jesus' death on a cross as a symbol of authentic willingness to suffer for the public social good.[10] This image of Jesus does not occur in the Qur'an[11] or subsequent traditional Muslim literature.[12] It contests the Islamic tradition. Evidently their religious tradition did not supply them with what they needed to endure the suffering of their circumstances or to mount the commitment necessary to carry out their public duty. Religious worlds are contested at the point of human suffering.

The problem of evil emerges out of the problem of suffering. It is not merely a threat to our ability to endure, as is the problem of suffering, but to our ability to make sound moral judgments. Judaism has a sound doctrine of suffering and the Jewish people from early in the existence of their tradition have suffered. Yet the Holocaust was too major an event to explain in any adequate way. It therefore has created a very large amount of moral quandary--not only among Jews, I might add. I heard of a Jew who became a Christian after reading Martin Luther's "Table Talk." Someone had given him the book so he could see the anti-Semitic dimensions of it. In addition to the anti-Semitic material, he also encountered Luther's theology of the cross. He found it the only theology he had known that made any sense out of the holocaust experience.

I can imagine there being individuals in Muslim societies who question whether God has any concern for them when their society has suffered so severely. These closet atheists may respond almost immediately to the conviction that God was in Christ suffering with us and giving us hope and assurance--beyond our suffering--of eternal life. Atheists reject the view of God their world gives them. They have not rejected views of God they have not yet known about. Hindus and Buddhists do not seem to be bothered with the problem of evil as much as Muslims, but it can challenge any person regardless of his or her religious affiliation.

Lamin Sanneh, professor of Christian mission and African studies at Yale University, had an experience related to this moral limit as a teenage heir to leadership in a West African Islamic community, studying Islamic disciplines. His deep conviction that there must be a God of love was not rewarded by his Islamic studies. When he

was taught that Christ was not crucified, that God could not have let his great prophet die, he wondered what would it say about God if he would let Jesus die? His conclusion so satisfied his heart that he became a believer in the God who let Jesus die. This conversion eventually led to his baptism.[13]

When we add to this all the influences that flood into even the most remote places of the earth from world views and ways of life that radically challenge those of traditional religious societies, it is not hard to realize that these sacred communal worlds, constructed by us humans, are being contested constantly. Movies, television, internet, CDs, cassettes, books, newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, advertisements, leaflets, modes of clothing--many, many factors of our modern, global context--like Trojan horses come into these sacred worlds and then slowly unpack, sending challenges to sacred, communal, and constructed religious worlds. Indeed those who appear to cling most tenaciously to the traditional paths, may be, like Saul of Tarsus, some of the

ones most deeply troubled by problems of meaning, suffering, moral outrage, and uncertainty. No wonder religious traditions try to protect their people from becoming Christians.

What I have tried to say so far is that the unreached and resistant peoples God wants us to reach with the story of Jesus are resistant and sometimes at least unreached because they live in religious worlds and hold to concepts of identity that are deeply ingrained by their religious traditions. Their moods and motivations convince them their view of truth and their way of life cohere uniquely with reality. But I also want to leave you with the impression that these socially constructed realities are not free from threats and problems. They not only are open to change, they are undergoing it steadily.

So what does this mean for our efforts to reach these people with the story of Jesus? I am asked to give

AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE

I cannot hope to define evangelical for you for this

talk. I am not willing to say that only evangelicals take the Bible with utmost seriousness. But I want to say evangelicals do take the Bible with utmost seriousness. Another dimension of being evangelical is to take classic Christian doctrines such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement with utmost seriousness. We believe the truths of scripture and orthodox tradition to be true.

Furthermore, evangelicals believe that all people can come to know God in their own communal and individual experience. We believe in deep personal piety, in daily devotions, in faithful attendance at the means of grace, and in evangelistic witness and service to brothers and sisters within our communities of faith and to those outside it.

We believe strongly that evangelism and works of mercy and justice are incumbent upon our communities of faith--that the people of God in Christ should be about both of these vital businesses.

We believe the Bible should be read, marked, and studied by all; that it should be faithfully interpreted from the pulpit and in the classroom.

We believe in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and that public and private worship should be offered to God--communally several times a week and individually on a daily basis.

Congruent with these convictions, we take the Great Commission with utmost seriousness. We believe it is our duty, burden, privilege, and joy to make the gospel available to all peoples, and to make disciples of them by baptism and teaching, that is, by verbal and non-verbal means. We believe furthermore that this task will result in people making Heaven their home who would otherwise be lost. We believe that the way of salvation presented in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments represents God's one way of salvation. We believe people everywhere can and need be convicted and convinced that Jesus is Lord-that they need to be convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment. We also believe that to be the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8).

I labored with you above about the nature of religion in order to show both the difficulty and possibility of helping the Holy Spirit in drawing unreached and resistant people groups shaped by major religious traditions to Christ. Although I am certainly not familiar by any means with all the motivations, methods, and messages that Free Methodist missionaries currently espouse--far from it--nevertheless, based on what I do know, I want to suggest a message, motivation, and method I believe appropriate for mission among unreached, and resistant people influenced by major religious traditions.[14]

We start with motivation. Let us be

MOTIVATED BY THE LOVE OF GOD

First, let me say that *I believe our task should be undertaken in light of the Trinity.*[15] God the Father's universal love and sovereign lordship over all creation ought to be our primary motivation for sharing the story of Jesus. Other motives certainly apply such as the fact that if we neglect what I am calling our task, people that otherwise would enjoy fulfillment in Christ as individuals and as communities of faith in this world and the next, will be lost both in this world and the next.

This is a worthy motivation, but it is included in the love of God. Unless it is enfolded in that universal love deeply and consistently, however, it can be compatible with other unacknowledged but ethnocentric motivations such as our civilization and national achievements make us superior to you. And our religion is better than yours is. You need us.[16]

Second, *what God has done in Christ as revealed in the New Testament, especially in the gospels, represents not only the guidelines to salvation in this world and the next, but also a revelation of how things in sheer reality are.* The gospels, interpreted with help of both the Old Testament and the other New Testament documents, compose the founding story of Christianity. Through the lens of the Christian story God has revealed the general order of existence--how things truly are. Without this revelational story we would not know the true nature of God and everything else. This story reveals Jesus and especially the symbols of the cross and the empty tomb as both the model of the love of God for all the people of the world and the model for the extent to which we should go to let people know about his story. We are empowered by the love Christ reveals to participate in the obedience he exemplifies. We are motivated by the victory he won for us to believe in the possibility of full Christian discipleship for resistant people.

Third, *we believe in the work of the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit is God at work in the world and in the church. When Amos spoke for God to Israel who thought their special chosenness set them above all other nations he referred to what the Holy Spirit had been doing in those other nations. "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans for Kir?" (Amos 9:7). God was not only involved in Israel's story, but also in the stories even of their enemies and captors!

The Holy Spirit works among all individuals and people groups toward the goals and values of God the Father. The Spirit has worked and is working creatively and consistently even where the story of Jesus and the greater story of the Bible are unknown. Thus we are motivated by the fact that the story of Jesus we know will illuminate the work of the Spirit whom they do not know, but will come to know. It is easier to explain a reality than to defend a theory. We are eager to explain reality by means of the story of Jesus. The Spirit has been involved in the construction and contesting of the worlds of resistant and unreached people. We need to know this. We need to respect this and see it as a feature of God's love for these people. We are motivated by "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the intimate engagement (my words for koinonia) of the Holy Spirit" (2 Corinthians 13:13).

See the example above where Lamin Sanneh without knowing the story of Jesus came to realize the love of a God who would allow his prophet to die. What greater joy than to have been the one to narrate that story to illuminate his experience of God. But what of our message? Just as we are motivated by the nature of the Triune God, so also the good news about who God is represents the essence of our message.

OUR MESSAGE:
The Ultimate Lord as Intimate Companion

Many entire books are devoted exclusively to the Christian understanding of God. What I want to say here is that the nature of God should be the essence of our message. We can get way off the track comparing Jesus, Muhammad, and Buddha for example. We can argue for the doctrine of original sin without comprehension because it is so hard to defend a theory with people who inhabit a different world from our own.

Comparative scriptures would be a hard way to go because Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic scriptures are not comparable with Christian scripture. It is like comparing apples, oranges, peaches, and bananas. Starting with a critique of their worldview and life ways, would hardly be a fruitful avenue because of the problem of clashing worlds I mentioned above. As the Spirit leads, any of these avenues may turn out to be fruitful. I'm not saying they can't possibly work. But I am saying that the key issue is God.

The startling news is this: the one, eternal, all-powerful Creator, the only fully sovereign and holy Person, the one fully and consistently reliable Being wants to enter into relationship with every person and every community.

This Ultimate Being wants to engage with people and communities in their most intimate concerns. God wants a part in supplying the needs which people employ magic, divination, and other forms of supernatural and human ingenuity to supply. This mighty Lord is jealous of any being, procedure, or thing that would take his place as the source of good for his people (Exodus 20:3, 4).

Most Hindus have gods who are specialists at the various things they need for a full and safe life. But most of them do not believe that the Ultimate Reality is a personal being interested particularly in them. Thus the lesser gods who are specialists in meeting specific immediate needs get most of their attention. Even lay Thai Buddhists whose Monks look to themselves for the meeting of their needs--especially for salvation or nirvana--find in the available spirits the power they need for full and secure life. Most Muslims have a conception of God who is adequate and reliable, certainly ultimate; but they do not know how intimately God wants to relate to them. They thus turn to sources orthodox Islam frowns upon to seek guidance, protection, jobs, offspring, and healing.[17]

I want to make the point that the main issue is God. The great Dutch Reformed missiologist, Johan Herman Bavinck, held that the most important question for Christian mission is the question, "What have you done with God?" He points out that peoples have identified God with cosmic processes, they have replaced God by their immediate concerns, they have allowed God to be eclipsed by focusing primarily on moral order, or they have equated God with an impersonal Absolute.[18]

All these responses to God involve separating the ultimate deity or reality from the intimate issues of life. Jesus brings them together. Even the prayer he taught his disciples does this, "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:9-13 NIV).

Bavinck rightly identifies the most important focus for mission communication; namely, the understanding people have of God. But I want another chapter added to the discussion. The questions must also be asked, "What has God been doing with these people?" Recall Amos' declaration that God was involved even in the stories of Israel's enemies. God has been revealing himself through creation for these people. God has been healing, rescuing,

feeding, clothing, sheltering, forgiving, reconciling, and supplying offspring for these people. God has been providing personal and social order and requiring justice of these people. God has been revealing himself in persons and communal symbols, stories, and events.[19] Of course this discussion of God gives rise to the question, How do we know what they have done with God and, even more difficult to discern, what God has been doing with them?

Usually people groups have a name for the Ultimate God. It can often be clear that a particular deity has some of the attributes of the God revealed most clearly in the Jesus story. In this case, we have news about this God that will liberate and thrill these people. It may be that the God Jesus reveals is in fact more sovereign and more ultimate than our hosts have come to believe. It may be that he is even more intimate and interested in the details of their lives--even the lives of their women and children--than any beings they have known. Of course what Jesus revealed about God may antagonize and scandalize them also. After all, his teaching about God, even when partially disguised in parables, got him some enemies.

Yes the gospel is about revelation--because our God wants all to know his justice, mercy, and love. He wants to know and be known. Yes, the gospel is about salvation--because our God is a saving God and sin separates. The gospel is about God. It is the God spell (or story) and it is spell binding. The gospel reveals what God has been doing among our host people. It reveals who God is. It provides a core for a transformed world and self for our host people. What missional method does all this suggest?

A Method for Mission to Unreached and Resistant Peoples

As people wanting very much to reach the unreached and willing to work even with resistant peoples we need to know that we cannot go anywhere where God has not been. We do not bring God anywhere. Rather we meet God wherever we go. Even religious worlds and identities that seem totally invulnerable to the gospel have been shaped in part by the work of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, God has given us the story of Israel in our Bibles partly to demonstrate how people groups (since Adam and Eve left the garden at least) characteristically respond to the work of God in the Spirit and how God in the Spirit characteristically responds to their responses.

Isn't it obvious by now that reaching unreached and resistant religious peoples involves a method based solidly on discernment? Of course, books have been written about missionary method. I cannot adequately defend my contentions in this presentation about method. I cannot even adequately describe the method in full. But I can sketch in for you three key components of a method appropriate for reaching unreached and resistant peoples. 1) Our mission should communicate by story. 2) A discerning mission community or team should carry it out. 3) It should work toward a contextualizing community of host people.

1. Communication by Story

Story telling represents the best form of communication for people who have never heard the gospel and who are likely to be resistant to it. Three reasons support this claim. For one thing, people in traditional religious societies use stories to convey spiritual truth. They are used to this method of discourse. They trust it. For another, people get caught up in stories before they get down on the communicator. Jesus used this method well in dealing with opposition and resistance. And finally, listeners will reveal themselves and their worlds in response to a story. In other words, story telling is a form of discernment. It can reveal where God has been eclipsed and distorted by the culture. It can reveal where God has been at work in the culture.

This was a major part of the method of Vincent Donovan in bringing the gospel to the resistant Massai of East Africa. He went to their villages and asked if he could tell stories about the God who had called him to their people from far away. He found that their reactions to the stories revealed both the places biblical truth stuck in their throats and the places where it was clearly acceptable to them. He did not ask them to decide for or against the gospel until he had finished his story telling and knew that the issues for acceptance and rejection were clearly understood. The majority of the villages accepted the gospel. It radically transformed their religious world in a way that did not mean taking on the religious world of an American missionary, but one that was truly a Massai Christian world.[20]

2. Dialogical Discernment in Community

Because mission is essentially God's work in the unreached and resistant people already, in us as the missional team, and in the convicting and convincing that accompanies our message and witness, the basis of our method needs to be discernment. We have to be able to detect where the Spirit is at work. Adequate answers to both the questions, What have they been doing with God? And What has God been doing with them? require

dialogue and discernment.

Christian dialogue with representatives of the non-Christian religions has gotten a bad name among evangelicals because they associate it with Christians whose main interest is harmony and cooperation with other religions and not with their being convinced that Jesus is Lord. Proclamation sounds better to us because it means announcing the truth, bearing witness to it convincingly, and not compromising with other alternatives. Have we explored, however, the possibility that we can pray for and expect proclamational results from dialogical engagement? This I believe is both possible and essential.

Dialogue is necessary for discernment and it permits those to whom we would witness make clear what their world is like. It can be much less threatening than a proclamational approach. It also can reveal how our message is being understood. In dialogue our host people have a chance to respond to our self-expression and to reveal their convictions and reactions. In such a process, we have a chance to see where the Spirit has been at work in them and in us.

I devoted a separate section to the crucial method of story telling. One of the reasons for using this method of communication was its dialogical quality. Through their reactions to our stories we can discover what our host people believe, know, and care about. We can also discern these things from listening to their stories.

We learned in the first part of this presentation that religion is a system of symbols. Through symbols, religious communities create the moods and motivations that make their view of the world and their way of life seem uniquely realistic. These symbols can also reveal through dialogical discernment the nature and structure of their world and ways. Through inquiry about and observation of their symbols and the stories and rituals that orchestrate these symbols, the role of God in their lives and community can more easily be discerned.[21]
It will considerably enlighten us about a host people's world if we ask them carefully and persistently about the meaning of their symbols and rituals. Some symbols are peculiar and exclusively related to a people's world and identity. Other symbols turn up in just about every culture.

Dialogical discernment engages much more in sharing stories and non-verbal symbols than in comparing ideas and standards of conduct. By observing their festivals and inquiring into the symbols and symbolic stories and actions associated with the festivals, we can learn a lot about our host people in a non-confrontational way. By listening to their stories and showing genuine interest in their symbols and ceremonies, we engage them in something they have deep interest in. In some cases, however, they may interpret our interest as prying into their secrets in order to gain their power. Obviously, the more genuine our relationship with them is, the less likely they are to interpret our interest as an attempt to steal their secrets and their power. It is important to discern whether they interpret our interest as flattering or threatening. This brings us to the communal dimension of our dialogical discernment. The missional team provides the context where discernment can best take place.

What I am calling for here is a dialogical discernment of the working of the Spirit in the people to whom we go, the people who host us (note I am avoiding the popular designation "target people"), the working of the Spirit in the missional team, and the working of the Spirit in making our witness convincing, represents essentially a missional spirituality. Our mission preparation needs to include among other vital components, a spirituality focused on communal discernment. It is a simple process, but not an easy one.

Pneumatic Spirituality for Missional Discernment

While time does not permit me to elaborate in any detail upon such a spirituality, I want to mention some dimensions of what I have in mind. I have in mind what Father John C. Haughey has called pneumatic spirituality.
In his illuminating study of the Holy Spirit, he identifies three types of spirituality: programmatic, autogenic, and pneumatic. Most Christians are engaged in one or both of the first two types. What is so necessary for any fruitful participation in God's mission-especially to resistant people-is the third one.

Programmatic spirituality means sincere participation in the program of the church: involvement in communal and private worship, communal and private study, and service to the community of faith and to the outside world. Autogenic spirituality represents those spiritual disciplines, practices, and perspectives that individual Christians choose for themselves. One need only go to a Christian bookstore to see the multiplicity of print and other media devoted to individual spirituality. Haughey does not denigrate these two important common spiritualities. Indeed, we could wish for more

people to benefit from them. Nevertheless, his third type, pneumatic spirituality, represents a biblical spirituality for discernment, a crucial task of mission.

Pneumatic spirituality means spirit-led discernment in community. It takes place where two ("spouses for example," says Haughey[22]), three, or even more believers are gathered together, believing Jesus is with them in the Spirit. They practice listening to the Spirit together, sharing their insights and concerns. In the following paragraph, Haughey describes the essence of pneumatic spirituality:

Those living [the pneumatic] . . . to God claim to have a sense of the immediacy of the presence of Risen Lord that only the Spirit can produce. . . . They live . . . according to a felt knowledge, an inner unction the Spirit provides. Affective prayer is the medium in which they experience God.[23]

In another paragraph he stresses the discerning and communal dimensions of pneumatic spirituality.

A faculty of discernment develops in pneumatics, since they are concerned with the direction in which God is calling them. . . . What is presupposed for a pneumatic spirituality is an unmediated experience of God in Christ over a sufficiently long period of time, so that the metaphor "companionship" becomes an accurate description of their interior life. . . . [Pneumatic spirituality] presumes community.[24]

Here in the missional community spiritual gifts given to members of the community of faith are exercised for discerning the work of the Spirit. It is this spirituality that needs to be practiced as part of the missiological training of our missionaries to resistant and unreached people. It can be practiced by our mission leadership from the top down and by our mission rank and file from the bottom up. It will result in an appreciation for gifts of administration and divinely gifted authority; it will result in appreciation for the gifts of encouragement, healing, discernment of spirits, and all spiritual gifts-named and unnamed, known and unknown-of every person connected with the mission from the service-oriented field hand to the eloquent fund-raiser on the deputation trail. It represents the body of Christ in the world.

Pneumatic spirituality is as simple as two people praying together and seeking God's inspiration and guidance for their task and opportunities. It can be as complicated as a communal prayer meeting where everyone is consulted on an issue after bathing it in collective and individual prayer. Leaders in the early church appear to have used this process in their crucial

deliberations over what was to be required of gentile converts to the new way. The phrase the community began its report with, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28) encapsulates pneumatic spirituality.

It would not surprise me if this kind of spirituality prevails among Free Methodist missionaries, church leaders, and mission executives. The point here is that we need to practice it in connection with the discernment necessary to determine the crucial features of a people's world and where the Holy Spirit has been and is at work among them. Knowledge of cultural anthropology, of biblical and systematic theology, of religious studies and mission history, knowledge of the religious tradition of the host people and their general culture (if known) represent indispensable preparation for mission to unreached and resistant peoples. But all this knowledge must always be background.

The people themselves who host us must always be foreground. Our knowledge can obscure the actual realities of the people we meet and the work of the Holy Spirit among them and among us. Pneumatic spirituality will turn out to be essential for keeping all these things in perspective. No matter how much we know-and you can never know enough, though you can sometimes know too much-we must always remain learners together in communal discernment based on open dialogue with the host people.

Our missional teams will always be their guests and must always be their students. This is true even in the third crucial area of our method, contextualization.

3. *Contextualization with the Host Community*

Unless the meaning of the gospel expresses itself in forms that are rooted in the religious world of the host people, the gospel will be a foreign implant and not an indigenous innovation and transformation. A missional method based on story telling and communal discernment should naturally lead to the expression of Christian meaning in forms meaningful to the host people. For this to happen, it is important that the contextualization of these forms be done in dialogue with the host people as well.[25] Contextualization is a vast topic about which much could be said. I will satisfy myself with treating briefly just one particularly relevant form of contextualization.

Pramod Aghamkar, a missiologist with vast missional experience among resistant people has come up with the term spontaneous contextualization. He exemplifies this

process in his doctoral dissertation. Spontaneous contextualization arises immediately among the host people as they come to understand the gospel and express it in their own terms. Aghamkar puts it this way, "Based on my ministry experience among new believers, I contend that contextualization is shaped spontaneously under the guidance of the Holy Spirit while new believers still live in their socio-religious settings."[26]

Aghamkar narrates the spontaneous contextualization of a Hindu merchant in a remote village in response to hearing and believing the gospel as preached by Aghamkar himself over the radio. At the merchant's request Rev. Aghamkar visited him in his village. He found the merchant had spontaneously painted a cross in the place in his shop where a symbol of a protecting deity should have been placed. He further put the same sign on his scales. Aghamkar is certain he had done this artwork in accordance with a Hindu ritual.

Aghamkar was also convinced the merchant had not just mixed a Christian symbol with Hindu magical meaning and intent for two reasons. For one thing the merchant had never experienced any miraculous or spiritual power for protection or healing emanating from Jesus or the cross. For another, the merchant experienced a certain level of persecution from village Hindus, including his son who told Aghamkar that his father had become insane. He had not just pasted Jesus over Hindu customs and powers. He had genuinely placed the Savior, symbolized by the cross, at the heart of his livelihood the way he had placed it at the heart of his life. He had no contact with traditional national Christians, yet he had spontaneously expressed his faith in the only symbolic way he knew how, using the primary symbol of Christianity in a traditional Hindu way.[27] It seems to me that, if we practice story telling as a means of communication and communal discernment as a means of knowing where the Spirit is at work, we will discover many instances of spontaneous contextualization.

In other words I believe that what I have advocated here will result in the transformation of the world and self of even resistant peoples.

In summary, because a people's religion gives them their world and their sense of self and because it enables them to experience that world and self as uniquely realistic and ultimately true, people of major religious traditions remain resistant to the gospel. And largely because of that resistance, they remain unreached.

But because God has not abandoned them and the Holy Spirit is at work among them, they can be reached and their individuals and communities transformed. But

this takes a high degree of spiritual discernment on the part of the missional team. Because it means determining where the Spirit has been at work and cooperating with that work. It means story telling because stories elicit a revealing response on the part of listeners. It means careful observance of, and inquiry about, symbols, especially as they are orchestrated in myth and ritual. It means listening, learning, and discovering how even resistant people go about contextualizing the gospel in their own cultures.

There is so much more I would like to say relevant to this topic. For example, I feel that mission should always plan for churches to be established for they represent the body of Christ-the new Israel, the demonstration communities of the coming kingdom of God casting its shadow into the present. I believe it is essential to avoid Westernization and secularization because religious peoples resist these processes as much or more than they resist the gospel. But I have taken my time and said what I feel most passionately about. May God bless us in our deliberations on this vital and demanding task.

FOOTNOTES

1   The phrase clash of worlds occurred to me before I thought of David Burnett's useful book, Clash of Worlds: A Christian's Handbook on Cultures, World Religions, and Evangelism (Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson, 1992).

2   Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Culture (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90 and 91.

3   Geertz deals with all these systems in ibid.

4   Paul Tillich, "Theology and Symbolism," in F. Ernest Johnson, ed., Religious Symbolism (New York, NY and London, UK: The Institute for Religious and Social Studies, Harper and Brother, 1956), 109.

5   See Alva William Steffler, Symbols of the Christian Faith (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2002) and Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, eds. The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols, 2nd ed., trans. John Buchanan-Brown (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1996).

6   Pramod Y. Aghamkar, "Building Church on Holy Ground: Proposals to Contextualize Worship Places in India," Ph.D. Dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2002.

7   Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Din al-Nawawi (d. c. 1277), An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith, 10th ed., trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (Beirut: Holy Koran Publishing House, 1982), no. 14, p. 58.

8   Michael A. Rynkiewich points out that culture is constructed and contested ("The World in My Parish: Rethinking the Standard Missiological Model," Missiology, 30/3 [July 2002], 315 and 316). And, since religion gives cultural convictions an aura of authority and both shapes and reinforces the culture of a people, I have used this in connection with religious worlds and identities.

9   Jerry L. Page, "Turner's Model of Human Sociality and Missionary/Host Relationships: A Case Study in Intercultural

Bonding," Ph.D. Dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2000, draft ?.

10 In modern Persian poetry "with many writers, the cross emerges as a meaningful symbol. . . . [T]his may reflect the fact that many contemporary poets have been engaged in social and political struggles, and suffered adversity because of their involvement" (Oddbjorn Leirvik, Images of Jesus Christ in Islam: Introduction, Survey of Research, Issues of Dialogue. Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia, no.76. Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1999), 163.

11 You won't find it in Neal Robinson, Christ in Islam and Christianity (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1991).

12 You won't find it among the themes nicely laid out in Tarif Khalidi, ed. and trans., The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2001).

13 See the tape of an interview of Lamin Sanneh by Graham Green. [Somehow this tape has escaped me at least for the moment]. See also his article in IBMR for October 1984?

14 David Barrett and Todd Johnson in World Christian Trends (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001) provide nuances galore for types of religious traditions. Their categories illuminate the global religious situation fruitfully. For example what I am calling "major religious traditions" they call (among other designations) geogreligions. That is they are global in scope and any person anywhere who has the opportunity may become a member of their societies. Because people groups identify in one form or another with a georeligions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, they have greater confidence. That is they can identify with a global and universal movement that boasts a significant history, important writings, heroic representatives, and an impressive culture. This confidence renders these people groups more resistant than people groups whose world and self are shaped by an ethnoreligion. That is a religion that shapes only their ethnic group (Chapter 17). A careful study of Barrett and Johnson will help mission teams prepare adequately for their assignments.

15 I have dealt with this motivation in two articles, "The Trinity: Paradigm for Mission in the Spirit," Missiology, 17/1 (January, 1989), 71-72; and "Christian Witness in a Marketplace of Cultured Alternatives," Missiology, 30/2 (April, 2002), 152-153.

16 See John Wesley's similar sentiment in "A People Called Methodist" (Works, Jackson, ed., Vol. 8, 257). "The thing which I was greatly afraid of all this time, and which I resolved to use every possible method of preventing, was, a narrowness of spirit, a party zeal, a being straitened in our own bowels; that miserable bigotry which makes many so unready to believe that there is any world of God but among themselves."

17 I have dealt with God's nature and intimate human issues in Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples Across Cultures (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1997), especially in Chapter 2.

18 Johan Herman Bavinck, An Introduction to the Science of Missions, trans. David H. Freeman (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960), 266-72.

19 Two theological factors have led me to the strong conviction that no one is lost eternally because he or she has not heard of the gospel. One is the teaching of Jesus about the nature of God and the other is the teaching of scripture about the engagement of God among all people. Now it is true that many, many people who have not heard of Jesus will resist the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and thus be lost. If they had heard the story of Jesus they might have been moved to respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and cultures. In this sense many people have been lost because they have not heard the story. But no one will be lost simply because they did not know to place their faith in the Jesus revealed in the New Testament. I take, therefore, an inclusivist position about the "unevangelized." They can be saved by virtue of the work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in cross, resurrection, and Pentecost even if they have only placed their trust in what they do know of truth and right as mediated by the Holy Spirit-God in their stories. This position has been admirably interpreted by John Sanders in No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992) and Clark H. Pinnock in A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992). Other evangelical position have been taken by Gabriel Fackre (divine perseverance) and Ronald H. Nash (restrictivism) in John Sanders, ed. What about Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995). The third view is Sanders' view interpreted more fully in No Other Name.

20 Vincent Donovan, Christianity Rediscovered (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985). This book deserves multiple readings for method. He draws on important older books such as Roland Allen's Missionary Methods: Saint Paul's or Ours (Fleming H. Revell, 1913).

21 Larry D. Shinn, Two Sacred Worlds: Experience and Structure in the World's Religions (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1977), 86-98. David Burnett offers ten questions to help in discerning a people's worldview: 1) What beliefs are strongly held? 2) How do parents teach children to behave? 3) What do people regard as major offenses (sins)? 4) What do people do in crises? 5) What rituals do people perform? 6) Who are the trendsetters? 7) What are the greatest fears the people have? 8) What are considered to be words of wisdom? 9) What is expressed in the art forms of the people? 10) What aspects of the culture are most resistant to change? Answers to these questions obviously involve a lot of data gathering, listening, asking, and observing (Clash of Worlds, 26-29).

22 John C. Haughey, S. J., The Conspiracy of God: The Holy Spirit in Us (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image Books, 1976), 84.

23 Ibid., 83.

24 Ibid.

25 Since time is limited, I will mention here a couple of important sources for contextualization: Darrell L. Whiteman, "Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge" (International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 21(1) 1997: 2-7), for a survey of the current issues, and Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," (International Bulletin of Missionary Research 11(3):104-112), for a method of contextualization that is thorough and dialogical. See also Aghamkar, "Building Church on Holy Ground," chapter 7, for an excellent discussion of contextualization with some live pastoral examples from the Indian context.

26 Aghamkar, "Building Church on Holy Ground," draft 191.

27 Ibid., draft 191-94.

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RECOVERING THE MISSIONAL CHURCH:
INTEGRATING LOCAL AND GLOBAL

By Dan Sheffield

1. INTRODUCTION

That Western society and, by extension, the Christian institutions which function within that society are in convulsion is a surprise to no one. The issue, for our purposes, is how is the Church responding to the death knells of modern Western society, and in particular how are local congregations viewing their involvement in the mission of the Church in a postmodern, globalized context?

In his book *The Church on the Other Side*, postmodern writer and pastor, Brian McLaren says, "the bad news is that missions as we have known it appears to be in decline and will probably become a casualty as we pass to the other side [of the postmodern matrix]."[1] But what will emerge on the other side?

Missiologist Alan Roxburgh speaks of Western society and the Western Church as functioning in a liminal environment.[2] Roxburgh uses anthropologist Victor Turner's stages of the ritual process (separation, liminal, reaggregation) to describe our present context. The modern Church has separated from the warm, nurturing environment of the mother (modernity) and has entered into the liminal stage between the comfortable past and an unknown future. In the liminal stage there is a desire to return to the known world of the past combined with a fear of the future. However, as the liminal period extends there can be a weaning from the past and an anticipation of the still, as yet, unknown future. Neither Western society, nor the Church, has emerged from the liminal stage into reaggregation. Therefore, as Roxburgh suggests, we are living in a tension "between discovering a means of getting back to the former social location or anticipating a transformational relationship with society."[3] It is precisely this transformational model of church that we want to discuss.

In our modern history, the Western evangelical church has seen the mission task as primarily a sending activity. That is, there are needs "out there" for gospel proclamation and so we have "sent" gifted (at least in some cases) workers from "us to them." We have set up specialist structures (agencies/autonomous or departments/semi-autonomous) to guide our sending activities. Local churches have had very little to do with the mission task beyond releasing workers and finances so the specialist structures could do their specialized work. The mythologized rationale for this model follows William Carey's experience - if the established church won't get involved in doing the mission task, then we will have to set up separate structures ("means") to allow this to happen. And thus was born the modern missionary movement.

This model was probably best captured by Ralph Winter in his influential essay "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," published in 1974.[4] Winter uses the sociologist's terminology of sodality and modality to describe the necessary structures for church and mission. Winter defines a modality as a structured fellowship in which membership is broadly seen as inclusive and makes no distinction between age, sex or other factors. A sodality, however, is a structured fellowship in which membership involves an adult second decision (a special commitment) beyond modality membership which may include marital status or other inclusive restrictions. In the modern missionary movement these distinctions have come to refer to congregational/nurture structures (modalities) and to mission structures (sodalities). The congregational/nurture structures are inward and nurture oriented while the mission structures are outreach or task oriented.

The outcome of this dichotomized approach to church and mission has come to mean that local churches and their leaders often have little understanding of the implications of mission for their own context. A Theology of Mission course is not required of M.Div students at our seminaries because that is seen as a specialized subject for those who have made the "second decision" to minister in a sodality rather than in a modality. Global mission engagement is not understood as a logical extension of local mission engagement because we are not doing "local mission" - i.e., viewing ourselves as "sent" into our own communities.

In our present context, however, we are being reminded that "the mission field" is no longer only "over there" - we, as Westerners, are also living in a post-Christian society to which the mission needs to be extended. We can no longer only "send over there," we now need to "be sent" in our own social context. This is

precisely where local churches are now scrambling to discover how to be missional churches in their own communities, as well as beyond.

Much of the previous half-century has been spent by evangelical churches trying to recover their place in a fast-departing Christendom. The Church Growth Movement and the emphasis on pragmatic methods, strategic planning and guru/coach/therapist/CEO-type pastors have all been attempts to find ways to remain relevant. We have not yet discovered how to be the church in a tribalized world where our voice and our professionalism has been marginalized to "just one among many." It is precisely at this point that the Church outside of the West needs to be listened to because they have existed in the margins of their societies and yet found ways to provide meaning and impact in their communities.

In this paper I intend to discuss some of the biblico-historical models of mission engagement while seeking to discover a model of the missional church appropriate for our present context which demonstrates an integration of responsible engagement with its own local setting, as well as with the wider world.

2. BIBLICAL-HISTORICAL MODELS

2.1 Antioch

Perhaps the most striking biblical model of a missional church is that of the Antioch church recorded in Acts 11:19-30 and 13:1-5.[5] Just a cursory glance suggests that this church was founded by Christians who thought "outside the box."

The Jewish believers reached out to the "different-other" - to Gentiles - to share the good news of Jesus Christ. At the same time we understand this wasn't such a stretch because this intercultural witness was led by believers who had already lived and functioned in cross-cultural contexts (Cyprus and Cyrene).

Barnabas and Saul conducted in-depth teaching and equipping of the fledgling congregation. Ministry proceeded from the exercise of spiritual gifts. The congregation looked beyond themselves to share their resources with famine victims back in Jerusalem.

In 13:1 we have a picture of a multicultural leadership team waiting upon the Lord in Spirit-guided worship. In this context the Spirit is able to ask that Barnabas and Saul - two of the church's key leaders - be "set apart" for a special ministry. That the leadership team responds to this direction is indicated by the speed with which the "missionary team" is sent out. The first mission ministry returns Barnabas to his home (Cyprus) and Paul to a likely area of familiarity (southern Turkey).

This synopsis seems to suggest a local church founded through relational engagement with, and proclamation to, a particular community; the development of healthy systems for nurture and ministry; and a Spirit-guided leadership team responding to God-given vision to reach out, first in relief to near neighbours and fellow believers, and then on to gospel proclamation in unreached areas.

However, Gary Burger, a Campus Crusade staff worker in a 1990 essay published by the International School of Theology indicates, "this passage is commonly interpreted to teach that all missionaries must be sent by and on behalf of a local church to be legitimate. However, a more careful study of the passage will show this to be a questionable interpretation."[6] Burger goes on to quote H. Cook from a 1975 Evangelical Missions Quarterly article:

The organized church at Antioch was not involved in the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul. It was only the mentioned prophets and teachers who were involved. There is no indication that these men were leaders of the church and/or were acting on behalf of the church... the Holy Spirit, not the church, sent them. Luke repeats for emphasis that it was the Holy Spirit who set apart Barnabas and Saul and sent them out by His authority to perform their special mission... the laying on of hands was an act of blessing, not an act of appointment... the three certainly did not have any authority other than that which Barnabas and Saul also enjoyed...[7]

This brief example suggests how viewing this text from a different paradigm has supported the disconnection of local and global, modality and sodality.

2.2 Medieval mission practices

In the Roman era the church developed along the lines of Roman institutional models. The Latin word for a Roman magisterial territory, "diocese," came to convey the territorial jurisdiction of a bishop who supervised numerous parishes, or congregations. This governmental framework came to represent the modalities. The monastic groupings however followed the Roman military model where nominal Christians were encouraged to make a special, second decision into a disciplined, ministry-oriented grouping functioning as a sodality. There was no sense that these groupings were connected to or under the oversight of parishes or even the diocese as in the Antioch model, only giving nominal adherence to a distant central authority.[8]

As the Empire began to disintegrate, however, the monastic groups seemed to be much more durable and able to maintain both a sense of spiritual vitality and mission involvement than were the local parishes. The heart of vital Christianity is often understood to have

been preserved better in the monastic orders rather than in the diocesan system. John White believes this was the beginning of "a movement of laymen carrying on a personal ministry outside the direct authority and control of the church."[9]

While resurgence of everything Celtic has led to a new appreciation of the Celtic missionaries and their practices in the early Christian period,[10] it is also obvious that there is very little historical data upon which to base a sound methodology. Essentially Patrick and his followers adopted mission teams based around monastic methods rather than parish models. Wholistic mission engagement with tribal groupings resulted in churches being founded for the purpose of furthering that mission engagement. These churches are understood to have functioned on a sodality basis rather than modality.

2.3 Modern Protestant mission practices

Winter explains that, although not originally intended, the Lutheran movement produced a diocesan structure modeled after the Roman diocesan tradition. Luther's desire was to bring the vitality of the spiritual life he experienced in his monastic order back into the life of the ordinary Christian in the parish. The Reformers, however, did not readopt the Catholic orders (the sodalities) which had played such an important role in the renewal of Roman Catholicism. Winter suggests it was this omission that represented the greatest error of the Reformation and the greatest weakness of the resulting Protestant tradition.[11]

In Winter's opinion, it was the Pietist movement which became the organized renewing structure of the Protestant community. He maintains that this movement was a sodality, "inasmuch as it was a case of adults meeting together and committing themselves to new beginnings and higher goals ... without conflicting with the stated meetings of the existing church."[12] From these Pietist gatherings, "alongside" the existing church structures, came both the Danish-Halle Mission and the Moravian mission bands in the early 1700s.

It was John Wesley's encounter with one of these Moravian sodality/mission teams traveling to America that led to Wesley's own renewal/conversion. Winter, amongst others, sees the Wesleyan bands/classes/societies as sodalities and thus contributing to the thesis that independent bodies are necessary to the renewal of the church and its mission.[13] Snyder, however, would use more relational language to describe the role of these bodies: that they are "seeking to be a self-conscious subcommunity or ecclesiola working to revitalize and yet remain loyal to the larger church body."[14] With the advent

of the "mission society" following Carey's 1792 call for "the use of means for the conversion of the heathen," the Protestant sodalities became part of mainstream practice.

The first burst of societies (1792-1824) were largely related to existing denominational structures, serving as sodalities within a larger framework. On the heels of Finney and Moody Revivalism, the Keswick Movement, and the Holiness Movement in the mid-1800s, came a new burst of mission societies formed largely by boards of laypeople functioning independent of any formal church structures. In the post-WWII era there developed a whole new grouping of mission societies targeting those regions not already reached in the so-called "second wave." Most notably, however, there developed a grouping of mission sodalities targeted at the North American context on the premise that the "home church" was no longer able to evangelize and disciple its own communities; specialist organizations were needed here as well. Van Gelder suggests that these "paralocal ministry structures are, in general, a reflection of deficiencies inherent within the understanding of the church's nature, ministry, and organization as defined in denominational ecclesiologies."[15]

Despite modifications and tinkering over the 20th century these are still the primary forms of mission activity based in North America: mission arms of denominational structures and independent mission societies directed by lay boards. Local churches, still, for all intents and purposes, have a limited understanding of their role as mission outposts and mission initiators.

It is now time to move toward a new model of church, or perhaps, it is to recover forgotten models, which enable ekklesia's of God's people to be a transformative presence in their own communities and through intentional effort to their Judea's, Samaria's and the ends of the earth.

3. RECOVERING AN INTEGRATED MODEL

Roxburgh returns to Turner's ritual stages to discuss the significance of communitas in the liminal state. As a society moves through the liminal state there are two options for human relatedness, the development of structure or the development of communitas. In the development of structure during a liminal period "we are presented with an orderly social world, a recognized system of social control, prescribed ways of acting toward people by virtue of our incumbency of status-roles."[16] This might be compared with the rush, following 9/11, to set up a Dept of Homeland Security, to introduce new laws regulating border crossings, and the transference of funds from non-profit organizations, etc. The development of communitas on the other hand, results in:

The stripping of former roles and status which "may have the effect of strengthening the bonds of communitas even as it dissolves antecedent social structural ties" (Turner, 1969). Communitas suggests the formation of a new peoplehood, the constitution of a new vision for being a group. The basis of recruitment is no longer status or role function but identity and belonging within a group that, in some clear ways, stands outside the mainstream of the culture.[17]

Are we talking about ekklesia as sodality, rather than as modality? Perhaps the church was never supposed to function as a parish, primarily concerned with the nurture of insiders. Perhaps we are to be a sodality to the modality of our society. Perhaps I need to be reminded of the meaning of ekklesia...

To return to Roxburgh:

> What is required is a communitas that calls forth an alternative vision for the social and political issues facing the people. A fitting image for this communitas is the city on the hill that Jesus used to anticipate the new social reality he was calling into being. This is a distinct but visible society offering an alternative form of life. This is the way Christianity entered history. It was a new social reality formed out of a liminal experience that created the communitas of a new peoplehood.[18]

In the recent resurgence of interest in the model of Celtic Christianity, we are returned to the notion of church as sodality, as mission team. There is no place for passive, nominal Christians, no place to sit, bask and "get by til next week." We are all in progress; we are all in development in Christ even as we are involved in engaging with the society around us.

Catholic missiologist, Gerald Arbuckle calls for "re-founding the Church." He suggests that two fundamental acknowledgements demand that we start over:

   * That the Church is the People of God; all - pastor and laity - share a common baptism and mission in Christ; we are all called to ministry, that is, to respond to the pastoral needs of the members of the community.
   * That the People of God are to be no longer concerned only with their own growth in Christ, but they must strive to respond to the pastoral needs of the world.[19]

Van Engen exposits the language of the Nicene Creed when he proposes that the church's missional ministry is unifying, sanctifying, reconciling and proclaiming.[20] Guder prefers the proclaiming aspect in the forefront:

"the missional nature of the church is more emphatically affirmed when the apostolic activity itself defines the church."[21]

Hauerwas and Willimon quote Karl Barth: "[The Church] exists... to set up in the world a new sign which is radically dissimilar to [the world's] own manner and which contradicts it in a way which is full of promise."[22]

3.1 The leadership issue

The calls for a radically different form of church are not new, of course. What is needed is leadership which understands the times, has a fundamental sense of the nature of the church, has the courage to act outside the accepted norms, and the ability to take people with them into this new journey.

Seminary professors, Hauerwas and Willimon, however, paint a picture of the leadership development process as it now stands in most denominational systems:

The seminaries have produced clergy who are agents of modernity, experts in the art of congregational adaptation to the status quo, enlightened facilitators whose years of education have trained them to enable believers to detach themselves from the insights, habits, stories and structures that make the church the church.[23]

Along with their critique they call for courageous leaders:

But if we live as a colony of resident aliens within a hostile environment, which, in the most subtle but deadly of ways, corrupts and co-opts us as Christians, then the pastor is called to help us gather the resources we need to be the colony of God's righteousness.[24]

Arbuckle calls for "re-founding prophets" with memories of hope (able to communicate the essence of Yahweh's abiding love), with creative imagination (to see as others don't see), who are community-oriented (they keep seeking to build redemptive communities), with a sense of humour (able to see joy in the incongruities of life), full of faith, courage and prayer, and finally, skilled in grieving, in empathy (they see the pain, the insecurity behind the facades).[25]

Roxburgh suggests three roles:

The pastor/poet; poets are the articulators of experience and the rememberers of tradition; the poet listens to the pain and questioning and knows these are cries that long to be connected to a Word that calls them beyond themselves into a place of belonging. "There will be no vision of a missionary people without the poet/pastor living within the congregation's experience and giving voice to its desire for transformation and renewal."[26]

The pastor/prophet; the prophetic imagination directs the poetic discourse of the people toward a vision of God's purposes for them in the world at this time; addresses the hard side of discipleship where we must face the reality that in God's kingdom we are not at the centre of the universe. The prophet speaks a Word which engenders hope out of which arises authentic missional engagement.[27]

The pastor/apostle; pastors must lead congregations in places where old maps no longer work. Discipling and equipping require a leadership that demonstrates encounter with the culture in action, not just teaching and sending. In our present mission situation pastors must be in the world rather than in the church. "The pastor/apostle is one who forms congregations into mission groups shaped by encounters with the gospel and culture - structuring the congregations shape into forms that lead people outward into a missionary encounter."[28]

In Roxburgh's model, the apostle/prophet/poet leads from the front. These leaders "call into being a covenant community; second, they direct its attention out toward their context... being at the front means that the leadership lives into and incarnates the missional, covenantal future of God's people."[29]

In this "in-between time" in Western society, missional churches are needed who will reposition themselves as sodalities, as communities on a mission with the Spirit, responding to their contexts with authentic engagement.
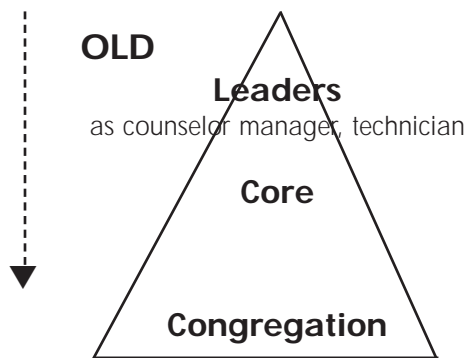
The most obvious examples of churches who have often thought of themselves as missional congregations are those doing ministry in our inner-cities. This, of course, has led to misunderstandings when their missional nature has not been understood or respected by both domestic leaders, who serve churches that view themselves primarily as modalities, and by global ministry leaders mandated only to look across the ocean. These churches, however, may become our most likely candidates for re-founding a way of thinking about the character of the church. These churches may find their way more clearly to the reconnection of local and global ministry.

I would like to suggest a model which sees the local church as mission initiator and the specialist department as mission empowerer.

4.1 Local Church as mission initiator

An inner-city church which has sought to bridge that connection has been the Rainier Avenue FM Church in Seattle. While not knowing all the details myself, I would like to paint a broad picture of the local church as mission initiator using Rainer Ave as an example. This multi-ethnic, mission-oriented church, in a large urban center, engaged in team-based outreach to the Southeast Asians in their local community, in particular amongst Laotians. As this ministry grew, a gifted and trained Thai national became part of the ministry team. This leader had a burden for church-planting in his own country and expressed this to the wider leadership team of the local church. The leadership team encouraged the development of this burden as a local church initiative. An exploratory trip to Thailand in 2000 was arranged with a multi-
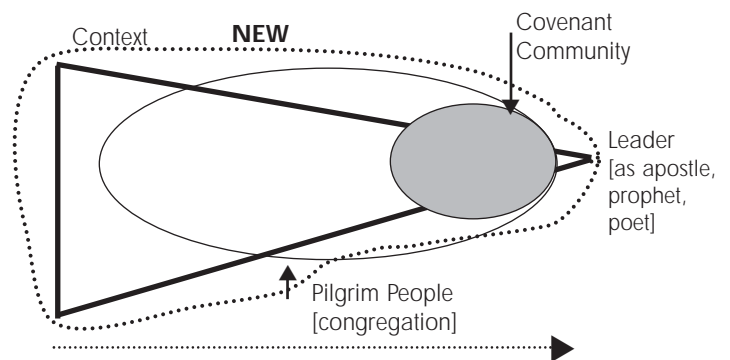

4. A SUGGESTED WAY FORWARD

Our particular challenge as global ministry practitioners is how to encourage the emergence of missional churches in the North American context which will function as sodalities in regard to intercultural and global ministry. What is the appropriate role for a specialist community like the present mission department?

national team and funded from the local church. Free Methodist connections in the region were contacted. From this exploratory trip contacts were developed which eventually led to the planting of a church. The Free Methodist Mission and the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference became partners in this joint venture initiated by the local church. Short-term VISA personnel, ministry teams, funding, and oversight have come from multiple

participants; the local church, the PNW Conference, FMWM and APFFMA have all been engaged in this initiative.

Another church, a bit further behind but moving in the same direction, is the Kingsview FM Church in Toronto. This church, located in what was once a Toronto residential suburb, is now surrounded by high-density housing in a volatile community dominated by Muslim Somalis. Kingsview has begun a journey of ministry with the Somalis, first of all through sports outreach and now, after-school tutoring and summer day-camp programs. Church leaders recently began a process of exploring their wider mission commitments. Following the presentation of the Gateway Cities Vision at the Canadian General Conference (2002), the pastors were approached by a Somali refugee about the possibility of partnering in the development of a health clinic in Mogadishu, Somalia. The church, in liaison with the Canadian NLT Mission Contact and FMWM, has followed up on this contact. An exploratory trip composed of local church members, a Somalian and a FMWM representative is being planned for Feb 2003. This venture is being funded and driven by the local church.

These examples give an embryonic picture of the kind of model I believe we should be encouraging. Local churches, driven by missional involvement in their own communities, take the next step of wider involvement in the global village. The diagram in the appendix gives a picture of the potential involvements of a church committed to seeing itself as a sodality rather than a modality - as a missional church.

4.2 Specialist agency as mission empowerer

But where does this model leave the specialist role of a denominational mission department? I believe that we need to re-tool as empowerers of local church initiatives.

In the past the specialist agencies, whether denominationally related or independent, have seen themselves as primary initiators of mission vision as well as the deployers of personnel and resources - after local churches had supplied those workers and resources to the agency. A key task of the autonomous mission body was to communicate that mission vision to the local church in such a way that workers and resources were pryed loose from the local church. "We (the mission) are your (the church) hands in the world." That may seem like an unfair characterization, however, in the present context this is the perception of many pastors, church leaders and congregational members. The model being proposed here suggests that the specialist agency needs to become the actual enabler of the local church's "hands" in accomplishing the local church's vision for their world.

What does the agency presently "do for" the local church? The agency provides:
* Research and development of resources for vision casting and identifying ministry goals
* Screening and deployment of personnel (now, some cross-cultural ministry training)
* On-field oversight of mission personnel by experienced workers
* Administration of financial requirements
* Vision-casting and prayer communications to local churches
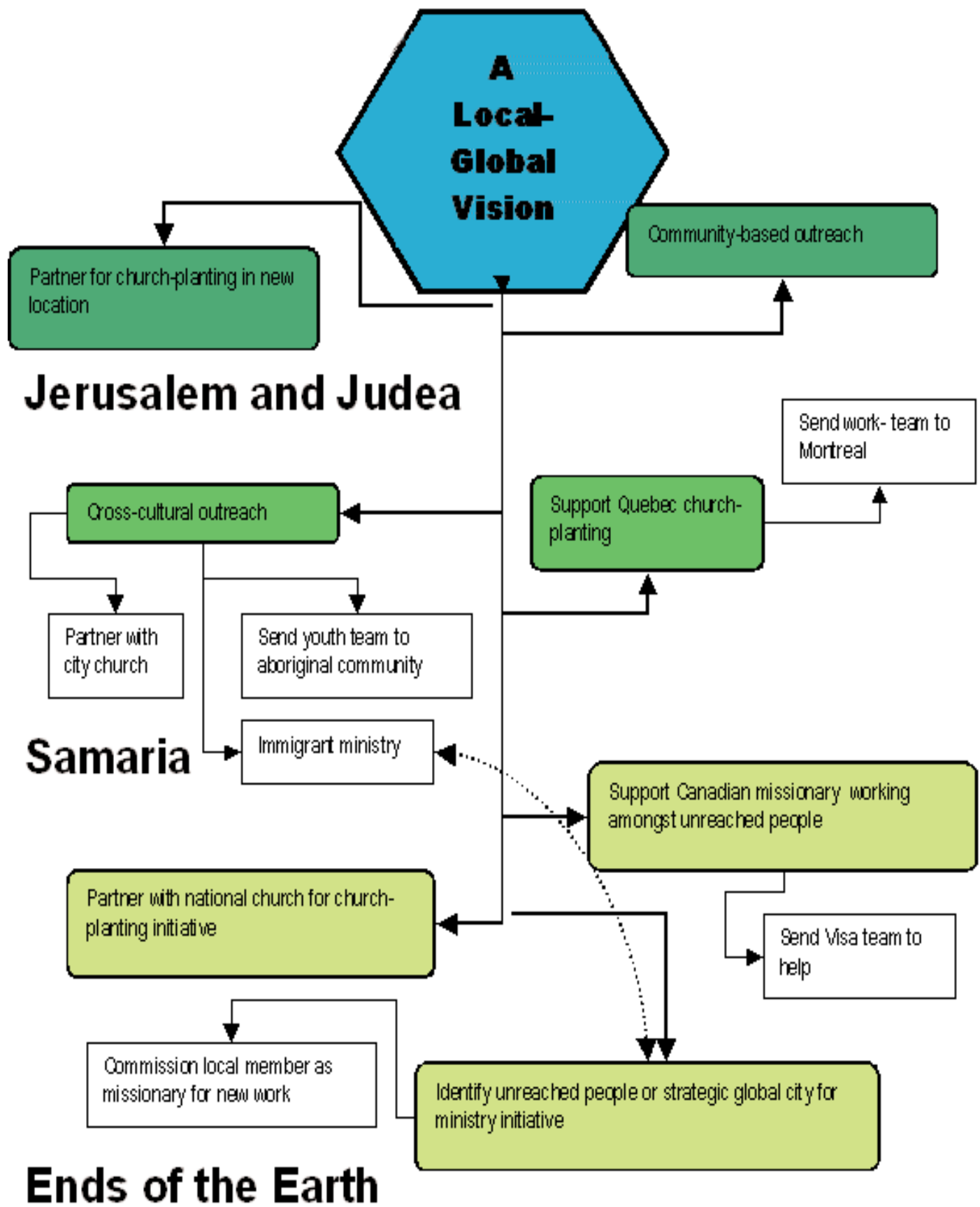* Liaison with national churches and leadership

How could the specialist agency empower local church initiatives?
* Can we not provide research and information that enables churches to develop their own vision and ministry goals?
* Can we not use existing denominational systems for screening personnel? Perhaps specialist cross-cultural training programs can be provided to local churches.
* Team-based ministry has less requirement for outside encouragement, but experienced mission mentors may be in greater demand.
* Can local churches not oversee cross-cultural ministry budgets and receipt their own donors, in collaboration with specialist knowledge from the agency?
* Vision-casting, motivation and prayer information become the domain of the local church
* Can local church leaders, with developed cross-cultural communication skills, not liaise with national church leaders?

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR A DENOMINATIONAL STRUCTURE

In their book, Changing the Mind of Missions, Engel and Dyrness arrive at several conclusions about the future direction of church-mission relations. They suggest that the reign of Christ "will be extended primarily through localized initiatives that infiltrate all segments of society."[30] They go on to say that "the local church will once again be affirmed as God's chosen means for spreading the gospel through ministry that radiates outwards and multiplies from these cells of the kingdom."[31] It's all about the local church!

At the same time, Guder indicates that "the connectional structures of the church are needed to represent the missional unity that transcends all human

A Local-Global Vision

Partner for church-planting in new location

Community-based outreach

Jerusalem and Judea

Send work- team to Montreal

Cross-cultural outreach

Support Quebec church-planting

Partner with city church

Send youth team to aboriginal community

Samaria

Immigrant ministry

Support Canadian missionary working amongst unreached people

Partner with national church for church-planting initiative

Send Visa team to help

Commission local member as missionary for new work

Identify unreached people or strategic global city for ministry initiative

Ends of the Earth

boundaries and cultural distinctions."[32] The crucial issue is the beginning point.

The movement toward missional connectedness should be centrifugal, starting from particular communities and expanding to the global dimensions of the church, the community of communities. God's Spirit forms particular communities for mission in particular places and multiplies that mission by increasing the number of particular communities: the church moves from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and out to the ends of the earth. As this happens, the Spirit has shaped this church to become multicultural, multiethnic, geographically extensive, and organizationally diverse.[33]

I would like to suggest that there are several places where the specialist mission agency will have to think and act differently in regard to the empowerment of missional churches. We will have to depend upon relational connections rather than structural protocol. Missional churches are driven by gifted, passionate people who are not going to automatically look for "the proper way to do this." Specialist leaders will have to build relationships with churches that are functioning in a missional manner, ready to provide resources when the relationship is activated.

We will have to accept a loss of control and value diversity. Initiative and oversight revert to the local church in the missional model. Specialist leaders will encourage local churches by facilitating all the contacts necessary for a new international outreach, rather than functioning as gatekeepers. We will have to recognize that the diversity of ways of going about cross-cultural ministry - which are inevitable - are important and valuable. Mistakes have been made by the specialist agencies and mistakes will be made by local churches. In the multiplicity of approaches, however, the Spirit is sure to be working.

We will have to accept a loss of hierarchical, ascribed-status management and move to gift-based ministry and leadership. The mission empowerers who will be accepted as specialist resource personnel to local churches will have earned-status and will be respected as their ministry leadership is seen to flow from giftedness and passion. Authenticity will have more value than position or title.

Since specialist mission structures have a long history and perception amongst pastors and local churches, the movement to a mission empowerment model will place the onus on the specialist agencies to take the pro-active role in becoming a servant to the local churches. We can no longer be the "ambassador of" the local church, we must become the "servant to" the local church.

CONCLUSION

In this "in between" time, with so much disorientation and uncertainty, we have an opportunity to do something different. We can choose to scramble after emasculated ways to remain relevant in society as a whole, or we can begin to be a different kind of people, from the margins. We can begin to function as missional churches, sent on a mission into our own context. And then, following the natural connections resulting from life in the global village, we can begin to reach out to our Samaria and to the ends of the earth as cross-cultural mission initiators. And, If this transformed model emerges, the cross-cultural specialists will have to transform both philosophy of ministry and methodology to function as mission empowerers.

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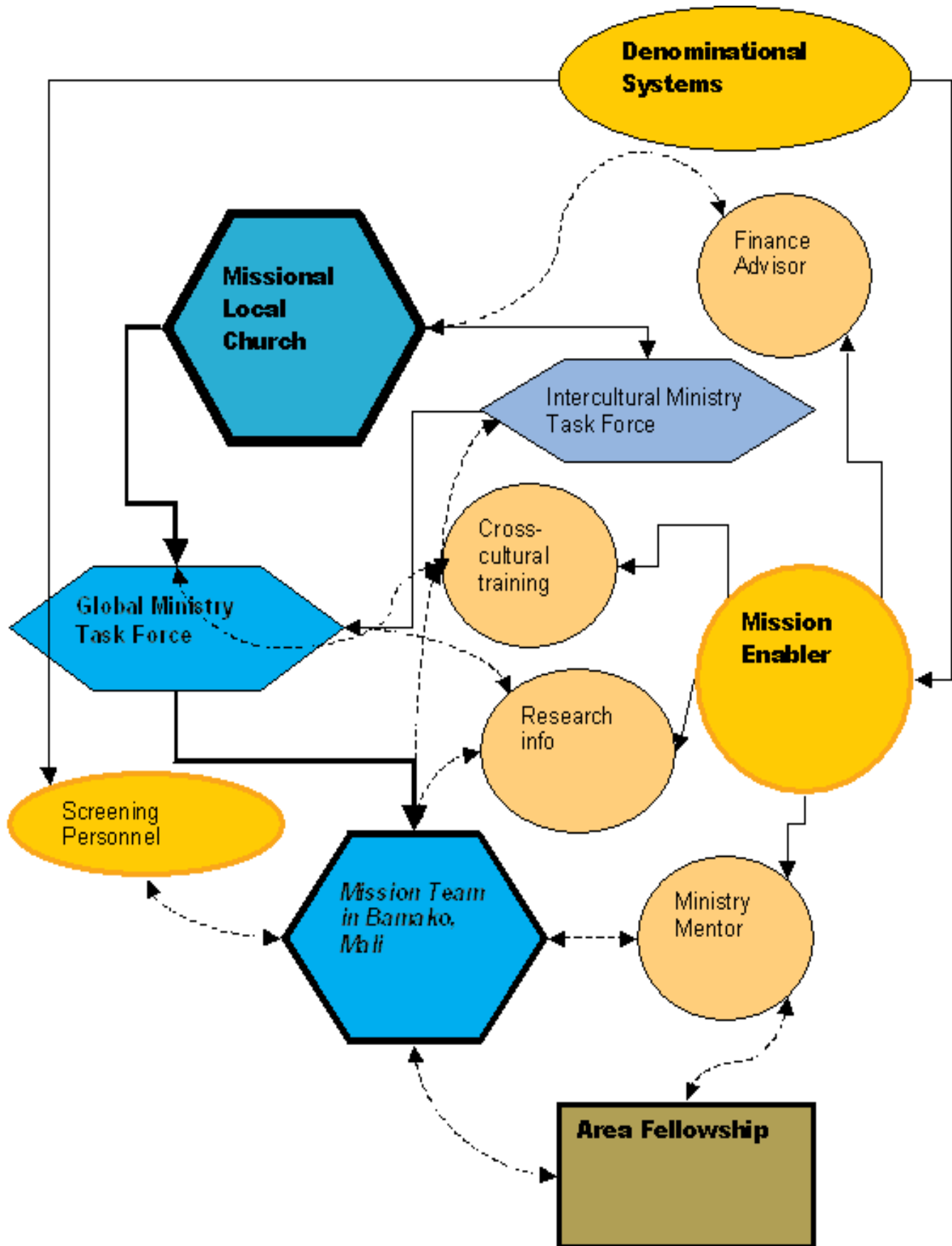
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FOOTNOTES

1   Brian McLaren, The Church on the Other Side. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. p. 141.

2   Alan Roxburgh, The Missionary Congregation, Liminality and Leadership (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1997) pp.23-56.

3   Roxburgh, p.47.

4   Ralph Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission." Missiology 2:121-139, 1974.

5   David Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991. p. 43-44.

6   Gary Burger, "The Local Church and Para-Local Church: A Proposal for Partnership in Ministry." International School of Theology: Monograph Series, 1990, p.4.

7   H. Cook, Who Really Sent the First Missionaries? Evangelical Missions Quarterly 12:233-239, 1975 in G. Burger, p.4.

8   R. Winter, p.128.

9   John White, The Church and the Para-Church. Portland: Multnomah Press, 1982.

10   For instance, George Hunter, The Celtic Way of Evangelism. Nashville:Abingdon Press, 2002.

11   R. Winter, p.135.

12   ibid., p. 135.

13   ibid., p.135.

14   Howard Snyder, The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980. p.112.

15   Craig Van Gelder, "Understanding the Church in North America" in Missional Church (D. Guder, ed.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. p. 74.

16   Roxburgh, p.50.

17   ibid., p.52.

18   Roxburgh, p.54

19   Gerald Arbuckle, Earthing the Gospel. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990, p.208.

20   Charles Van Engen in Missional Church, Guder. p. 255.

21   Darrell Guder, Missional Church. p. 256.

22   Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, Resident Aliens. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989. p.83.

23   Hauerwas and Willimon, p. 116.

24   ibid., p. 139.

25   Arbuckle, p. 214.

26   Roxburgh, p. 59.

27   ibid., p. 60-61.

28   Ibid., p. 62-66.

29   Roxburgh, "Equipping God's People for Mission" in Missional Church, Guder (ed.)

30   James Engel and William Dyrness, Changing the Mind of Missions. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000. p. 178.

31   Ibid., p. 178.

32   Guder, Missional Church. p. 264.

33   Ibid., p. 265.

SHALOM:
GOD'S UNREASONABLE MISSION

By Philip L. Capp

My assigned task in this paper is to present a working model for Shalom Communities. I am to try to show how a shalom community is ekklesia in which evangelism, diakonia, and incarnation are inseparably linked without dichotomy or the "balancing of priorities".

The understandings presented here have grown out of two decades of serious reflection and teaching on the issues surrounding the Biblical notion of devotion, justice/righteousness and shalom. This reflection has furthermore been set in the context of nearly two decades of serious concern with the shaping and nurture of a theological learning community in South Africa and against the background of nearly two decades of experience in the process of shaping and nurture of a mission community in what is now Zimbabwe.

Since the middle of the last century John Bright's study The Kingdom of God (Abingdon 1953) has led to a major shift in thinking about the Church. David Yardy wrote a paper summarizing some of the best thinking on the Kingdom of God in a Free Methodist Mission context. (Yardy's paper was distributed at the Mission Boot Camp in Bangkok, it is not published, but should be available) A discussion of shalom is not a contender with Kingdom of God Theology. Shalom is the theme that fleshes out what the "Rule of the King" is about.

Early in the reflection period my attention was drawn to a small book by James E. Metzler, From Saigon to Shalom, (Herald Press, 1985). I continue to recommend this book as one of the most clear and

significant presentations of the notion of Shalom.

Even before this, my thinking has been nurtured and shaped by the influence of some of Howard Snyder's writings. Amongst those, perhaps The Community of the King (Intervarsity Press, 1977) has been the most influential. Although Snyder does not use the term shalom what he describes is part of the shalom process. His theology of the church fits the shalom theme.

Just a word about my title. This was not the assigned title! I am using it because I believe it symbolizes an important conception. Shalom is not the product of reason. It is not the outcome of reasoned assumptions from philosophical thought. (There have, however been numbers of utopian schemes presented from a philosophically reasoned basis. For a serious listing of such literature explore the following internet link: http://www.nypl.org/utopia/primarysources.html) Shalom is given by God in response to a human community's response to God. Shalom is not utopian. Shalom has to do with the full range of reality as humans experience it and, I believe, has to do with how God enables human community to live and thrive in this world and how God enables such human community to represent God in the world. Therefore Shalom is inseparably related to Incarnation. Shalom cannot be separated, then, from the Life, Cross and Resurrection of Jesus. Nor can it be separated from the meaning and purpose of the Holy Spirit as given to the community of believers. (Note, there is a sense in which certain larger and more generalized aspects of God's response to the world can be said to be shalom - sunshine, rain, day and night, the earth as a resource for life - and with that must be accepted the giving of storms, earthquakes, floods, etc.. In this sense there is a metaphor of more particular shalom - there are realities connected with the giving of God that are not explained by words like nice, happy, joy, good and others.)

One further introductory note: In my occasional use of the term grace there is a serious conceptual difference from the prevalent notion of Grace as I have read and heard it expressed. Beyond the felicitous and loving way in which God comes to us and surprises us with unexpected and undeserved favor, I understand grace with the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition as "Uncreated Grace" rather than "Created Grace". The implication of this is that, for my understanding, grace is not just the occasional giving of something by God, but is rather the entire substance of divine presence and

enabling power, it is distinct, but not different from the the wholeness of the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this sense, then, grace is the "Trinitarian Community" abiding and enabling the human community to "godliness" or "god-likeness" in this present world. For an interesting Orthodox treatment of this notion of grace see the following internet link: http://home.nyc.rr.com/mysticalrose/grace.html

WHAT IS SHALOM?

Shalom is one of the central and overarching themes in the story of God's interaction with earth and humans. Without Shalom, Redemption becomes meaningless in relation to this world and without coherence as far as how life and eternity may be linked. I believe this to be true because Shalom is presented in the Biblical narratives as what God wills human society to look like - to be like - and redemption deals with God's enabling of humans to be becoming godlike instead of anti-godlike or non-godlike.

The main form of the Hebrew (shalam) appears 276 times in the Old Testament and is found in every book except Amos, Habakkuk and Zephaniah. However, a very strong "shalom-justice" statement appears in Amos 5:24. (The word used here is a form of tsedek (related to right, righteous, just) which is another related idea that cannot be separated from the idea of shalom. Tsedek is a large theme in the Old Testament and forms part of the shalom theme.

Shalom is literally translated as "peace" and used as a greeting in both Hebrew and Arabic, shalom is actually a multifaceted word with a complex set of meanings. Consistently translated in the Septuagint as eirene, and used by New Testament writers in the Greek form with the background of the Old Testament Hebrew usage, the word becomes almost consistently translated as "peace" in the New Testament. The absorption of the Greek notion of "cessation of hostility" as the primary meaning of eirene completes the dilution of understanding for English readers of the New Testament. The awesome power of the simple phrase "the Gospel of peace" is diluted to non-recognition by this translation loss. The profound usage of peace with the underlying notion of shalom is lost in the New Testament for most people unless it is restored through careful Biblical understanding. (cf. James E. Metzler, From Saigon to Shalom, Herald Press, 1985:57-64, especially p.58)

1.1 The consistent and large issues in Shalom are:

Wholeness, health, well-being and belonging - individual, but especially communal or societal versus sickness, fragmentation, broken and divided relationships, greed, hostility, fraud - all of which appear in a variety of ways in modern world social and political settings under the terms of ethnic or racial prejudice, class oppression, political extortion and embezzlement of national resources, environmental destruction in the name of development or business enterprise, poverty, hunger, - the list could go on.

Harmony, love, friendship, cooperation - again, between individuals, but most especially in community or societal relations versus the competitive, ethnocentric, self-centered, power accumulative and unbalanced economic distributive structures characteristic of the world we live in.

Justice, true (integrity), right (righteous) -particularly in relation to communities versus the entrapment of much of the world in cul-de-sacs of impoverishment and powerlessness.

Peace, unafraid, safe as characteristics of community relations versus the violence, war, rampant crime, political aggression that in fact characterize much of the world communities.

Beauty, order, coherence, radiance, loveliness versus the chaos, disorder, littered, smelly, unsanitary, overcrowded, ugliness that characterizes so much of the world's cities, and "developed" countryside - even sometimes the wilderness areas.

Wholeheartedness, good, Godliness versus the environmentally damaging, devious, slothful, non-caring, evil and sinfulness characteristic of much of the world's personal, social and economic activities.

1.2 Some of the great Biblical images of shalom are:
- The Garden of Eden
- The Vision of the New Jerusalem and the Garden in the City
- The Beauty of the Tabernacle
- The Desert Blossoming (Isaiah 35)
- The Wolf and the Lamb (Isaiah 11:6,7; 65:25)
- Every man (person/family) with vine and fig tree (Zech. 3:10, Mic. 4:4, see Hos 14:7; Zech. 8:12; Mal. 3:11)
- Covenant of blessing to Abraham, Moses (Gen 12:17,18; Ex 3:20)
- Mission of Jesus "seek and save that which was lost" -

cf Sermon on the Mount and the "Kingdom of God" theme
- Healing of the sick and deformed, resuscitating the dead in the New Testament
- Transformed people in Corinth-"such were some of you" (I Cor 6:9-11)
- Pauline expectation of Social Transformation through Christ-"put on then" (Col 3:1-4:6)

Some of the characteristic Biblical usage of shalom (in various forms of the root) are:

Old Testament
- When life in the community is not disrupted by violence
- Protection
- Safety (a very frequent usage)
- Agreement, accord, alliance, friendship, confederates - (note: What could Christians, Jews and Muslims agree to do together?)
- Health - Jer 14:19
- Well being - personal and community - very large usage (linked to listening to God - Is 48:18; 48:22, Jer 8:11; cf Ex.20:24 - the Sacrifice of "Well-Being" or peace offering
- Unafraid because of trust in the Lord (Deut 20:1; Josh11:6
- Comfort or Solace
- Harmonious living together - treaty, consultation versus war (Note the Penteteuch's emphasis on war machinery (eg horses and chariots -cf Deut 17:16; 20:1 and see also Zech 9:10 - image of no war
- Justice - (note the reality of justice linked to the notion of "devoted" herem I Kings 20:42)
- Victory in war often described in shalom terms
- Satisfied
- Greeting (very common)
- Prosperity - a result of rain, sun, weather, fertility, all of which are God's gifts to earth (prosper carries the notion of sufficiency, not surplus)
- Order, organization - expressed often in concern for widow, orphan, poor - distributed order and prosperity opposed to elitism (Order that oppresses is Anti-Shalom even when good for some.)
- Ethical - Depart from evil, do good (Ps 34:14, Ps 72; 73) Free of deceit, Intent of well- being for all, blameless behavior
- Restitution - Gen 44:4, Ex 21:34, 21:36 etc. There

are many references to this. It seems that if there are no required consequences of good behavior to make up for bad behavior, then there are no real consequences. And if there are no consequences for bad behavior then there can be no Shalom.

- Complete - Shalom carries ideas of finishing and the integrity to do that (Keeping one's word) See Ps 50:14, Ps 56:12
- Trust; Stability; Pleasure

New Testament

- In the New Testament, "peace" equals shalom almost every time.
- As in Gospel of peace equals Gospel of Shalom
- As in Jesus is our peace equals Jesus is our Shalom Mat. 10 describes a Shalom Mission strategy for Palestine - note the greeting of   "peace" and the instruction to "let your peace return to you" if there is rejection of the mission.   Implied is the notion that receiving and responding to God will result in Shalom, rejecting will result in "anti-shalom"

1.3 Shalom as something God brings or makes:

- Shalom is God's creation through, not by his people (Is 45:7; 54:10; 53:5
- Looking to God and Justice are criteria of living in Shalom (Is 60:17; 59:8)
- Shalom is a result of obedience to God - Exiled Jews to seek welfare of the foreign city and in that find their own welfare - Jer 29:7, 11
- Vision of shalom in Jerusalem - the result of God's doing, just as the destruction was God's doing Jer 33:1-16
- Image of Shalom in Jerusalem - false as attempted by the leaders versus the true brought by God (Jer33:1-31)(Note: Shalom is not about everything being nice) Image of Shalom among the Remnant -God's doing with response from people that includes a mission outreach resulting from the evidence in the community of God's presence Zech 8:11-23 (Note some of the issues here: worship, truth, justice, goodwill toward others) And note 7:8 - not oppress the widow, orphan, poor alien, nor devise evil against another.
- Prophecy of One of Peace (read Shalom) out of Bethlehem Mic 5:5
- Shalom is not about gaining power Micah 3:5
- Shalom comes from God's activity as the one who

repays, not from ours; from God as the one who recompenses, not us: from God who performs, not our performance;   from God who completes or restores, not us. Cf Jer 25:14; Is 66:6; Is 65:6

A few years ago Cornelius Plantinga, Jr, professor of theology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids published an article about Sin. His central point is that sin upsets, disturbs, distorts, destroys the Christian concept of the way things ought to be. He describes that way, drawing on a passage from Nicholas Wolterstorff in Until Justice and Peace Embrace, (Eerdmans, 1983:69-72) as follows:

The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is, of course, what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. We call it peace, but it means far more than just peace of mind or cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight, in which natural needs are satisfied, natural gifts fruitfully employed - the whole process inspiring joyful wonder as the creator and savior of all opens doors and speaks welcome. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be. ("Not the Way It's S'pposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin" in Theology Today, vol 50, No 2 - Jul 1993:182)

One thing that needs to be said again is that Biblical Shalom is not utopian - that is, it does not appear in the Bible as disconnected from the hard realities of life, the suffering, the incomprehensible, and the unexplainable. One of the most difficult parts of the Bible is the epic of Job. God directly involves himself with Job's suffering - there is no fuzzy dualism in the theological conceptions of the author of Job. Evil is not an equal, or unequal, opposite to God. Evil upsets Shalom, but it does not upset the God of Shalom, nor God's power to continue to bring Shalom into the worst of human circumstances.

SHALOM AND THE NOTION OF MISSION

The intersection of the Biblical understanding of Shalom with the New Testament conception of a Community of God's People as bearers of the presence of God into the world in which they live is the crucial connection of Shalom and participation in God's mission.

I agree with Howard Snyder's contention that the church is the community of God's people and that the structures that develop to facilitate how the community responds to God, are "alongside the church", non-sacred,

humanly constructed (and therefore changeable) means to an end that God gives, not an end that we achieve or create. (See Howard Snyder, The Community of the King, IVP, 1977, a carefully developed Biblical theology of the church and this theme is repeated in several places, but see especially pp 178-182).

God is present in the world. This has been historically focused by the incarnation. But the Biblical notion of Shalom refocuses the historical presence of God in the Community of God's people. (I do not mean by this to limit God's presence to the Community of God's People)

The connection of Shalom with mission necessitates community. Not just general community, but particular community. Shalom without a particular community is not possible. A particular community in process of responding to God and experiencing God's Shalom would be the equivalent of the New Testament "body of Christ, filled with the Spirit". (By the way, this is the central issue in how John Wesley understood what his mission was about - "the recovery of scriptural Christianity")

I believe that a particular Community of God's People responding to God through the enabling of the Grace of God is not only a church, but it is then the bearer of the face of God. It becomes a viable incarnation of God, bearing witness to God in the midst and the bearer of God's good news through the interaction of God's love through themselves toward the larger community in which they live.

The Holy Spirit has been given to enable every church to become "witnesses" (do not read evangelistic methods) - the living presence of God because of "Christ in us" or because Grace is at work - the Divine Energy in us. (But to say again, not just as individuals, in fact not primarily as individuals, but as members of the body which thinks and works together as a community being nurtured, energized and directed by Grace.)

So where the church is not only proclaiming Christ, but also choosing to be part of the healing and well being of the communities or areas in which it lives, there is God and so there is Shalom. Shalom is what the Kingdom of God or Rule of God should look like in persons and communities.

In the words of the assigned task, such a community is Ekklesia in particular and by its participation in the larger community evangelizes and ministers to the community and thus puts a face or faces on a particular

incarnation of God.

3. SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION PRACTICE

Shalom mission means putting a face on God - dwelling in the midst - representative of "God with us" (Emmanuel) rather than the faceless forms of mission.

Shalom mission means "heralding" or announcing that God redeems - forgives transforms, empowers or energizes, sanctifies. It means being the words of Christ

Shalom mission means doing the works of Christ particularly amongst the poor, helpless, needy, sick, sinful, or in other words, the lost. But not just doing something to someone else, rather -and this is important - working in such a way that we enable, or empower the people amongst whom we work.

NOTE: John Perkins has given a lifetime to urban community development. He develops the above three themes as Relocation-living in the community, Reconciliation-loving God, loving people, and Redistribution-enabling or empowering the people. A recent exposition of this is in his book Restoring at-Risk Communities: doing it together and doing it right (Baker, 1996).

Shalom mission means structuring our church communities for shalom community. The Body of Christ is seen, not so much in single individuals but in the community of believers acting in love in particular situations in particular places. See Ephesians. (Howard Snyder, Community of the King, is a careful exegesis of this.)

Shalom is "Trinitarian" - it is communal. Shalom cannot exist without an "other" and Christianity can not truly exist in one person only.

So Shalom mission counters the progressive individualization of the current world and in particular, the city. It enables restoration of thinking about the community and the forms it can take in the city.

Jeremiah said (29:7 - speaking of the dispersion of the Jews after the fall of Jerusalem), "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (For "welfare" read shalom)

3.1 Shalom is a valuable conceptual image for mission theology because:
It is one word (it requires explanation, but that is better

than trying to untangle misunderstood words.)

- It has a historic context that is Biblical.
- It can be illustrated from Biblical text and from contemporary life.
- It is comprehensive in depth of meaning. (Not because we say so, but because of Biblical usage)
- It is a process, a goal and a vision - all in one
- It is reachable by the least.   Big money and power are not necessary for shalom to happen. In fact, in some cases they may prevent it from happening.
- Shalom is what the church is about and why the church is. It is a missionary word by definition.
- Shalom provides a way to keep focused and a way to measure or evaluate.
- Shalom is the reason why we are in mission.
- For God so loved the world...should have eternal life (John 3:16)
- For God sent not his son...to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved. (John 3:17)
- Christ came to defeat the works of the devil.   He came to insist that Christians not only can, but must love one another. (cf. 1 John 3:8,10)
- "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." (John 17.18 NIV)

3.2 Shalom mission as a corrective:
Shalom mission is a corrective to the kind of mission that derives its vision from the foreign "sending" culture and implements a process driven by "foreign" interests. Shalom by definition is what happens because God is living in and working through a community. Shalom mission is the outgrowth of a particular shalom community living in a particular place, who, being led by God, focus on how they can increase the "well being" of the place in which they live.

When such a vision is brought into being, it will belong to those who participated in generating the vision - being the local body of Christ, it will belong to them and hence will "fit" the community.

3.3 Shalom mission: implications for how mission is done
Shalom mission has serious implications for how mission is done, how missionaries are recruited and trained and how mission strategy is developed. Please note that these implications are the same for whoever the sending church is and wherever the host church may be.

These implications have to do with problems such as:

Cultural imperialism (sending domination of project and process). A shalom community planted in the midst of a larger community with another faith system, would begin by "seeking the welfare" of that larger host community. To do that it would be necessary to learn from that community, understand its world of meaning and behavior and enter the process of understanding how to let Jesus become recognizable as one of them   A learning, inquiring, ministering shalom community would not try to transfer irrelevant structures of the church as though they were the essence of the church, but seek to find how communities work in this host situation.

Eugene Peterson makes a comment that is designed for pastoral ministry, but is relevant here. (for pastor, read missionary)

The program-director pastor is dominated by the social-economic mind-set of Darwinism: market-orientation, competitiveness, survival of the fittest. This is a shift in pastoral work away from God-oriented obedience to career-oriented success. It is work at which we gain mastery, position, power, and daily check on our image in the mirror. A Tarshish Career.

The Spiritual director pastor is shaped by the biblical mind-set of Jesus: worship-orientation, a servant life, sacrifice. This shifts pastoral work from ego-addictions to grace freedoms. It is work at which we give up control, fail and forgive, watch God work. A Nineveh vocation. With that paradigm shift everything changes. The place we stand in is no longer a station for exercising control; it is a place of worship, a sacred place of adoration and mystery where we direct attention to God...In program direction, the pastor is Ptolemaic---At the center.   In spiritual direction, the pastor is Copernican--in orbit TO the center.   (Under the Unpredictable Plant: An exploration in vocational Holiness, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994:176).

Communication (serious language and culture learning as a pre-requisite to leadership roles). A shalom community in mission would learn to speak, and use the language of their host community. It would be their first ministry task. They would engage in it as ministry, learning to be friends with the host community.

Status / Role understandings For instance - learner and story teller role assumption versus teacher or director role assumption even when different status and accompanying role is assigned by either or both of the sending and host communities. A Shalom community

would assume a learner role as the necessary tool, but beyond that, as the only functional role for new members of a community to assume. Story telling would become the privilege of learners in the conversational learning process.

The Specialist/Technician lock box (the problem of confusion of "Technical Aid" and Mission -even when done by serious Christians).   Mission is prior to "technical aid". Technical aid is not mission, but may be a significant part of how good mission strategy is carried out.   A shalom community could not be a shalom community if it plunged into the "teaching" role necessary to the Technical Aid or Specialist roles.   The fundamental role of mission communities is not to transfer technical expertise, but to allow a living community without Jesus, to see Jesus. It is not what a shalom community knows, but who they know that is the focus of mission.

The "any serious Christian is/can be a missionary - just go" syndrome (The problem of failure to recognize that there is a huge store of wisdom and specialized understanding available for the very delicate process of cross-cultural mission.) By ignoring the preparation and equipping we condemn "missionaries" to re-invent the wheel.   A shalom community in mission would need to have access to the reservoir of expertise and understanding, and furthermore would need to grapple with the serious implications that what they already know from another cultural world may be either irrelevant, or harmful in another setting.   There are wonderful insights that help in language learning, analysis of culture, listening to other viewpoints, communicating in ways that do not offend, etc.

The "response to the need" syndrome (The sense that we can fix what is wrong in the world). Only God does that. Shalom is given, not made. Shalom mission flows out of deep rooted listening and obedience to what God is saying to persons and communities. It is not the result of visionary proactive intervention, but the result of the call and sending of God.

3.4 Shalom mission: implications in the city
Shalom mission has particular implications for mission in the city. Such a mission involves a community making their home in the city, with vested interest rising from the fact that they live in the city, bringing beauty, justice, harmony, wholeness, and peace into the ugliness, rapaciousness,   violence,   irresponsibility,   greed,

deceitfulness and power struggles that are characteristic of the city.

There is a great, and appropriate, emphasis on mission in the city.   There is also a great deal of disagreement about the nature of cities.   These range from the notion that the city is evil to the notion that the city is good.   (I am unable at this writing to give bibliographical information - but see such authors as Ellul, Linthicum, Waymire, Robert Orsi, Harvey Conn, Peter Wagner, Bruce Winter and many others.

Ray Bakke went to a nearly dead church in the inner heart of Chicago. His ministry there involved building a sense of community in the congregation, a sense of how they could carry out their own lives as a mission of healing and transformation. He also established his own ministry by building relationships with the business, civic, political and other leaders, getting to know them and making himself available to them for helping them do what they were supposed to be doing. The result was transformation within his own congregation and the nurture of a large effective church in the city. (See: Raymond Bakke, The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today's Urban World . IVP, 1987)

3.5 Shalom mission: Connecting with Wesleyan thought and practice:
This section deserves a serious and longer treatment. However, there are a number of clear ways in which John Wesley's thinking was along the lines of the Biblical shalom notion.

Holiness, as Wesley understood it, had to do with opening life (individual and community) to listening to and obeying God. He understood Holiness as the work of Grace (please remember the early note in this paper about Grace) with a behavioral response. Two items clearly indicate this: His rules for belonging to a society, and his pamphlet "The Character of a Methodist". What Wesley called "Christian" Perfection, Perfection in Love, Sanctification, etc. is closely akin to the development in the Bible of the notion of Shalom. That his depth of interpretive perception has been diluted in the revivalism and triviality of doctrinal controversy is a great loss.

The New Birth, in Wesley's preaching and writing, had to do with experiencing God - a conversion of the heart, not just the head. It was God coming to us, not us achieving by some disciplined path - it was the self-giving of Grace that resulted in turning away from all that offended God and the doing of everything possible that

pleased God because of a personal relationship with God - Grace at work in us.

Wesley maintained an open ecumenical spirit that fostered cooperation and fellowship without regard to affiliation except to Jesus Christ. His mission involved the nurture of those who were willing to be nurtured within the Methodist Movement, but his vision was other than the building of a denomination - this his inner spirit refused.

The class meeting was a time of utter honesty between persons about who they were, how they were living, the help they needed, the failure, the success, the process. And the class itself was organized to provide support for the nurture and growth of everyone associated with it. This kind of community could listen to and obey God. And they did. The transformed lives of Methodists were a marvel in Britain in the 18th century.

The effect of Wesley and others influenced by him has been a history of societal and political change that has been consistent with the notion of shalom. Such things as orphanages, homes for the elderly, small capital loan societies, Christian book and tract publishing, community food assistance, public opposition to substance abuse, public medical assistance for the poor, anti-slavery activity and publication, regular assistance for the poor in the societies are some examples that are well documented.

Wesley's clear vision was the world. His expectation was that "scriptural Christianity" would increase to the ends of the earth.

4. EVIDENCES OF SHALOM MISSION:

I would like to note three stories that I believe illustrate shalom mission. They are notable not because they are rare examples, but because they are not characteristic of what the bulk of churches are understanding as the mission of God in their midst.

4.1 Uganda

First, on a national scale, what has been happening in Uganda since 1936 is a major footnote to what God might be ready to do in any nation that responds as Uganda has responded. Recently a video has been released "Transformations II" (see the following internet link: http://www.transformnations.com/) This video presents an important part of the picture, but cannot
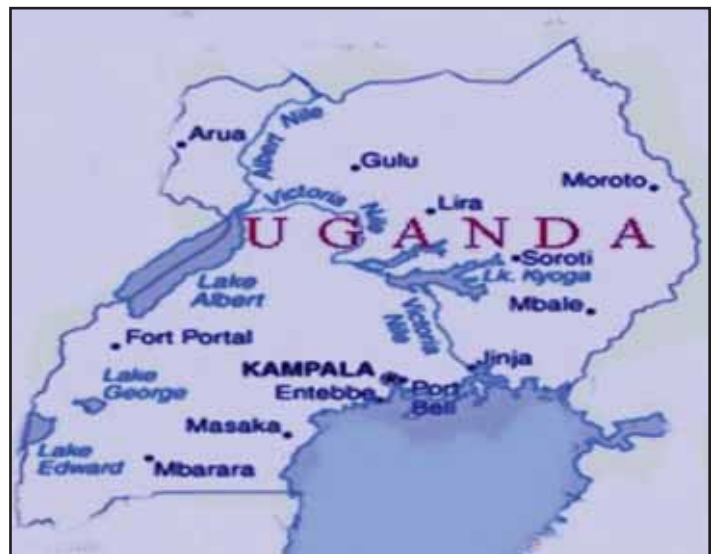
detail the history since 1936 of the people instrumental in the beginning of what is known is the East Africa Revival Movement, nor the heroic part of the Anglican, Bishop Festo Kivengere, as well as many less well known persons (except to God) over a period of years in which Uganda suffered the vicious rapacity of political oppression, genocide and theft of the people's resources. The story is long and tragic. The suffering has been immense. Never-the-less, there has been a strong Christian segment that has intervened in prayer and preached hope. It is also a matter of record that hundreds of Christians in Uganda died because they refused to give up their Christian faith under pressure or threat of death. In Idi Amin's time there was a serious upsurge of Christian involvement in opposition and community prayer that totally transcended the denominational boundaries that typically separate the evangelical community. When Amin was gone it seems that coalition relaxed. The next regime was, if anything. worse. Christians joined again in prayer and in 1986 the current head of Government , Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, was chosen. (For official reports see: http://www.government.go.ug/ including a comprehensive report from the World Health Organization with statistics on Aids/HIV infection decrease. But for reports from Christian sources see pages such as: http://www.impactfm.org/ , http://www.luziusschneider.com/News/English/Uganda E.htm , http://www.sentinalministries.org and many others.)

Since 1986 there has been major turn around. The economy has improved, there are significant Christians in government who are actively participating in better

governance, including a minister of ethics and integrity, Hon. Miriam Matembe, who is herself an outspoken Christian. Economic growth has been about 6% for the past decade. Inflation has dropped from over 380% 15 years ago to 6-8%, Corruption is being uncovered and dealt with; President Museveni repealed Amin's Islamic covenant and rededicated the nation to the God of the Bible in a public service. Christians have increased their unified responses across all denominational barriers and work together and pray together. Uganda is the only nation to systematically attack AIDS and reduce infection rates by 50%. Christian participation has been very significant in this progress.

Today, Uganda is on the way to being a healthy and prosperous society. Is everything right? No. Is Uganda an example of Utopia? No. But Uganda is an example of what happens when Christians unite on a continuing basis and put the welfare of everyone up front, leave denominational concerns behind, then cooperate with all who will cooperate and lead the way in united prayer.

I would submit that without the active participation of the people of God, the church, in Uganda, the indications are that there would have been no recovery. Furthermore, there is evidence in the anecdotal records that when Christians became less than vigilant in their prayer participation, the nation faltered. This seems to be a genuine example of how God responds with shalom to a people willing to listen and to obey God in spite of the cost.

And finally I note that this is newsworthy because it is exceptional. If this kind of shalom orientation were common, and many nations were seeing such renewal and health, then it would be more difficult to make it a great story. Yet, our participation in mission ought to be fostering this kind of national response where the "welfare of the city "in which we live is the focus.

4.2 The Ubunye Cooperative Housing project of the Ubunye (Free Methodist) Church

In 1992, the Free Methodist Mission in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa followed the leading of the Lord to establish an inter-racial church in the heart of the city of Pietermaritzburg. Previous to this time the ministry of the Free Methodist Mission had been directed solely toward the Black populations. The Free Methodist Church in South Africa was a Black Church and mostly rural or village in its outreach.

This small inter-racial church planting project of the mission struggled along. In 1994, Dan and Kathy Sheffield came as missionary personnel to lead this project. The name changed from "Berg Street Fellowship" to Ubunye Church. The congregation began to grow, and it was an inter-racial congregation, representative of the neighborhood in which the church was located. Dan worked with young people in the congregation to bring them into leadership. Even though it was a small congregation, they looked for a way to minister as the people of God to the larger community. One of the most evident needs was clean, safe, affordable housing for people moving into the city in droves. The result of this was massive over-crowding and exorbitant rents without the maintenance of the buildings rented. Squalor multiplied.

Next door to the church there was a large house with nearly 30 people trying to live in it. Lack of leadership skills and inability to do the necessary things resulted in electricity being shut off, water being shut off, sewage being plugged and extensive damage to the interior of the building through careless and uninformed living practices.

The Ubunye congregation negotiated a lease on the building, cleaned it up and then supervised its rental to a reasonable number of people at reasonable rates. It worked. People were grateful. So a larger project was

undertaken.

A residential hotel with about 60 spaces for long term residents had fallen into disrepair. It became available for purchase. The Ubunye Church, with leadership from Dan and Kathy Sheffield, negotiated the purchase, the renovation and the establishment of about 50 units for small families who had low income employment in the city. In addition they established the Haven - a small section of the complex that was safe for the temporary shelter of abused and battered women.

A recent report indicates that the Ubunye Cooperative Housing project is doing well, the Haven is considering an alternative location as a well run and flourishing ministry. Furthermore, the Ubunye Church has been able to partially complete (roof and floor) a church building that will accommodate 250 to 300 persons. The congregation has been meeting in a room that could not accommodate the existing congregation let alone allow for growth. This was not a matter of inadequacy. This was a product of deliberate choice. Funding promised by government for the housing project was delayed for several years and the local congregation allowed funding that would have built their church to be used in order to keep the housing project viable while waiting for government's eventual response. This year that hope and prayer over three years was rewarded.

After some difficulties with leadership following the Sheffield's departure in 1999, a new pastoral couple have been appointed and now the congregation is showing strong signs of health.

In South Africa, Ubunye has presented a meeting place for Christians from many ethnic/racial backgrounds. People have come to know Jesus there. Lives have been changed and the life of more than 50 families has been radically improved through the housing ministry (which is now self-supporting) plus the significant number of women whose broken lives have been ministered to with love and constructive compassion through the Haven staff and facility.

Let's be honest, this has not been an easy path, nor has everyone agreed, but the God of shalom has worked through prayer and difficulties have been resolved, and the ministry has not lost focus.

I submit this as an example of shalom focus in ministry for a local church. The welfare of the city directs the ministry and energy, and the needs and concerns of the congregation are placed in the background when

necessary.

But, I also submit that this has grown out of a shalom focus in the mission. There was a small community of

mission personnel who participated together in order to make this happen. Without that leadership and vision, there would be no Ubunye ministry in Pietermaritzburg today.

4.3 Street Children Ministry in Belfast

The final example is a ministry that I know through the occasional reports of a young lady who was a participant in the Mission Boot Camp in Bangkok in January of this year. Her name is Paula Johnston. She lives in Belfast. She told something of her very recent personal journey - a young lady walking in sin and hostile to the church. One day God spoke to her as she was walking the street. She went from her apartment the next Sunday in search of a church. The first one she found, not far, was a Free Methodist Church. There she has received a very warm welcome and nurturing environment. She has been involved in ministry with other Christians to children and teenage young people in the city streets -drugs and alcohol problems amongst others. They have outfitted a truck in order to have a meeting place and carry their equipment. The young people have been responding, and several have been saved - but street ministries are difficult and unpredictable.

In August of this year (2002) they had an end of the summer barbecue with all the children invited. Paula was nervous about the outcomes - no one knew how the children would respond or if they would behave

themselves.   Well they all came - ages from 10 to late teens. And people from all the churches involved in this ministry.

Paula writes in a personal letter: "It was an amazing night and God's peace and love just filled the kids, the place, they behaved so well, much better than I could ever (have) dreamed. First time most of them have been at the church too, just perfect. The kids saw that people do care and the group got to meet the kids they have been praying all year for. God alone knows what will come of it."

Today Paula is in Bible College preparing for a mission career - hoping to go to Afghanistan.

So here is a ministry getting the serious attention of several churches who are participating beyond their denominational barriers, praying for a single end. It is a very local and very particular ministry. The end of it is not clear, but the evidence of results along the way indicate that a number of young people have been saved and are now praying themselves that their area will be drug and alcohol free. God is making a difference in the life of a bad section of the city amongst young people whose lives have been on the rubbish heap. And Paula was one of those three years ago or so.

5. A SHALOM VISION APPLIED TO FREE METHODIST MISSION SENDING

What would we have to do to establish "shalom mission communities" as our typical unit of mission sending?

What would we have to do to make sure that every person in such a community had an understanding of the issues involved in working across culture?

What would we have to do to make these units of mission sending representative of the oneness of the body of Christ by inclusive participation instead of "only North American and UK" personnel?

What would we have to do to change the vision of power that western missionaries project because of the facilities, life style, access to resources, etc?

What would we have to do to shift our focus in mission sending in such a way that Free Methodist Mission personnel would be valued because they listen to and obey God - they "walk with God", not because they are able to accomplish certain tasks or successfully initiate and complete projects - or attract funding?

How should we understand "shalom mission" in relation to the fact that there are many very capable people in many parts of the world who could participate in mission, but do not have the resources to do that? Do we need to have a different structure for that?

What would we have to do to move from the cultural assumption that a team and a community are the same thing? How can we incorporate creative disagreement and contention that forces us to God instead of pushing dissent into or beyond the margins?

How does our VISA sending process relate to a "shalom vision" for mission?

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD
AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH
WITH CONSIDERATION OF THE MISSION OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN ASIA

By David Yardy

I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD INTRODUCED

Jesus strode methodically across the stone floor. His whip whined through the air curling around the table legs. With determined jerks He upended table after table scattering pretty little stacks of coins helter-skelter. Above the sound of the lonely steps, the whining whip, and the clanging coins one voice could be heard-His voice. The haunting words echoed from the past and through the colonnades and courts of the temple: "Is it not written 'and my house shall be a house of prayer for all the nations?' But you have made it a robber's den" (Mark 11:17).

We often fail to understand the serious implications of this passage and merely use it to justify our own bad temper as "righteous indignation." We fail to ask the right questions. Why was it that Jesus-the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Man of Peace-physically attacked the activities of the religious leaders during the Passover season, within the most sacred walls of the most sacred city of the Jews?

The cleansing of the temple gives a helpful window into an understanding of the Kingdom of God and its mission. The synoptic Gospels place this event immediately after His triumphal entry, when Jesus rode into the capital as a King and the crowds cried out: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord: Blessed is the coming Kingdom of Our Father David: Hosanna in the Highest!" (Mark 11:9, 10). The cleansing of the temple became the bridge between Jesus' teaching and healing ministry and the final redemptive acts found in His trial, suffering, crucifixion and resurrection. The consciousness of the Messianic King and Kingdom as focused on Jesus, was in high profile during the cleansing of the temple. The Jewish leaders were indignant that Jesus would have any royal pretensions that would undermine their kingdom interpretations. The charge was that Jesus claimed to be the king of the Jews. "'You are a king, then!' said Pilate.

Jesus answered, 'You are right in saying I am a king, in fact, for this reason I was born . . .'"(John 18:37). Fastened to the cross was a sign that read in Aramaic, Latin and Greek-"JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

In God's own mysterious way Jesus was born a King and died a King. His message was that "The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15). His teachings were teachings of the Kingdom and His prayer was for the Kingdom.

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD DEFINED

It is essential that we have an adequate understanding of the Kingdom of God or we too can violate its integrity and mission justly earning Jesus' anger. In some ways we are at an even greater disadvantage than the Jewish leaders in being able to understand the true nature of the Kingdom of God. There are not too many kingdoms left in this world and those people that have kings keep them around for mostly ceremonial purposes. We change our rulers from year to year by elections, impeachment or mass rallies. The kings and emperors of the ancient world had absolute life and death authority over all peoples within their territories. The Kingdom of God is also totalitarian in an even more absolute sense. In our pluralistic "live and let live" society, can we even begin to comprehend, let alone live by, Kingdom of God principles?

The "Kingdom of God" has been a major theme in the confusion of modern theology. Immanuel Kant and Albert Ritcshl interpreted the Kingdom of God as an imminent individual religious experience. Johnnes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer saw the Kingdom of God as an "objective messianic kingdom" and a territory into which one enters. Others have seen it in revolutionary terms or as an ideal pattern for human society. And there have always been those sincere believers that contend that the

Kingdom is only in the future and "other worldly." The evangelical perspective is characterized by George Ladd's definition, "The kingdom of God is His Kingship, His rule, His authority." (This would also be supported by such evangelical writers as Newbigin, Howard Snyder, and Arthur Glasser.)

I would like to suggest that the Kingdom of God is the Presence of God brought about and maintained by His rule. The two essential factors in the Kingdom of God are the rule of God and the presence of God. The rule defines the inherent principles and boundaries of the Kingdom, but the Presence of the King is the ultimate expression of the living reality of the Kingdom.

III. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN HIS RULE AND PRESENCE

In the Genesis account of the relation of Adam and Eve with God there is both the immutable, mechanical, and irrevocable law and also a personal and intimate relationship. Sin came in both the violation of the law and the broken relationship with God. It resulted in the loss of the presence of God. The process of a plan of reconciliation finds its focus in the creation of a people of God. In the Exodus account there are two basic foci at Mount Sinai. The first is in the giving of the Law. The second is in building the tabernacle for the presence of the Lord in the throne room of the holy of holies. It was a nation forged by a new law. When they submitted to the law of God they found the glorious presence of the King among them (Exodus 40:30).

The changes in history of the Kingdom of Israel were wrapped up in maintaining the presence of God. Their history jerks from crisis to crisis. Even during the construction of the tabernacle the people set up an alternative throne in the golden calf. In a display of anger similar to the cleansing of the temple, God is ready to wipe the nation off the face of the earth. Alternate gods continue to be a problem in the waning Presence of the Glory of God. The throne of David undermined the throne of God to the point that the temple often fell into disrepair, false security, or hollow rituals.

To reestablish the Kingdom, the King needed to break through the darkness of the false kingdom. The advent of Jesus Christ was the presence of God in a Person: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the Son from the Father" (John 1:14). Jesus is Immanuel-God with us (Matt.

1:23). The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Christ (Eph. 5:5). The Kingdom of God is expressed in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The violent encounter in the cleansing of the temple indicates that something was terribly wrong in the understanding the Kingdom of God. The Presence of God had been obscured by an obsession with the law and God's loving presence had been carelessly discarded. Ironically, this obsession with the law violated God's rule and presence. The laws were so rearranged as to violate God's original intent. The city of Jerusalem and the temple had become places of deceit that restricted access to a Holy God. According to the Luke, after His triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple, Jesus weeps over the city (Luke 19:41). Tears and anger for the city and the temple indicate a turning point in the Kingdom of God. Ezekiel had prophesied of the day when Yahweh is no longer with his people and the city.

The New Testament still places a strong emphasis on the law and there are at least eighty references to the Ten Commandments plus drunkenness. Jesus said, " I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17). While Paul insists that one can never be saved by keeping the law, he repeatedly lists a catalogue of sins based on the Decalogue. The Kingdom values are no longer based on the external maintenance of a few negatives, but an inner power through Christ to express absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love (Robert Speer in The Principles of Jesus). One enters the Kingdom of God and lives in the Kingdom by immutable spiritual laws (i.e. Nicodemus and "you must be born again" in John 3). The growing edge and living dynamic of the Kingdom is the presence of the King who through His Holy Spirit gives His disciples the power to fulfill the law.

A helpful perspective of the relation of God's rule and presence can be illustrated by this rectangle divided by a diagonal line.

The Rule of God in the Kingdom of God
One half represents "law" and the other half "Presence." Positions C - A represent a legalistic faith where the fading presence of God is propped up with rules upon rules. There are times, when individuals and denominations (i.e. Free Methodist Church earlier in the last century) started multiplying rules and measuring spirituality by observance of the law. The other extreme would be toward position E where individuals and

churches measure spirituality by "signs and wonders" and direct mystical encounters with God. In their personal lives they become not much different than the world easily rationalizing the law into what feels good, is convenient or "functional." Some, such as Os Guiness, suggest that the evangelical church in America would be drifting in this direction.

We would like to suggest that the best dynamic would be moving somewhere towards D where there is a symbiotic relation between the "law" and the personal "presence" of Jesus Christ. The personal presence of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is the first priority and power to fulfill his rule in the Kingdom of God. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men" (Romans 14:17, 18).

Bishop Newbigin writes, "This (new) presence of the Kingdom is both an unveiling and a veiling. Jesus, in the contingency and particularity of His human being, is the presence of the Kingdom: but that very presence can be a riddle or a scandal."

IV. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS A MYSTERY

In His ministry Jesus referred to the Kingdom of God in terms of an unfolding mystery or secret. Jesus taught about the Kingdom in parables of mysteries and secrets. He transitioned his ministry with the mysterious behavior in the temple and concluded it with the cross-a mystery to the Jews and a scandal to the Gentiles.

We can suggest several reasons for this mystery. One reason is that God is awesome and so much beyond our comprehension. Second, the Kingdom is a dynamic process-gradual and mysterious in its unfolding. Thirdly, mystery puts our dependence on God and not on our own human manipulations. Fourthly, sin has so bent our understanding that in the heat of the conflict with the Kingdom of Satan the reality of things can be obscured.

In his book Models of the Kingdom, Howard Snyder suggests several paradoxical dimensions to this mystery. The Kingdom of God is both present and future; individual and social, spirit and matter; gradual and climactic and involves both divine and human action. Before we are overwhelmed by the mystery, let it be clear that there is help in this adventure of Kingdom living.

There is help in the community of believers, in the Word of God, the experience of the saints and the Holy

Spirit. Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to help the faithful reach beyond the limits of their human understanding. The Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance, teaches and intercedes on our behalf when we do not even know how to pray.

V. THE WHOLENESS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the Old Testament, the wholeness of the Kingdom of God is expressed in shalom or peace. Shalom is a rich word signifying far more than the absence of war. It has more positive implications suggesting wholeness and harmony with God, man and creation. In Jesus Christ comes the peace of God reconciling all things and bringing harmony and unity in the Kingdom.

In cleansing the temple Jesus brought wholeness in various dimensions where the Jews were restricting God's rule. Jesus was restoring justice by driving out thieving moneychangers. Jesus was healing the blind and the lame at the occasion of the cleansing (Matt. 21:14). By driving out the moneychangers from the court of the Gentiles, He was giving access to the presence of God to all the peoples of the world. The repeated tragedy of the Kingdom of Israel was in restricting, localizing and fixating the Kingdom of God.

Wholeness in the Kingdom of God demands two inseparable dimensions-the cultural mandate and the redemptive mandate. The cultural mandate refers to the responsibility kingdom citizens have toward all of creation and to the welfare of their neighbors (Gen. 1:26; Matt. 22:37-39). There must be a creative and responsible use of our environment and an unrelenting pressure for justice and peace for all men. The introduction of Jesus' ministry was not just a call to repentance (Mark 1:15) but also a cry for justice, freedom and healing (Luke 4:18-19). The cultural mandate is never an option, and it is essential to the working out of the redemptive mandate. We will expand on this later.

In his book, Church Growth and the Whole Gospel, Peter Wagner suggests the following paradigm for God's mission in the world. God's mission to the world can be represented by a rectangle divided in half by a diagonal line.

A Paradigm for Conceptions of God's Mission in the World
One half represents the evangelistic mandate and one half

represents the cultural mandate. Position A would deny the evangelistic mandate and limit God's mission to social and environmental restoration. Position B would suggest that the church has responsibility in both areas, but the cultural mandate holds priority. This would represent the activities of more liberal denominations. Position C holds that the evangelistic and cultural mandates are of equal value. Realistically this equality is hard to maintain. Many evangelicals, including the Free Methodist Church would hold to a position close to D, that both the cultural and evangelistic mandate are essential, but priority should be given to evangelism. Position E would deny that the mission of the church has anything to do with the cultural mandate. Fundamentalists and Dr. Donald McGavran would lean toward E.

A helpful statement on a wholistic perspective comes from J. Waskom Pickett's monumental contribution to missions in Christian Mass Movements in India. He writes, "The effort should be to minister both to spiritual and physical needs from the beginning. Neither aim should be undertaken as preliminary to the other . . . But just as clearly there should be no question about the primacy of the spiritual aim. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,' says Jesus, 'and all of these things shall be added to you'"(p. 355).

"The mission of the Free Methodist Church is to make known to all people everywhere God's call to wholeness through forgiveness and holiness in Jesus Christ, and to invite into membership and to equip for ministry all who respond in faith." This "call to wholeness" finds it roots in the very origins of the Free Methodist Church. In the early decades of the church, the Book of Discipline stated, "All their churches are required to be as free as the grace they preach. They believe that their mission is twofold-to maintain the Bible standard of Christianity and to preach the Gospel to the poor." In its earliest days the church spoke and acted against slavery, the oppression of the farmers by monopolies, and provided free places of worship for the poor.

Such an all-inclusive and holistic view of the Kingdom of God and the mission of the church makes some followers of Christ uneasy. It is most convenient to have a neatly packaged Kingdom that can be outlined or measured by "prosperity," numbers, hierarchy, dispensations, or "signs and wonders." While all of these

may have a place in the ebb-and-flow of Kingdom understanding, with inordinate attention they become instruments of human manipulation. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done," we are praying for a Kingdom in all its fullness, reflecting the Glory of God. It is a multidimensional, mysterious Kingdom radiating the sacrificial love of a holy God. The cutting edge is reconciliation by faith in Christ that impacts all things. There is a line of truth emanating from the Gospel that demands integrity, honesty, purity, unity and justice with all peoples and all things (Gal. 2:14).

VI. THE PURPOSE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WORSHIP

We need to remind ourselves again that the essence of the Kingdom of God is His presence. The Westminster Catechism states it well: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him for ever." The Kingdom rotates around worship, or declaring the worthiness of the King. The events of the Abrahamic covenant and the formation of the people of Israel were marked by the presence of God. Sinai was most of all about creating a people of God who could worship Him before moving out to fulfill any other task. Through Deuteronomy and Leviticus, systems of worship were created along with a tribe of worship leaders. Half of the book of Exodus has to do with preparing a place of worship which, when it is completed, assures the Presence. The ups and downs of the kingdom of David center on worthy and unworthy worship in the temple. By cleansing the temple and renting the veil Jesus declared the temple unworthy. Worship is no longer limited to this place or that place, but is found in the hearts of believers who acknowledge Him as Lord and worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The call of God in Christ Jesus is, first of all, to reflect the holiness of God in the way we live. It is to "walk the way Jesus walked" in the fruits of the Spirit. We cannot display the likeness of Christ unless we are in Him and empowered by His Holy Spirit. It is easy to substitute gifts of the Spirit such as speaking in tongues, healing, strategic planning, administrative skills, and evangelistic skills for integrity, purity, honesty and love. Once we have met God and have a heart after Him we can be worthy to follow His commands in extending His rule and presence.

VII. THE PURPOSE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITNESS

We now change our focus to the cutting edge of the Kingdom of God - evangelism. I am indebted to Everett Cattell and his book Christian Mission: A Matter of Life for a helpful Biblical interpretation of evangelism. "Evangelism is witness for Christ directed towards all men, and seeking to claim for Him every department of life both personal and public. This witness is given by proclamation, fellowship and service." (from the International Council at Willingen, Germany, 1952).

Witness for Christ is expressed in three ways: proclamation, fellowship and service.   Proclamation (kerygma) is at the heart of Christian witness. Kerygma is both the message and the act of proclaiming the message. This message consists of three parts:

1. The discovery of unfulfilled hopes.
2. The story and interpretation of Jesus Christ.
3. The call to repentance.

Witness usually begins from a point of need. When we serve in Christ's name, we proclaim the love of Jesus Christ, incarnationally opening the unbeliever's hearts to the unfulfilled hopes in their lives.   Jesus had so much to do and say about servanthood. "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 1:45). Service (diakonia) rooted in the cross of Jesus Christ breaks open (or cultivates) the hard hearts of men in preparation for the proclamation of the Gospel.

Jesus is always the center of the kerygma which includes the stories of his birth, teachings, healings, death and resurrection. The focal point is on the cross that uniquely draws rebellious sinners to conviction and calls them to repentance. So many "plans of salvation" slide lightly over the issue of repentance. Conversion includes not only a prayer of faith but also a willful turning away from individual sins and a life of sin. The conversion (metanoia) that takes place is a work (or gift) of grace by the Holy Spirit.

At conversion, one becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of God and enters the fellowship of believers. The New Testament refers to this fellowship as koinonia - the loving relationship of the community of believers who worship and serve the King. Koinonia itself, not the structure of the church, becomes a witness. The loving ties that lead to mutual acceptance, mutual edification and unity becomes a magnet to nonbelievers who have been alienated from God and troubled in their hearts.

VIII. THE KINGDOM OF GOD MANDATE- THE GREAT COMMISSION

While our Lord limited His earthly witness to a few hundred square miles, His redemptive intent was global (John 3:16). Once the hope of salvation was made real by Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples were given the mandate-"Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

This global mission of the Kingdom of God was not unique to Jesus. He was the fulfillment of a plan that was part of the covenant with Abraham that "all the nations of the world would be blessed through him" (Genesis 18:18). What was implicit in the Old Testament became explicit with Jesus Christ. The Great Commission was the marching order given to the disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension into heaven.

The success of the church throughout history has been in direct proportion to its obedience to the mission statement of the Kingdom. Extending the rule of the King to bring all things under his control has to do with following these Great Commission instructions. The Jewish people had failed to understand this priority of purpose and had turned the Court of the Gentiles in the temple from a place of worship into a marketplace. Peoples traveled from all over the world to worship the true God, and instead were distracted by the hubbub of bargaining and the deceit of corrupt moneychangers. Jesus was angry because of the disobedience of the Jews. They refused to bless the nations with the presence of the King.

We will divide the Great Commission statement into four basic components:
 1) the Authority, 2) the Commissioned, 3) the Task, and 4) the Goal.

IX. MISSEO DEO - THE KINGDOM OF GOD AUTHORITY

The mission of the church is by the authority of God. It is an absolute authority that gives all-sufficient power and purpose to fulfill a humanly impossible task. The Great

THE AUTHORITY

THE COMMISSIONED   THE TASK: MAKE DISCIPLES   THE GOAL

Commission comes from the Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The prevailing power and purpose is kept in place through prayer (Col. 4:2).

While the Trinity is fully involved in this task, it is Jesus Christ who made it all possible through His death and resurrection. It is by faith in Jesus Christ that persons enter the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is the Helper. "The chief actor in the historic mission of the Christian church is the Holy Spirit. He is the director of the whole enterprise. The mission consists of the things He is doing in the world. In a special way it consists of the light that He is focusing upon the Jesus Christ." (John Taylor in The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission).

Is it any wonder that the first major event after the ascension of Jesus Christ took place at the temple, among peoples of all nations, while the message of Christ crucified and risen was preached, and culminated with the filling of the Holy Spirit? At Pentecost, peoples from the nations entered the Kingdom of God, the church was born and scattered. This was the final cleansing of the temple and set into motion global cleansing.

The danger in mission is substituting this ultimate, final and absolute Authority with institutions of mission and obscuring the dynamics of the Holy Spirit with human efforts. "We bring something cancerous into the body of Christ when we let anything about the church usurp the place of its divine head" (Cattell, p. 8).

The Free Methodist World Mission in North America represents nearly 125 years of evangelistic efforts in Asia. God has blessed its many sacrificial endeavors even as geographical, cultural and linguistic distances have often necessitated heavy institutional machinery. In the new era of Asian missions, it is in the best interest of the Free Methodist Church in Asia for North America to take the posture of a servant-partner, listening to, learning from, and adapting to Asian leadership, helping Asians reach Asians for Christ.

The exclusive claims of the authority of Jesus Christ may seem quite judgmental as we engage peoples of other faiths. All the major religions of the world were founded in Asia, including Christianity. They all have rich heritages that are intimately intertwined with ancient cultures and civilizations. Christianity lost many of its Asian characteristics as it moved west so that as it returned to its home it was often insensitive to the cultural environment that gave it birth. As a result, many became embarrassed by the exclusive claims of the authority of Jesus Christ. Mahatma Gandhi contended "all religions were equally true and equally false and that, therefore, everyone should stay in the one into which he was born" (Cattell, p. 13).

William Temple wrote: "The essential element in any religion is its claim to be true, whether partially and relatively, or completely and absolutely . . . The essential element in any religion is the character of God. And it is

here that religions deeply differ from one another" (Cattell, p. 13). Inherent to recent trends of globalization is tolerance and pluralism. If Christianity does not learn to adjust to these realities is it counterproductive to peace and good will among all men?

While Christianity has a lot to gain by returning to its Asian roots, it is a violation of its very nature to say that salvation can come from anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the affirmation of all that is good in all cultures and the judge of all that is evil. By the power of the Holy Spirit, not human prejudices, Jesus Christ brings all cultures into wholeness.

X. THE CHURCH AS THE MISSIONARY PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The church is the Kingdom of God community nurturing the household of believers to worship and witness. The church must never be mistaken as equal to the Kingdom of God, but it is the focus of the Kingdom of God. It is only by the church that the Kingdom breaks into new territory. It is the King who builds the Kingdom but the church is His means. There is no way the heathen will believe unless they hear the kerygma and hearing can happen only when a preacher is sent (Romans 10). The church as the body of Christ is the instrument of sending in obedience to the Great Commission. "As my Father has sent me I am sending you" (John 21:22).

In order to send, the church must create structures. These institutions are never ideal and some structures are more appropriate than others. We can divide the structures of the church into two types. The fundamental institution fulfills the nurturing and worshipping functions. This might be referred to as the ecclesiastical or congregational structure. The Kingdom expansion responsibility results in mission structures. These are task-oriented and geared to gathering peoples into new or existing Kingdom of God communities.

The early church had this structure in the synagogue-type of worshipping congregations and the Pauline-type of missionary bands over which the local congregations had little immediate control (Acts 13:1-4). The church has become ineffective in expansion when it has abandoned mission structures as the Protestants did during their first 200 years. The church has been very effective in growth as during the Great Century (19th) when it adopted mission structures and grew from 23% to 34% of the world population. Today Christianity is the most world encompassing of all the world religions. Christians are found in all the nations and almost all the 60,000 people groups.

During the 19th century the Free Methodist Church began its mission and in 1882 the General Missionary Board was created and immediately sent missionaries to Asia, Latin America and Africa. One of the shortcomings of modern missions has been teaching and preaching missions at "home" but not on the "field". What is especially welcome now is the birth of new mission structures in regions around the world. In 1994, the Asia Pacific Free Methodist Missions Association was organized to coordinate and encourage mission structures in all the countries where we have Asian ministries. After one hundred years (1982) the Free Methodist membership on the "field" was double that of the membership at "home". Fifteen years later (1999), the "field" is five times as large as the "home". As every "field" becomes a "home" for sending, the Kingdom effort multiplies exponentially.

We must remind ourselves that the Great Commission is best fulfilled through the Church. God has raised parachurch organizations for many purposes, even evangelism. But institutionalization can quickly disconnect parachurch organizations from accountability to the worshipping and nurturing body. "Connectedness" is the strength of the Free Methodist Church around the world. As comfortable as it may be, it is unwise for any mission organization to build an autonomous and self-perpetuating mission environment.

Our strength in Asian missions will come as we partner together using the various gifts God has given us by his Spirit. The Apostle Paul's mission team became more intercultural, multi-gifted and interactive with the church as it developed through a succession of missionary journeys.

XI. THE MISSIONARY TASK OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD-MAKE DISCIPLES

The primary purpose of the church is worship. The primary task is to make disciples. Worship and making disciples are mutually interdependent for a healthy church and a growing Kingdom. "Making disciples" is divided into two dimensions-"baptism" (conversion) and "teaching obedience" (nurture) to Jesus Christ. Baptism marks the entry of a believer into the Kingdom of God and into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ in the

church. We have already discussed evangelism.

But the larger responsibility of discipleship is often neglected and that is teaching obedience and bringing the "born again" into maturity. The issue of discipleship is not how much we teach about Jesus, but transferring obedience into the lifestyle of the believer. Obedience to the King in all things is what ultimately defines the Kingdom of God. Our God reigns. The King can rule only as the citizens submit. Teaching obedience is not an easy task with the rebellious nature inherent in mankind. Jesus came to establish His Kingdom but His time on earth was centered on twelve troublesome disciples who had a hard time learning obedience. At the cross, they followed from a distance and at the resurrection they hid in fear.

Fear is a reality because the Kingdom of God is in mortal conflict with the kingdoms of this world. Satan will throw all his resources, powers and agents at destroying the Kingdom of God. He particularly attacks the points of expansion of the Kingdom of God. The weakness of Western discipling efforts has often been restricting its methods to philosophical, theological or technological teaching while neglecting to confront spiritual powers in spiritual warfare.

We are prone to not count the cost of discipleship and to forget that obedience is strengthened in tribulation. Luke summarizes Paul's effective discipling methods in Acts. Paul returned to visit the new converts in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch encouraging the believers in the faith by saying "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14: 22)

With the coming of the Holy Spirit the disciples became bold in their witness and empowered to obey and love Jesus Christ in all things. The Free Methodist Book of Discipline states: "God the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier. Coming into the life at conversion, He fills with His presence when the Christian's consecration is complete, cleansing the heart and empowering for witness and service. He sheds God's love throughout the heart and life of the Christian" (p. 307).

XII. THE KINGDOM GOAL IS ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

Just as the Jewish people repeatedly violated their calling to be a blessing to all the nations, the church has repeatedly restricted its mission to certain kinds of people. The greatest challenge to the early church was breaking the barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles. Two chapters in the book of Acts (chapters10 and 11) deal with the racial problem of the Roman centurion, Cornelius, receiving the Gospel through the Jewish apostle, Peter. Even after visions from heaven and the wonderful conversion of this extended Roman family, Peter had to go to Jerusalem to defend his actions before the Jewish church leaders (Acts 15). The biggest crisis of the infant church, one that even threatened its existence, was about the "other" nations coming into the Kingdom community. It ultimately took the council at Jerusalem to resolve the issue.

While the multi-gifted cultures of the world are a wonderful part of God's creation, racial prejudice has been the distortion and curse of Satan. Racial prejudice manifests itself in attitudes of superiority, economic and social oppression, extreme nationalism and ethnic cleansing. The church and mission of the church have often become victims of racial prejudice and have perpetuated the tendencies of cultural and racial arrogance. It is only by a deep work of the Holy Spirit that prejudice can be realigned to Kingdom values with love and respect for all peoples.

"We affirm the intrinsic value and inherent dignity of every human being regardless of gender, ethnicity, or disability. We confess our sinful human tendency toward prejudice and turn from it. We call on people everywhere to respect the worth of all persons and to actively seek justice for all" (1999 Book of Discipline of the free Methodist Church, p. 45).

We necessarily look at the world through the windows of our own culture. So it is difficult to witness with discernment and build the church in another culture without transferring our own cultural baggage and undermining the host culture. Our goal is to present the Gospel. People believe in Jesus Christ and are converted. These new citizens of the Kingdom are formed into fellowships (koinonia). It is then the responsibility of the church in the new culture to study their own rituals and customs in the light of the Word of God. Through the Word of God, prayer, and the help of the Holy Spirit, the church then brings about godly reformation in the life and practices of the people of that culture. At times the church will affirm cultural practices and at other times it will confront cultural evils, but all the time it will affirm the God-given uniqueness of the people of that culture.

The Acts 1:8 version of the Great Commission expands the "all peoples" target of the Good News. What began with Pentecost in Jerusalem goes to Judea and Samaria and to all the corners of the earth. Instead of all peoples coming to Jerusalem to a restricted- access court of the temple to worship God, the Gospel is to be taken to all peoples.

Modern missions began (1792) when William Carey reacted to the restricted- access mentality of the Protestants in his generation who contended they had no responsibility to take the Gospel to the heathen. His landmark study of the Great Commission - An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen - launched the Great Century of Christian expansion.

The first era of modern mission was largely to peoples of the coastal regions of the continents of Asia and Africa. James Hudson Taylor sparked the second era of modern missions (1835) by moving inland to the heart of these continents. It was during this second era that the Free Methodists began their missionary endeavors (1881). Consequently, most of our first work was based in Central India, Central China and Central Africa.

The third era began (1935) with Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran focusing not so much on bridging geographical distance as on bridging cultural barriers. Concentrating on unreached peoples has become the strategy of missions. Strategically, Free Methodist missions have only become peripherally involved in people group strategies. Goals have often been set in geopolitical terms rather than in terms of people groups.

The most promising development in this era has been the phenomenal growth of indigenous missions so that there are now more missionaries being sent from regions outside the West than from the West. Organizations like the Asia Pacific Free Methodist Missions Association have put a multilateral dimension into missions that impacts new areas with the Gospel more effectively and more appropriately.

The genius of the Great Commission is that by the power of the Holy Spirit the church becomes self-perpetuating in the spontaneous multiplication of churches within and from and to all peoples. There is no restriction on who reaches out or who is reached because once a people is reached with the Gospel, they are obligated to reach out to "the whole world." The vitality of missions comes not as a result of its institutions, strategies, or finances, but out of prayerful and sacrificial obedience to the Great Commission.

XIII. THE MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD-THE URBAN CENTERS

The mission of the Kingdom of God can be understood from the perspective of the city. The City of God is the Kingdom of God. Jesus entered the city of the kings as a King and in the midst of the traffic and trade of the city He confronted the obstacles of mission. The Holy City had been invaded by the evils of the city of this world and the shalom and mission of the city of God had been destroyed.

The cities with all their concentrated complexities and powers of evil can distract the church from mission. By becoming subject to the media, technology, and institutions of modernity, the church is in danger of violating its purpose by becoming obsessed with the means and not the mission. As much as we value these extensions of the mind they must be held in subjection. If technology and institutions of mission become the guiding force, they are a curse. They can trap the church into becoming self-sanitized fortresses rather than suffering servants seeking the peace of the city in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Some missiologists contend that we are now entering the fourth era of modern missions-the era of the massive urban centers. While "people groups" remain an important strategic concept, the evangelistic task has been complicated by the impact of modernity and globalization. The Taiwan church, for example, is faced with the decline of the Rukai and Paiwan tribal district membership as their young people move in mass to the urban centers. This phenomenon is repeated in India, the Philippines, and throughout Asia. In the city the "people groups" are broken down and cannot be dealt with as simple homogeneous units.

By the year 2015, 27 of the 33 mega-cities in the world will be in Asia. It is imperative that we be on the cutting edge of urban evangelistic strategy in this new millennium. We need a larger plan that mobilizes spiritual and material resources to confront the complex evils of the city. We must not retreat into the hinterlands of our evangelical comfort zones but boldly risk using new strategies appropriate to the cities.

As we enter new fields, we should quickly focus on the urban centers. The multiplication of cell churches around a Free Methodist ministry/worship center seems to be our general urban strategy. A multicultural team of Free Methodists gifted in urban survival and evangelism skills is needed to lead the way. Considering the realities of a global culture, our strategy must be global with global resourcing.

XIV. THE MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD-PRESENT AND FUTURE

Christianity, more than all other world religions, is rooted in history. The history of salvation travels the same road as the rajas of India, the emperors of China and the pharaohs of Egypt. The essence of Christianity is not myths and legends but events. In the Kingdom of God, history becomes the arena for God's presence. Salvation history works through real relationships in acts of deliverance and provision. These events become milestones for understanding the nature of God and His Kingdom. The kerygma is the proclamation of the essential events: God became flesh, ministered, suffered, and was crucified, was buried, rose again and ascended (I Cor. 15:3,4).

The primary historical principle for writing the story of the church is the story of its expansion, not the story of its ecclesiastical intrigues. The story of the church is immediately dependent on the story of its obedience to the Great Commission in extending the presence of the King by forcefully taking new territory. The Kingdom of God is built on the salvation events of the past, the mission work of the present, and it marches into completion in the future. Jesus pointed out that the Kingdom is both present and future. At some point in the future, the Kingdom will be fulfilled and the glorious presence of the King will become the overwhelming fact. The King's rule will be established in complete victory over any contending rule. The Kingdom of God will be the glorious presence of Jesus Christ. The new Jerusalem will be so cleansed that there will be no conflict, death, disease, sorrow or tears. There will be true shalom.

XV. THE URGENCY OF THE MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom of God may be likened to a road under construction. There is the ribbon of concrete behind us hardened by the events of history. There are the stakes and flags in front marking the course and destination. But we are with the concrete-spreader in the present task.

The time for the church to be active in the mission of the Kingdom of God is now while the harvest is ripe, the days are short and times are evil. If we do not move now we succumb to the "spirit of the age" and to creeping bureaucratic lethargy.

At a time when the zeal and growth of the young Free Methodist church was waning, a man named Vivian Dake began to organize the Pentecost bands for the work of aggressive evangelism. "See the tide of the popularity coming in on us," he wrote. "Rich Free Methodists are holding on to their thousands and the work of God is suffering. Judgment thunders will soon arouse us from our stupor . . . We need to advance along the line . . . At what infantile pace we are creeping along . . . Years are rolling by like a forest before a cyclone. Men are going to eternity. The judgment is at hand. Oh shall we not sing from the gulf to the lakes, from ocean to ocean,
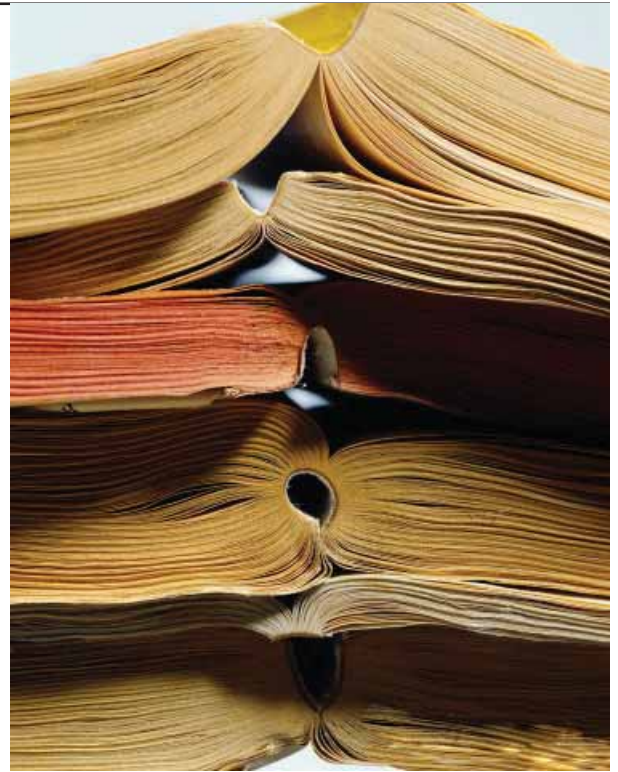
> Only for souls, while the tear drops start;
> Only for souls, though with aching heart.
> Go friendships and pleasures; your death-knell tolls.
> Only for souls, only for souls."

(Parsons, Life of Vivian Dake, p. 43)

"AND LO I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS,
TO THE END OF THE AGE."

(Matthew 28:20)

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