

**Cultural Sensitivity in Christian Mission to Resistant People, an Historical Perspective**

*The link between mission praxis and theological presupposition*

Marc Coleman

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Study Leader: Professor P Verster

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To Cathy



"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), is Christ's command to His followers. Not that all are called to be ministers or missionaries in the ordinary sense of the term; but all may be workers with Him in giving the "glad tidings" to their fellow men. To all, great or small, learned or ignorant, old or young, the command is given.

Ellen White, *Education*



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## **Section I**



*Chapter 1*

*Introduction*



## **A The main focus**

This historical investigation focuses on the perplexing challenge that has confronted Christian missionaries since the beginning of cross-cultural mission endeavor. In Christian mission how important of a role should be assigned to the culture of the evangelized?<sup>1</sup> The subtitle of a very insightful book intended for Christian missionaries, *Introduction to Biblical Christianity from an African Perspective*, in a very succinct question sums up this dilemma. *What place for the culture* (O'Donovan 1992: 1)? In cross-cultural mission, this question takes on enormous meaning. Simple, direct, and unencumbered with needless verbiage this query has been at the foundation of theological debate, catechistic controversy, and denominational schism throughout the long and complex history of the mission of the Christian church. At the heart of the debate two issues have existed: the specific role (if any) that culture should play and how the church should accommodate the various religious and cultural beliefs and practices of converted peoples from different backgrounds and cultural heritages while still maintaining biblical fidelity. The main thesis of this research is that in the history of Christian mission to resistant peoples the theology of the missionary predisposes to a particular set of mission principles. Stated otherwise there is a link between what one believes about the Bible and other Christian doctrines and how one goes about the task of doing mission. I argue that history bears out this assertion. The link is more than a casual one.

## **B A narrow definition of culture**

Xianqun Xu in discussing the indigenization of the Chinese church identifies two major areas of culture that Christian missionaries had to confront. These were the *philosophical ideologies* of the Chinese and the *non Christian (unbiblical) ceremonies* inherent in Chinese culture. An example of the latter would be Chinese ancestor veneration (Xu, 1997). Another author, Andrew Eungi Kim (2000), sees the indigenization of Christianity in Korea as revolving around the same two elements; the ideologies of the non Christian world and/or its rites and ceremonies. In this study, when referring to culture, the context is cross-cultural mission and the specific inclusion of culture in mission refers to the two areas mentioned here: pagan or unbiblical philosophies or ideologies and pagan or non Christian rites and ceremonies. Thus in this research instances or

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<sup>1</sup> The specific context in this research for the term evangelism and any related terms is that of Christian mission endeavor to win proselytes or converts.

eras in the history of Christian mission have been chosen where purposeful attempts by missionaries have been made to either include non Christian philosophies or ceremonies or where such have been made conspicuous by their absence.

### **C Defining mission**

Christian mission has been defined as purposeful endeavors of good works with the goal of helping those without Christ to know and accept Him as savior. This may include help ministries, medical work, or educational endeavors – all with the goal of sharing the gospel. It is this definition or some close variant of it that has driven much of Christian mission throughout history. This was the philosophy of William Booth for instance, the founder of the Salvation Army, a missionary denomination (CRB 1936: 1562-1563). Mission has been seen as the work of monks and priests or other professional clergy by some (Durant 1950: 58) while others have seen it as the work of the whole church – including laymen. Paul, Barnabus, and other apostles are presented as doing mission work. They were sent to share (preach) the gospel with those who had not heard of Christ (Nichol 1978). In the case of William Booth, voluntarism played an important role.

Whether voluntary or part of a profession, mission in the context of this research is simply what Christians do to share their faith and win converts. Another term that is often interchangeable with mission is evangelization, to seek to win converts to the cause of Christ (Ockenga 1960: 11). The mission of the church is therefore evangelical in nature, seeking the conversion of sinners, through preaching or other means. The different subjects of study in this research reveal that opinions on exactly who Christians have considered the un-evangelized to be and just how to reach them have varied greatly throughout the centuries.

Mission then is what the church does to win converts cross-culturally or within the culture. For as Bosch postulates (1991: 7) there is no difference theologically between foreign and home missions. The one caveat that mission in the context of this study addresses is that of mission to resistant peoples, whether they are Christians of another persuasion or pagans in a foreign land.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Resistant is here distinguished from unreached or unevangelized and simply means that the people group in question is resistant (at least initially) to the message of the missionaries. See Vincent Samuel (Samuel, 2003, 3-4)

## D The goals of this research

While some cross-cultural mission endeavors throughout history have used the culture as a window into the worldview of the people, others have seen it as a tool to be used actively in shaping the gospel message and beliefs.<sup>3</sup> This research seeks to document how this has been done in particular mission movements throughout Christian history. The detailing of these major movements is not intended to be exhaustive of all Christian history but rather indicative of the major trends throughout the course of the church's history of cross-cultural mission.

The first matter in this research is to establish the mission theology of the missionaries to the unreached or at least to become familiar with aspects of theology that molded the mission activities of the missionaries studied. While the term *mission theology* is relatively new in the landscape of Christian history, the link between theology and praxis is not. Belief has always preceded praxis and has been a determining factor in mission approach. The second issue of how one (the missionary) may accommodate the cultural beliefs of the evangelized is demonstrated to be contingent on the first. At its core then this research, in its development necessarily delineates (seeks to discover) how the second issue, accommodation of local cultural beliefs and ceremonies in Christian mission, has historically been a function of the first. Our main goal then is to seek to identify patterns or trends in belief that engender particular cultural accommodation types in mission approach.

Linked to these two fundamental issues has been the problem of syncretism in mission. The matter of syncretism breaks down into a variety of questions. If syncretism is a product of some mission approaches, is it to be avoided? How can people from diverse cultures retain parts of their traditional belief structure in their acceptance of the gospel without affecting the doctrinal purity of the church and its truly biblical frame of reference as pointed out by Hesselgrave (1995: 115)? How can the lost be reached unless we present the gospel in terms that they understand? How far should the church go in accommodating pagan beliefs? Should the church seek to accommodate cultural beliefs at all? These are the questions that provide impetus to this research.

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for his delineation use of the terms unreached and resistant as an example of the use of these terms and the subtle differences implied.

<sup>3</sup> I here refer the reader back to the very narrow definition of culture in cross-cultural mission established just above this reference. One can substitute culture with the words *ideologies* and *ceremonies*.

## **E The preliminary findings of this research**

This study demonstrates that the responses to these questions have manifested themselves in three broad-based approaches which I call mission praxis paradigms (MPPs).<sup>4</sup> These MPPs are practical approaches to cross-cultural mission that encompass almost all mission endeavors (with a few exceptions) since the beginning of the Christian Church. These three approaches; the *Authoritative MPP*, the *Inclusivist MPP*, and the *neo-Inclusivist MPP* hold many ideologies in common while concurrently holding many conflicting theological positions. This study demonstrates that mission approach or methodology in its broadest sense has throughout history been a function of theological orientation. It is not a critique of any one approach but rather demonstrative of the tendencies to approach or particular theological leanings.

## **F A word about the approach to time periods in this historical research**

J.N. Kritzinger articulates that in an historic overview article (research paper in this case) one can employ one of two approaches to time: a diachronic or a synchronic approach (Kritzinger 2003: 542-567). The diachronic according to Kritzinger is an approach that requires a “careful periodisation”. Periodisation refers to the establishment of definable (named) eras in an historical study characterized by unifying attributes. In the context of this research periodisation permits the researcher to develop the significance of cross-cultural mission efforts in their historical setting and context. Bosch’s *Transforming Mission*, remains the classic model of such an approach. This is also the chosen method of Kritzinger. The synchronic approach on the other hand requires a set of models, a typology, that serves to unify the disparate aspects and varying approaches to mission. Since this thesis is an overview covering the span of time from the age of the apostles to the present, the synchronic is most often the ascendant method employed while in a few instances the diachronic is necessarily ascendant. The major advantage of the synchronic perspective is that it is not wed to epochs and dates as closely as the diachronic. This permits an emphasis on trends across the sweep of time. Using the synchronic approach, I am able to concentrate on the development of the three historical mission praxis paradigms contrasting their differences and progress with some freedom throughout history with a general adherence to sequence

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<sup>4</sup> Bosch uses the term *paradigm* as do others such as Küng to represent the trends in mission approaches in given historical settings or eras. In this research paper the term approach, paradigm, cross-cultural praxis paradigm, methodology and other related words are used interchangeably to refer to the broad-based missionary approaches (MPP) herein described. The three broad approaches necessarily include aspects of the era based paradigm model of Bosch and Küng but are generally broader in scope and time covered than the Bosch model.

highlighting the similarities and differences and still be true to the outline of this research. The few diachronic aspects of this research allow a more thorough investigation into the background development of the three historical mission praxis paradigms in and of themselves.

It is to be noted that although this research does follow a generally progressive march through Christian mission history, it is important to have the freedom to move backward in time to highlight specific trends. For that reason a *strict obedience* to chronological history is not striven for in this research. Ultimately, time and time periods are not the most vital issue in this study; rather it is the common threads of historical, mission theology and methodology that are of key importance.

The language employed is purposefully simple and the conclusions straightforward. Any brief perusal of Christian mission history makes very apparent the fact that the dynamic, simultaneous, and pervasive expansion, missionary activity, and mission theology of the church have been so varied that one could easily spend all of his time noting the multitudinous differences in Christian mission throughout history. *This is not the goal or thrust of this research.* This job would be endless. However, my purpose is to find the broad-based similarities in praxis and approach throughout history. Furthermore, this research delineates not only the similarities in praxis but the underlying theological trends and assumptions that naturally unite disparate missionary endeavor into generally identifiable groupings or approaches, (MPP) if such exist. These broad groupings are the subject of this study. While oversimplification is always a tendency in such research, I believe that this has been avoided through a thorough historical investigation of the topics covered. This thorough development and delineation of development of the three mission approaches allows for synthesis and consolidation of ideas where appropriate but not oversimplification.

## **G Mission paradigms, missionary approaches and mission theology**

While I deviate extensively at times from the diachronic approach of David Bosch, his landmark work *Transforming Mission* still serves to provide a general, historical framework for this study.<sup>5</sup> Bosch, in concurrence with the earlier work of Hans Küng, divided Christian history into six

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<sup>5</sup> *Transforming Mission* was not novel in the periodisation of mission. However Bosch's work was so extensive and descriptive that it spurred several texts that complement or explain his own.

periods (Bosch).<sup>6</sup> These eras of Christian history were the stage upon which the complicated and detailed businesses of paradigm shifts in the mission theology of the Christian church were played out. Others have further divided particular eras into a number of paradigms that are both informative and guiding to this research. An excellent example of this is the work of Kondotra George in which he shows that the early church employed several paradigms of mission that operated concurrently (George 1996: 216-226). However, George's application of the term paradigm is much narrower than that which I have adopted for this research. For the purposes of this research the term paradigm (or Mission Praxis Paradigm) represents a broad approach to cross-cultural evangelism (mission) that is anchored in theological presuppositions. In this research the terms methodology, paradigm, approach, praxis and missions model are all used interchangeably with the term MPP.

Of special interest to this research is the extensive section 2 of Bosch's book entitled *Historical Paradigms of Mission*. This section lists the six paradigms of missions throughout church history as the following: the apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity, the Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period, the medieval Roman Catholic paradigm, the Protestant Reformation paradigm, the modern Enlightenment paradigm, and the emerging ecumenical paradigm. These divisions are in fact a restatement of the six periods that Hans Küng has outlined in his work *Paradigmenwechsel*.<sup>7</sup> Each of these divisions according to Küng reveals a peculiar understanding of the Christian faith. Bosch's contribution to what Küng had already done was to suggest that "... each [period] also offers a distinctive understanding of Christian mission."

## **H Mission paradigms and mission theology**

Bosch (1991: 181-189) goes on to point out that in each of the epochs within their own contexts, Christians wrestled with defining what the mission of the church was for them. Each of these varying paradigms had their share of proponents all arguing that the paradigm they espoused was true to the Bible. Bosch's study is a masterful exposition and outline of what mission meant to

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<sup>6</sup> Although Bosch is not the first to use the method of breaking Christian missions history into time periods, his is the most complete and relevant for the purposes of this research. Bosch's unique contribution of suggesting that these subdivisions represent actual missions paradigms provides salient material for the heart of this study into the historical applications of mission theology.

<sup>7</sup> See Bosch page 183 for his own description of Küng's theories and his own unique contribution in building paradigm theory on top of them.

the majority of Christians in each of these periods. Necessarily, his work delves into the theology of mission. Interestingly, Bosch makes the observation that because the church in each of its varied contexts throughout history essentially re-interprets the Bible's message, it is more appropriate to speak of theologies of mission rather than a general theology of mission. Bosch's emphasis is on the plurality of theologies as opposed to one.

He makes the salient point that Küng's division of the history of Christian history into six time periods is not something that is new (ibid.). What was novel about Küng's approach was the fact that for the first time these thought periods were seen in the light of Thomas Kuhn's theory of "paradigm shifts".

Bosch built upon this work identifying the general trends in belief, polity, liturgy, and missionary method in each of these subdivisions. His emphasis was results oriented. He sought to show how the societal, theological, and political considerations acted upon the church and helped create the missionary paradigm for the church in its respective contexts. Norman Thomas, in his work *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity*, adds greater clarity to Bosch's work by giving dates and time markers a more prominent place and thus more easily delineating the overlapping but linear nature of the six subdivisions of Christian history (Thomas: 1995).

## **I The unique contribution of this research**

This research differs from that of Bosch in that it seeks links or trends in theology that would suggest specific approaches to the missionary task. While his work is generally descriptive this study contains both descriptive and interpretive elements. This research deals extensively with the theological presuppositions that served as a precursor to mission methodology and how these manifested themselves in methodology. The emphasis is not just on the "how" of doing missions but on the "why" behind the "how" where it is possible to ascertain. Employing at times the synchronic perspective to this research I concentrate on theological trends and cause and effect relationships between theology and praxis that span eras and epochs. This research narrows the perspective from the global factors that produced the missionary paradigms to that of the theological presuppositions (as far as such are attainable) behind them. This research concerns itself with the theological reasons why missionaries throughout history have adopted the methods

that they did. What were the theological assumptions that led to the church's reaction to the global catalysts that helped produce a paradigm shift in missions?

### **J Differences of delineation**

Necessarily, this study deviates some from the strict lineal demarcation of Christian missions eras to that of a more general historical outline that allows one to view Christian missions thought from a point of view that gives heavier weight to the theological element. Figure 1 (*Adapted from, A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission*) outlines the general flow of Bosch's book and represents in a graphic way the mission paradigms of Bosch and Küng.

Biblical Paradigms			Historical Paradigms	Modern Paradigms
The Biblical Paradigm			Eastern Orthodox Paradigm	Enlightenment paradigm
			Roman Catholic Paradigm	
Matt.	Luke	Paul	Protestant Paradigm pt I.	The new/emerging paradigm
			Protestant Paradigm pt. II	

**Figure 1, Bosch’s view of mission paradigms.**

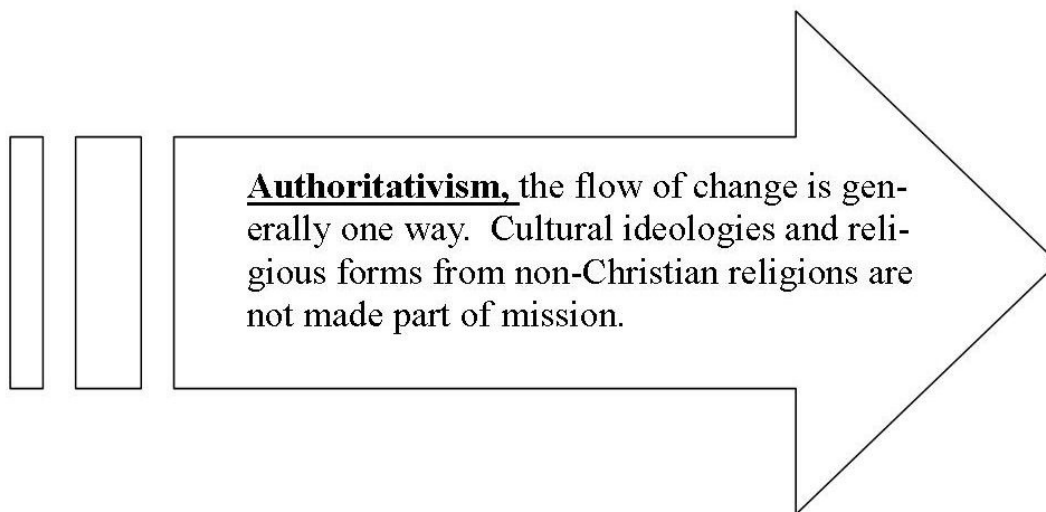
## H The mission praxis paradigm

1. This research focuses on the three MPPs throughout the history of the church. The first of these I call *Authoritativism or the Authoritative mission praxis paradigm (MPP)*. Authoritativism (A) includes all of the mission models, both historical and modern, which are characterized by a view that gospel proclamation by the church impacts the culture (non Christian ideologies and religious ceremonies and practices) of converts essentially changing them.<sup>8</sup> The gospel (when received) and the church are seen as impacting the culture but as existing largely independent of the culture as a sub-culture within the larger culture. The flow of change is primarily in one direction. The church and its mission endeavors are generally expected to be ambivalent if not resistant to the *culture*. While Authoritativism does allow for the church and the gospel to be affected to a very small degree by the *culture*, the affects are always minimal and never fundamental. To the Authoritative MPP proponent throughout history, *the gospel is countercultural*. Its ideologies and theological perspective are epitomized by the apostolic church and its missionary approach. One of its prominent theological perspectives is that of *sola scriptura*. Its message is heavily weighted toward and influenced by an apocalyptic emphasis. The essence of the gospel is unchangeable in the Authoritative model of mission. While the messenger does adapt his external customs, language, mannerisms, and dress, the gospel is to the

<sup>8</sup> I must here again refer the reader to the very narrow definition of culture that is given for the purposes of this research in the opening pages.

Authoritative proponent in essence unchangeable at its core. For the Authoritative missionary the Bible's message is transcendent to all culture. Examples of this approach that I explore in this research are: the church of the apostolic era, the mission of primitive non-Romanized, Celtic Christianity, the Nestorian church's mission exploits, and the mission methodologies of the Protestant Reformation. Figure 2 indicates the flow of change under the Authoritative paradigm. The gospel on the left authoritatively affects the culture while itself receiving little change.

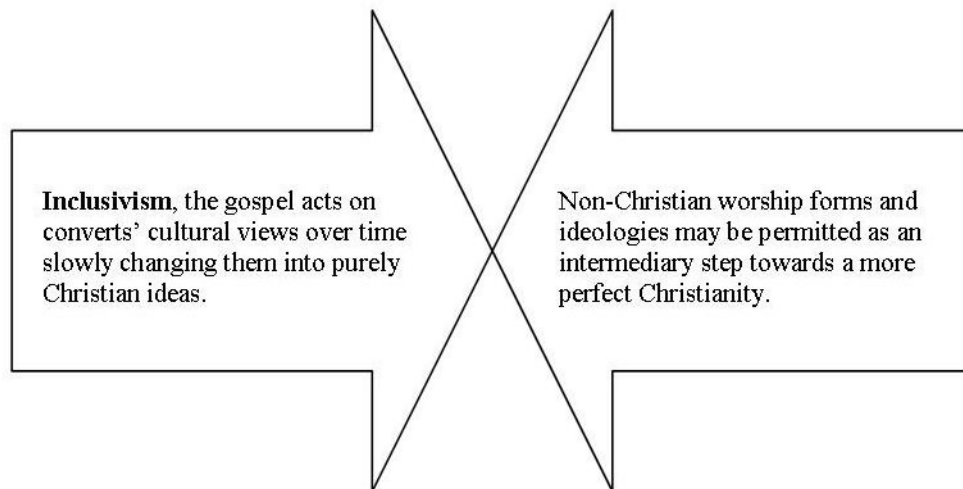
**Figure 2, representation of the Authoritative MPP**



2. The *Inclusivist* (I) MPP includes all mission paradigms in which the Bible and the expression of the gospel are seen as linked to culture (the ideologies and the religious ceremonies and expressions of the converted) in a type of reciprocal relationship. Non Christian rites, ceremonies that are cultural and/or ideas are deliberately added to mission in the hope of accomplishing the task of winning converts among resistant peoples. The key concept in the *Inclusivist* MPP is *reciprocity*. While conversion of individuals is the stated goal this may be accomplished by conceding to and including either non-Christian philosophies or adapting non-Christian religious ceremonies or other religious forms. *Sola scriptura* is not a functional or foundational principle within the *Inclusivist* framework but tradition and culture are permitted to affect mission methodology of the church in varying cultures. Non-literal hermeneutics are characteristic aspects of this approach.<sup>9</sup> The adaptation of the gospel from the *Inclusivist* (I) perspective has

<sup>9</sup> The use of the term *non-literal* hermeneutic is not used as delineating anything outside of the literal, verbal inspiration approach of what many call Christian fundamentalism. Rather, the terms *literal* and *non literal* when

historically allowed for practical compromises with the culture that produce what its proponents see as necessary accommodations. Others would argue that a newer composite Christianity essentially different from its predecessor was created. Inclusivist approaches have historically sought a general assent to a certain few, key doctrinal points and have viewed other theological and liturgical areas as flexible. Figure 3 indicates the reciprocal character of the Inclusivist MPP.



**Figure 3, the Inclusivist MPP**

*Authoritativism* is weighted towards changing the culture of the convert, *Inclusivism* is weighted towards exchange and equilibrium. Examples of this MPP that are researched in the following pages are: the mission efforts of some of the early Christian apologists, the Roman Christianity of Britain, and the medieval church.

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applied to hermeneutic approaches (in this research) are meant to indicate the tendencies or prominent characteristics of the several hermeneutic approaches available to the exegete. For example a grammatical-historical interpretation as well as the more fundamentalist approaches could all be considered as falling under the “literal” heading while historical and higher criticism and allegorical approaches would all fall under non-literal hermeneutics.



**Figure 4, the Neo-inclusivist MPP**

3. The *Neo-inclusivist* (NI) MPP borrows much of its ideology and theology of mission from the two others. This research indicates that NI MPP seeks to bring together into one mission system both the exclusively biblical foundation of the Authoritative MPP and the rational and culturally adaptive perspectives of the Inclusivist. Its proponents generally agree with aspects of the Authoritative approach while seeking to apply the principles and methods of the Inclusivist. The NI proponent has at his disposal a broad range of ideologies and methodologies to choose from. Elements of the social sciences, especially anthropology, figure heavily into its mission approach. The language of contextualization is another major component of its mission endeavors; and the social sciences are at times given normative value in scripture interpretation. While Authoritativism and Inclusivism date back to the earliest history of the church, the NI approach is a product of the post Enlightenment period. It is relatively new but claims the most adherents. The NI MPP most closely aligns with the emerging, ecumenical paradigms in Bosch's classification system.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See chapter 12 of *Transforming Mission*.

Biblical Paradigm			Historical Paradigms	Modern Paradigms
The Biblical Paradigm Authoritativism			Eastern Orthodox Paradigm Inclusivism & Authoritativism	Enlightenment paradigm Neo-inclusivism
			Roman Catholic Paradigm Inclusivism	Authoritativism, Inclusivism and Neo- inclusivism
Matt.	Luke	Paul	Protestant Paradigm pt I. Authoritativism	The new/emerging paradigm
			Protestant Paradigm pt. II Neo-inclusivism	Authoritativism, Inclusivism and Neo- inclusivism

Figure 5, the mission epochs versus MPPs

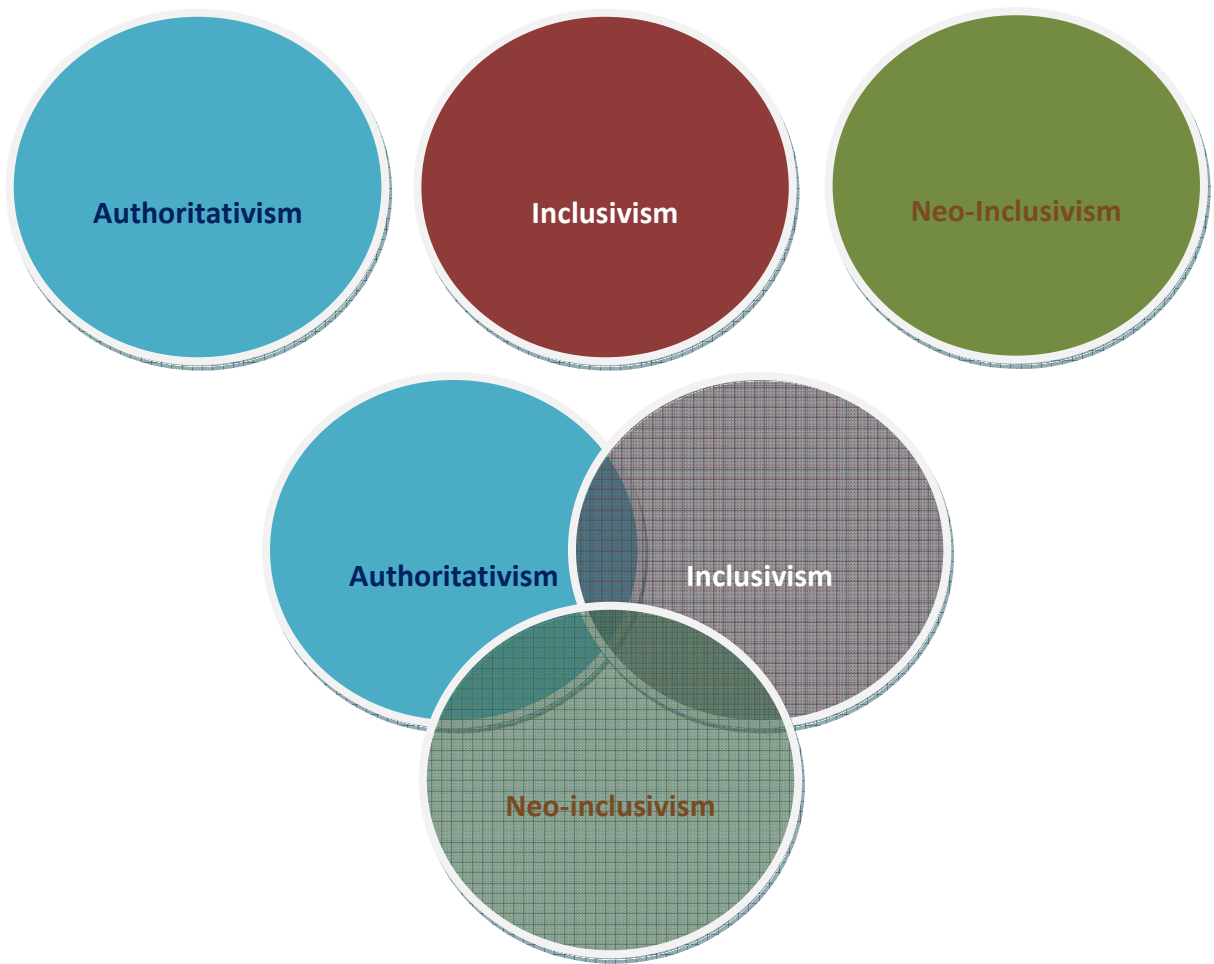
### I Further observations on the MPPs

This study indicates that the three broad approaches to mission (MPPs) cannot be studied in a strictly lineal fashion as distinct units. For the greater part of Christian history the first two have existed side by side and have interacted and influenced one another. The third or Neo-Inclusivist methodology is the only one that has emerged after the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment. Even though its time interval is somewhat limited by its relatively late development, the NI approach is not the sole mission approach of our times. It exists alongside the other two which have continued throughout church history up to the present.

One final difficulty in delineation must be here noted. The three approaches to mission have not, in practical application, been mutually exclusive at all times. Although ideologically and philosophically the first two seem almost diametrically opposed to each other, this study reveals that a blend of any two of the three approaches is possible and has at times existed concurrently

with the three distinct approaches. These nuances do add to the complexity of the delineation of the three broad, historic approaches to mission. Nevertheless, it is revealed in this study that the three: Authoritativism, Inclusivism, and Neo-inclusivism have been the three essential mission approaches throughout church history.

While it is convenient to think of the three approaches as three separate entities, it is also important to see them as overlapping and interacting ideologies.



**Figure 6, the relationship between the MPPs**

## **J Ancillary goals of this research**

One outstanding secondary goal of this research is to determine if possible which missional model is potentially ideal, especially as it relates to religious-cultural adaptation and transmission of the gospel. I contend that two of the paradigms detailed in this survey are by nature syncretistic. Historical and modern attempts to recast the Bible's teaching for pagan or non-Christian audiences to secure easier or more "culturally relevant" conversion experiences using philosophical, anthropological, and higher critical tools have often resulted in syncretism and have often produced "believers" unsure of their identity as Christians as pointed out by Williams (2003: 77-92). Another affect has been that these adaptations have introduced syncretistic practices into the church, thus lowering the standards of Christianity.

My interest in this study has been, in most respects, of a very practical nature. While serving as a pioneer missionary for five years in a Buddhist setting and more recently, for eight years (continuing through the present) in a predominantly Muslim country, the possibilities and dangers of contextualization, syncretism, and adaptation of the gospel to other cultures is a matter of vital importance to me. Missionaries and missiologists have often viewed several methodologies that register as high spectrum contextualization as the only viable and intellectually honest options in the task of producing Christian believers in resistant cultural and religious settings.<sup>11,12</sup>

While a plethora of literature exists advocating a variety of methodological and theological approaches based on these high spectrum methodologies, there is a manifest lack of research on the *historical efficacy* of such approaches. Simply put how has the church developed where each of these methodologies has been employed? No research or literature systematizes and analyzes in a *global and historical* fashion the basic and underlying theological assumptions behind the various approaches while at the same time showing how each affected the historical development of the Christian church. A secondary goal of this study is to do just that.

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<sup>11</sup>High spectrum contextualization has been defined as the point where new "believers" do not identify themselves as Christians. There are a growing number of mission approach taxonomies for various missions to people of varied religious/cultural backgrounds, and every taxonomy has a point where converts may choose not to identify themselves as Christians. This study employs the words *high spectrum contextualization* as anything beyond the point of open identification of oneself as Christian and practicing and participating in another religious tradition like Islam or Buddhism. See (Williams, 2003, 77-90).

<sup>12</sup> See the writings of Joshua Massey as an excellent example of this type of reasoning.

This research highlights the theological assumptions peculiar to each of the three broad-based cross-cultural mission approaches. I argue that church history demonstrates that the place one accords to the religious and cultural practices of the targeted people group (*the evangelized*) in Christian mission is a function of some very basic theological assumptions on the part of the missionary. These pre-suppositions find their source in views of biblical inspiration, ecclesiology, and the nature of syncretism. Questions such as the following help to determine how far along the *adaptation-syncretism spectrum* one is willing to progress: What is the nature of the church?<sup>13</sup> Is it an organized body or a largely invisible body made up of believers from all ages? What is the nature of inspiration? Is the Bible the divinely inspired word of God? Is it only partially inspired bearing uninspired human elements along with the divine? Is it equally as revelatory in the modern setting as it was to the Jews of antiquity? Is the Bible's literal message applicable to people across the world or must one filter it through the tissue of culture and re-adapt it for each people group? Does biblical inspiration allow for factual errors in the Bible or just insignificant errors in grammar and punctuation? All of these questions, to a greater or lesser extent, revolve around one's approach to the inspiration of scripture. History has shown and this study demonstrates that the place given to the culture in Christian mission especially as it relates to religious practices of the evangelized is a function of one's response to these and other basic questions of theology.

## **K Theological variables**

The theological aspects of the mission movements studied fall then into several categories which are the following: 1. views of the nature of biblical inspiration, 2. views on the nature of the church, ecclesiology, and 3. views on the nature of conversion and salvation, soteriology.

Theology is reflected in methodology. A clear understanding of one's theology makes his methodology predictable. The heart of a practical, biblical methodology, or strategy, lies in a biblical theology. For this reason, broad, basic principles precede practice. Practice—actions,

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<sup>13</sup> Phil Parshall and others have generally taught that contextualization and syncretism were two ranges on the same scale, with syncretism being the extreme end or "high spectrum" end of that scale. However, recently others have suggested syncretism occurs on either the low or high end of that scale. People are beginning to see under-contextualization as a form of syncretism. Neither of these positions is more impactful of this research. See (Owens, 2007, 74-80) for a detailed discussion of this topic.

strategies and words—reveal a person’s theology whether good or bad, adequate or inadequate. (Brock 1981: 1-3)

## **L Further motivations**

Another strong motivation for this study is the desire to add a reasoned voice to the often-impassioned debate over mission approaches. The discussion surrounding syncretism, contextualization, and culture often limits itself to the non-actuating aspects of form and meaning. As important as form and meaning are, the discussion over these two is often not very fruitful because those on opposite sides of the discussion often bring a completely different set of theological assumptions with them. The discussion is further restricted by a limited historical perspective. Issues like contextualization are generally dealt with from a point in time as a vantage point with little credence given to historical significance. In this study, I want to uncover the historical assumptions generally of a theological nature, that lie behind the choices that one makes as to what is acceptable in the inclusion of unbiblical practices, ideas, or forms into Christian life and worship in cross-cultural mission. This study does that through the lens of the broad scope of history. In order to do this, much of this study highlights case histories and is narrative in nature.

Yet, another strong motivating factor that led me to undertake this research is that information presented in favor of higher spectrum contextualization often suggests that such approaches are a relatively new phenomenon based upon the latest anthropological principles. I argue that church history shows this premise to be untrue. The basic principles of *Inclusivism*, under which high spectrum contextualization neatly fits, have existed and been experimented with since the beginning of the Christian church. Also, the Authoritative approach has existed since the beginning of the Church; I advocate that this approach is God’s ideal.

The final motivation for this research, and by no means the weakest, is my desire as a researcher to test the hypothesis that the modern higher spectrum approaches to Christian cross-cultural mission have been historically the most effective in accomplishing the goal of the Church – making lasting disciples from among all men. Instead of judging a mission paradigm’s efficacy,

its adverse affects, and its positive effects from its immediate context and ephemeral results, this research examines the three major missionary praxis paradigms from a historical perspective. This study measures each paradigm against the long-term developments that led up to it and that have followed in its wake.

## **M A word on methodology**

In order to approach this problem I present the background of the Christian church from a missiological perspective in its immediate surroundings. I outline the various philosophical and societal pressures that made the work of fulfilling the gospel commission very difficult in the pagan surroundings of the church's early decades. The section here referred to shows the theological and practical reasons that made the mission paradigms of the church in its particular geographical and historical contexts appeared reasonable to many. This first section will be one of laying the groundwork for the comparative study of all three mission paradigms from a chronological and historical point of view.

The second section is the heart of the study. In this section, I outline the development of each of the three mission paradigms and the manifestation of each in a given setting, usually in competition with another MPP. For instance, the development of Christianity in the British Isles pitted an *Inclusivist* paradigm against an *Authoritative* mission paradigm. Not only did the proponents of these paradigms act upon the pagan culture that surrounded them but these approaches and their proponents acted reciprocally on each other as well. This reciprocal action was often tense and in turn produced a response that affected the development of the Church in Britain throughout all the history. The second section examines in detail the theological issues that characterized the distinct differences between *Inclusivism* and *Authoritativism* in that setting. I will examine the theological assumptions of both Inclusivism and Authoritativism and how these assumptions pre-disposed their proponents to adopt the missiological positions that they did. Following a timeline of Christian history, the second section will explore the three paradigms from the early, apostolic Christian era right up to our modern time. I have purposely chosen several well documented mission periods in Christian history. I have also striven to find overlooked but significantly documented areas of historical mission movements. Due to the fact that popular Christian history often overlooks the missiological developments and triumphs of the

Eastern Church and other persecuted but significant bodies of believers I have sought to include these. Inclusion of this important branch of Christianity in this research allows for a more complete, well-rounded study.

The third and final section is one of analyses and synthesis. It is here where I will draw conclusions not only about the efficacy of the three paradigms but also of their long-term effects on Christianity. I rely heavily on the empiric data as I seek to draw solid conclusions. I discuss the issues surrounding the transmission of the gospel and cultural sensitivity. I make reasoned arguments as to why and when one of the missionary paradigms is syncretistic in its outworking. In this section, I also include and analyze survey and questionnaire results in further assessing the relationship between theological bent and missiological paradigms.

*Chapter 2*

*The issues*

## **A The incarnational nature of the gospel and syncretism**

Christianity is a missionary religion and as such making disciples by purposeful, intentional promulgation of the Bible's message is and has been since its inception the main task of its adherents (Hesselgrave 2000 17-18). Jesus gave a very clear command in Matthew 28 when he said the following:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.  
Matthew 28:19-20.

However, the great challenge for the church has been to avoid mixing Christianity with the religious ideas and philosophies that it found already existing in new fields. The 1920's through the 1960's was an era when many scholars accused the early church of borrowing some of its essential beliefs and practices from pagan religious and philosophical systems of the time (Nash 1984: 9-23). The crucial question here is to whether or not first century Christianity was syncretistic. This study demonstrates the fallacy or truth of this belief while at the same time outlining the eras when the mission paradigm of the church allowed for and even cultivated dependence on pagan religious and philosophical systems. Nash argues that at the very outset Christianity did not borrow from the surrounding pagan religions but it subsequent times this did occur (Nash 1984: 9-23).

## **B Gospel proclamation and syncretism**

This research necessarily deals with the thorny issue of syncretism in Christian mission. Any discussion of mission and culture must elude (at the very least) to syncretism, because it has always been one of the chief dangers in mission endeavor. Many define syncretism as the fusion of two belief systems (Martin 2006: 122). This simple definition is the one adhered to in this research. Martin further expands his definition of syncretism in Christian mission when he says, "Syncretism is allowing the culture to change the biblical message and compromising biblical doctrines ..." (Martin 2006: 122). He further states that when the basic content of the gospel message changes through the influence of the culture, syncretism has occurred.

## **1. The “newness” of the gospel**

Why is syncretism an issue in Christian mission? Why can no exploration of mission history reasonably ignore this issue? The simple answer is that syncretism has always been one of the greatest dangers to Christian mission. As missionaries proclaim the gospel in places where it has never before reached and as people make decisions to become Christians, expressions and forms of Christian worship will vary from culture to culture (Hesselgrave 2000). It is then that in the formation of new bodies of believers that syncretism or an amalgam (as per Martin’s definition) can result. While the Bible’s message transcends culture, the church manifests itself within a given cultural context. The existence of the church is a testament to the fact that God is drawing people to Himself in every cultural milieu. Historically, mission efforts by the church have produced different types of groups of converts – some very syncretistic, some not at all. Which MPPs are more prone to syncretism; which are not? What theological and missiological assumptions are the actuating principles for their approach? These questions are at the heart of this study.

### **C The nature of syncretism**

The growth of an ever-broadening theory of contextualization within the Christian church has called into question previously delimited boundaries of syncretism. What was considered by most missiologists as syncretism several decades ago is now in many circles considered solid enculturation, indigenization, or contextualization (Plastow 1999: 1). Not only is there a redefinition of where syncretism begins and ends, but a completely new discussion as to the desirability of it (Brock 1981: 33-50). Most Protestant and Catholic missionaries and mission sending societies have until recent times expressed vocal support for the idea that religious syncretism in cross-cultural mission was undesirable. Today a growing number of practitioners actually suggest that syncretism is not only inevitable but also desirable (Batstone 1977: 112).

François Bloespflug demonstrates this modern tendency to question the harmful affects of syncretism. He questions whether syncretism is a concept that now has validity in Christian circles.

La notion de syncrétisme à l'inverse est de formation très ancienne. Elle ne relève pas spécifiquement du langage théologique actuel, étant purement descriptive et neutre sous la plume des hommes de science, notamment des historiens, et généralement péjorative ailleurs (Bloespflug: 2006).

Bloespflug's main thesis is that the term syncretism is not of theological origin and at best provides a vague basis for judging religious amalgamation. Another scholar echoes this position. He suggests that the Theological Educational Fund of the World Council of Churches created the term contextualization just because the term *syncretism* had developed such a stigma (Heideman 1997: 37-38). The process of syncretism then was acceptable to the ecumenical community but the term was not.

Syncretism is a tricky term. Its main difficulty is that it possesses both an objective and subjective meaning. The basic objective meaning refers neutrally and descriptively to the mixing of religions. The subjective meaning includes an evaluation of such intermingling from the point of view of one of the religions involved ... (Droogers 1989: 7).

Much debate has arisen over the centuries as to what syncretism is (Droogers 1989: 7-11)). Whether it is the actual process of interpretation of religions or a result of the process of interpretation, whether it is a subjective concept or unbiased term, or whether it is the mixing of two religions solely or includes other elements such as science, sociology, or culture all add to the ambiguity of the term. Add to this the fact that many scholars see syncretism of the Christian gospel as inevitable and even desirable and the confusion mounts. Syncretism for these scholars is implicit in the mission of the church. While some have vigorously opposed this idea, others gladly see the process of syncretism as a matter of course that is neutral in its affects (Moreau 2004: 1).

While it is true that the term syncretism was not of religious origins David Lindenfield of Louisiana State University states that the term was given a renaissance of meaning during the age of classical scholars such as Erasmus (Lindenfield 2007: 1). These scholars used the term to denote admixtures of various religious traditions. So much has syncretism come to be known as

indicating religious admixture that the American Heritage Dictionary (2000) says that syncretism is: “reconciliation or fusion of differing systems of belief, as in philosophy or religion, especially when success is partial or the result is heterogeneous.”

**D Historical and Old Testament biblical attitudes toward syncretism**

Generally, Protestants have viewed syncretism since the time of the reformation as the undesirable mixing of religions. This point of view found its basis in biblical (especially Old Testament) prohibitions to the mixing of Hebrew and later Christian religion with the surrounding nations. The general attitude of the Hebrew prophets and the New Testament writers toward culture and syncretism is apparent from the following texts:

Jeremiah 10:1-3	(Jeremiah 10:1) Hear the word that the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel.(Jeremiah 10:2) Thus says the LORD: "Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, (Jeremiah 10:3) for the customs of the peoples are vanity. A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman.
Deuteronomy 18:9	(Deuteronomy 18:9) When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations.
Isaiah 44:25	(Isaiah 44:24) Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, (Isaiah 44:25) who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, (Isaiah 44:26) who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins';
Leviticus 18:30	(Leviticus 18:30) So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God."
2 Kings 17:19	2Ki 17:19 Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced.

**Figure 6, some biblical references for early attitudes toward syncretism**

The preceding chart points out several key characteristics of the Old Testament view of culture, which are vital to keep in mind throughout this study. The prevailing attitude of the Old Testament prophets toward the customs (culture) of other nations is that if those cultures were not reflective of the God given economy of Israel they led away from God. This thought is the basis for the idea that when the Israelites followed the customs of other nations they were not obeying God. This view is expressed in 2 Kings 17:19. Another of the conclusions that can be drawn from these texts is that God does regard all cultures as originating from him as some suggest. Finally, the texts indicate that God does not see all cultures as essentially neutral in their purest forms. In the writings of the Old Testament prophets God judged some customs and cultures as negative and harmful.

The Old Testament prophets judged cultures and express the mind of God concerning other nations. God gave the Hebrews a series of statutes, laws, and ordinances over time that were intended to draw them to Him and protect them from the idolatry of the surrounding nations. God had judged the customs and cultures of the idolatrous nations as vain. In the Old Testament, a striking example of God's view of cultures that did not recognize Him plays itself out in the life of King Solomon. As his influence grew and he married many "heathen" wives, many in the nation followed him in mixing the Hebrew religion with that of the surrounding nations. This resulted in a syncretistic admixture.

Solomon began to lose sight of the Source of his power and glory. Inclination gained the ascendancy over reason. As his self-confidence increased, he sought to carry out the Lord's purpose in his own way. He reasoned that political and commercial alliances with the surrounding nations would bring them to knowledge of the true God; and so he entered into unholy alliance with nation after nation. Often these alliances were sealed by marriage with heathen princesses. The commands of Jehovah were set aside for the *customs of the surrounding nations*.

During the years of Solomon's apostasy, the spiritual decline of Israel was rapid. How could it have been otherwise, when their king united with satanic agencies? *Through these agencies the enemy worked to confuse the minds of the people in regard to true and false worship. They became an easy prey. It came to be a common practice to intermarry with*

*the heathen. The Israelites rapidly lost their abhorrence of idolatry.* Heathen customs were introduced. Idolatrous mothers brought their children up to observe heathen rites. *The Hebrew faith was fast becoming a mixture of confused ideas.* Commerce with other nations brought the Israelites into intimate contact with those who had no love for God, and their own love for Him was greatly lessened. Their keen sense of the high and holy character of God was deadened. Refusing to follow in the path of obedience, they transferred their allegiance to Satan. The enemy rejoiced in his success in effacing the divine image from the minds of the people that God has chosen as His representatives. Through inter-marriage with idolaters and constant association with them, Satan brought about that for which he had long been working,--a national apostasy (White 1906) (emphasis supplied).

The attitude of New Testament apostles and writers toward culture and syncretism is treated in a subsequent chapter of this work.

## **E Syncretism and contextualization**

Even if the meaning of the term syncretism has evolved over the years, it has generally come to have a pejorative connotation, signifying an unhealthy mixing of religions. Yet, beginning in the 1960's and 70's there was a growing trend to view syncretism as inevitable and contextualization as the heir of all that was good in the mixing cultural and religious traditions (Heideman 1997: 37-49). Syncretism before the era of contextualization signified corruption of Christianity, loss, and compromise of the gospel (Heideman 1997: 37-49). More recent missiologists like Parshall (1998: 404-410) and Smith (2004) along with Heibert (1984) maintain that syncretism is contextualization gone poorly. In essence, according to these men there are two types of contextualization, healthy and syncretistic. This research will return to this theme multiple times, as I test each manifestation of the three historical paradigms against the indicators for syncretism.

### **1. Syncretism, a working definition and further discussion**

Stated once again, the definition of the term utilized in this study is very precise. Syncretism is the undesirable admixture of religious belief and cultural elements. The specific context in which this term is applied is in the cross-cultural mission endeavors of the Christian church throughout history. While it may be true that such a broad term is not always conducive to such a constraining definition, in this study it is both beneficial and useful.

## **F Classes of syncretism**

Waisanen (2006: 5) expostulates upon the pervasiveness of syncretism in mission in his summary of the work of the Catholic theologian Leonardo Boff who outlined six categories of syncretism. Boff was another that saw syncretism as a natural and desirable aspect of Christianity's development (Batstone 1977: 112).

1. The first of Boff's categorizations is *Syncretism as addition*. In this classification believers may accept and practice a variety of religious observances that are contradictory but in their minds unclear so that one is simply adding one belief to another in a hodgepodge fashion. The believer is probably ignorant of the structures, rites and practices of each of his additional religious observances but simply adds one dissimilar element to the next without seeking to connect them. An excellent historic example of this would be the worship culture surrounding the Kaaba (the most holy place of Islam in Mecca, Saudi Arabia) in pre-Islamic times. Just before the establishment of Islam as a religion by Muhammad, over three hundred deities were represented at this pagan worship center. Even representations of Mary and Jesus existed there. People came from all over the Arabian Peninsula and other parts of the world to present offerings and sacrifices to their deities often mixing the worship of one with that of another (Zwemer 1907: 10-12).

2. The second category is *Syncretism as accommodation*. According to Boff this occurs when a dominated people adapts and incorporates the religious rites and rituals of its dominators either as a survival strategy or as a means of resistance.

3. Third in Boff's list is *Syncretism as mixture*. In this type of syncretism, there is a juxtaposition of a variety of religious traditions in one great conglomerate system. There is no real internal order or coherence in the system and the gratification that one gains from it is the gratification that derives from the sense of power one may imagine in worshipping a variety of deities. This type of syncretism is best typified in the Hindu and other polytheistic systems and their ready inclusion of the deities of other religious systems in their own.

4. Boff's fourth category is *Syncretism as agreement*. Agreement syncretism sees all religious systems as inadequate and faulty. They are by nature insufficient and therefore must be harmonized. This agreement often results in a type of universalism that is becoming increasingly popular in both Catholic and Protestant circles.

5. The fifth category is *Syncretism as translation*. This type of syncretism is of extreme importance to this research for some modern, conservative scholars would class this as high spectrum contextualization. In this category, Boff says that the cultural and religious expressions of a host religion and culture are used exclusively to define and communicate the essential message of another. Catholics have used this form of *contextualization* with tribal groups since Vatican II. Some of the Muslim *insider movements* better known as C5 contextualization fit neatly within the confines of this category of syncretism.<sup>14</sup> One fundamental point in this type of syncretism, which is often also employed to justify other forms of high spectrum contextualization, is that the host religion supplies culturally relevant terms and concepts for religious concepts that are new to the host culture. These concepts of necessity must be employed to bridge the gap between hearer understanding and intended message according to the proponents of this ideology.

6. The final category in Boff's hierarchy is *Syncretism as adaptation*. When believers of a religion are exposed to another, deliberately adapt, and attempt to transform another religion's beliefs into something meaningful for their own religious tradition, this type of syncretism occurs.

Boff's analysis of syncretism in Christianity concurs with that of another Catholic scholar, Robert Schreiter, in his work *Constructing Local Theologies* (Schreiter: 1985). Although Schreiter's categories of syncretism differ slightly from those of Boff's, the conclusion is the same: Syncretism is unavoidable when Christianity and culture come into contact. For these two Catholic scholars *pure Christianity*, free from syncretism, has never really existed. However, Boff takes the idea of syncretism a step further when he says:

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<sup>14</sup> For a full discussion of the dimensions of high spectrum contextualization in the Muslim setting see Williams, 2003 or Phil Parshall's article *Danger New Directions in Contextualization!*

All of the great religions of history, those that have reached a high level of development, have been the results of an immense process of syncretism. A religion, like Christianity, preserves and enriches its universality as long as it is capable of speaking all languages, incarnating itself into all cultures. This I propose is valid syncretism. It is a process that includes the other definitions of syncretism while, at the same time, going beyond.

(Schreiter: 1985)

Boff makes two conjectures in this paragraph that are especially pertinent to this research: that syncretism adds viability to Christianity and that syncretism is inevitable and desirable as the church and its message come into contact with culture. Boff simply is reflecting a growing attitude in mission circles, both Protestant and Catholic since the birth of modern contextualization—syncretism is to be expected and desired in mission endeavor. He does qualify his notion with the suggestion that there is good and bad syncretism, but there is (and should be in his thinking) syncretism nonetheless. As a reflection of this growing attitude, Moreau tacitly admits the inevitability of syncretism occurring in cross-cultural mission. He suggests the following:

All churches have their base in culture and therefore to some extent syncretistic; people who define syncretism are those in a position of power and view any threatening practice as syncretistic; and all churches are in some ways syncretistic due to their cultural milieu.

Outside of the classes of syncretism outlined by Boff, Lindenfield speaks of the direction of syncretism (Lindenfield 2007: 3-7). Does syncretism flow from the more powerful above or from beneath, the occupied, or subjugated? Direction of syncretism plays an important role in Christian history and is appropriately noted in this study.

### **G Syncretism in practice**

A missionary who worked for many years in India sees a reinterpretation of the bounds of syncretism beginning to take shape in a variety of ways in this predominantly Hindu country (Richard 1999: 1-4). What once would have been considered shocking and syncretistic now in the Protestant Mission community is commonplace among Christian missionaries who question whether or not syncretism is even a valid concept.

The appearance of what he terms *Jesu bhaktas* is evidence of this (Richard 1999: 1-4).<sup>15</sup> He suggests that this phenomenon in which “believers in Jesus” actively avoid Christian fellowship, identify themselves as Hindu and practice many Hindu rituals and beliefs is in fact an incarnation of Christianity freed from its Western trappings and reinterpreted for India. This reinterpretation does away with the idea that the church is necessarily an identifiable body of believers. He further expands on his idea by suggesting that the “church” in this setting should develop pilgrimage sites and designated *ashrams* as an attraction to Hindu believers in Jesus.<sup>16</sup> He suggests that a yearly calendar with festivals and saints days should not only be desired but also actively sought. He also suggests development of shrines in the Hindu fashion; *Father* (as in God the father) shrines for protection, *Son* shrines for forgiveness, and *Holy Spirit* shrines to pray for Guidance and strength.

#### **H Syncretism or contextualization**

“It is through the cries of those ancestor spirits that Koreans are able to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit” (Waisanen: 2006). Chun Hyun-Kyung, a presenter at a Christian conference in Canberra Australia, also said:

*This must be the time when we have to reread the Bible from the perspective of birds, water, trees, and mountains.* Learning to think like a mountain, changing our center from human beings to all living beings has become our responsibility in order to survive (Waisanen: 2006 ) (emphasis supplied).

During her presentation Australian Aboriginal dancers in loincloths and white-clad farmers from Korea accompanied by rhythmic music swayed and danced as she called upon the spirits of martyrs from ages past.

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<sup>15</sup> The term *bhakta* refers to Hindu holy men that serve as wandering teachers of Hindu religion. Some of the most influential become spiritual gurus.

<sup>16</sup> The term *ashram* in its most simple definition refers to a village, however in this setting the ashram takes on a deeper spiritual significance as a special pilgrimage site.

## 1. Muslim adaptation or syncretism

A missionary couple having worked for 20 years in a Muslim context makes a bleak and in some ways disquieting appraisal of the prospects of winning large numbers of Muslims to declare themselves Christian.

We have little hope in our lifetime to believe for a major enough cultural, political and religious change to occur in our context such that Muslims would become open to entering Christianity on a wide scale (Travis 2005: 12).

Because of this conclusion, the Travis's encourage Muslim believers in Christ to stay in the Mosque, recite the *shahda*, and openly identify themselves as Muslims. A growing number of missionaries to Muslims state openly that their own approaches are syncretistic (Massey 2004: 1-18).<sup>17</sup>

## 2. A growing current

The three examples cited above serve to illustrate some of the streams of modern missiological thought as it relates to what is known as *contextualization*, the adaptation, and enculturation of the message of the Bible in new settings.<sup>18</sup> From its earliest history a major challenge of the Church has been how to accommodate, if possible, local beliefs and practices and still be true to the absolutes of the Bible. Scott Moreau states that, "Throughout the centuries since the New Testament era, the church has constantly wrestled over the issues of culture in relationship to the Christian movement" (Waisanen 2006). The debate and dialogue center in the problem of how to do this while avoiding *syncretism*. This is the process of reconciling disparate, even opposing, beliefs and melding practices of various schools of thought. It is especially associated with the attempt to merge and analogize several originally distinct traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, and thus assert an underlying unity.<sup>19</sup> The difficulty with this amalgam of two religious traditions is that a double allegiance is often created in which new

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<sup>17</sup> The *shahada* is the main confessional statement of Islam : None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. <http://muttaqun.com/shahada.html>

<sup>18</sup> For a fuller exposition of the history of the development of the concepts of contextualization, see [http://etd.uovs.ac.za/cgi-bin/ETD-browse/browse?first\\_letter=C](http://etd.uovs.ac.za/cgi-bin/ETD-browse/browse?first_letter=C)

<sup>19</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>

converts are not fully committed to Bible religion while holding onto unbiblical forms of belief, practice and worship.

## **I When contextualization becomes syncretism**

As I have previously stated, I take the position of Smith, Parshall and a multitude of other scholars that syncretism is high spectrum contextualization or contextualization that has been misapplied (or over applied) and used in its most extreme sense. When then does contextualization, enculturation, or indigenization become syncretistic? This question becomes increasingly central to this study as the historical survey unfolds. As I have previously indicated, syncretism no longer poses a philosophical dilemma for many modern cross-cultural missionaries and as a result, there exists an increasing willingness to merge elements of Christianity with elements of tribal, pagan or other non-Christian faith systems in the name of cultural relevance (Parshall 1988: 404-410). Movements such as the Messianic Muslim and Messianic Jewish movements have come under heavy criticism as syncretistic. Messianic Muslims fit several of Boff's classifications of syncretism (Nikkides 2004: 1-15). So too does the "Churchless Christianity" movement of India. One striking and increasingly aspect of this research is that it demonstrates that these modern "insider movements" as they are called are reflective of the Inclusivist historical MPP of the church. As such, they are not new methodologies but modern adaptations of mission methods used throughout the history of the church.

*Syncretism is by definition the mingling of disparate religious traditions to the point that a new religious system is formed which fully reflects neither of the source religious traditions.* For the purposes then of this research, the point at which the evangelized adhere to unbiblical belief structures, identify themselves as something other than Christians, or practice unbiblical forms of worship, syncretism has occurred in Christian mission. I will show historically where Christian mission has crossed the line into syncretism.

## **J Indicators of syncretism used in this research**

To this point, I have discussed syncretism as an ideology, its acceptance by modern scholars and given a working definition of the term for this study. However, there remains one detail to outline in the following paragraphs of this introductory section. It is important now to have a set of

standards by which one can judge whether or not the various manifestations of the historical mission paradigms in a given historical setting were (or are) syncretistic. Employing these indicators as diagnostic tools one may clearly identify which mission paradigms are more heavily weighted toward syncretism and at what point in history biblical mission became syncretistic.

### **1. Anthropocentric emphasis:**

When Christian mission becomes syncretistic, the first manifestation is an emphasis on logic and observation above an emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit and Bible fidelity. Borrowing tools from the social sciences this anthropocentric focus seeks to systematize observations of culture in ways that are logical and coherent (Van Rheenen 1997: 33-38). While there must certainly be study and categorization in the process of legitimate contextualization, Van Rheenen underlines a very distinct, although subtle, difference between legitimate enculturation and syncretistic contextualization. In his discussion of the church growth approach as opposed to a biblical approach to mission he says that the former is rooted in anthropology. Legitimate contextualization is rooted in theology (Van Rheenen 1997: 33-38).

This anthropocentric focus manifests itself in a de-emphasis of doctrinal points and a blurring of the meaning of the *gospel commission*. H.L. Richard (1999) for instance, in his *Reflections on Churchless Christianity* asks the following questions: “Do you think the vast majority of India will ever join the church?” and “If you could envision an India won for Christ, what would its religious life be like?” Both questions reveal a misunderstanding of the gospel commission at a very deep level as well as a clear misunderstanding of what the gospel accomplishes in individual lives and in societies in general.

The first question belies the fact that the author understands the gospel commission as a command that Christ expects His followers to win the vast majority of Indians to Christ. While no Christian opposes such an idea, he also knows that in reality the very nature of the gospel is such that even in what are considered “Christian nations” only a very few accept the gospel and truly become Christians. The commission as Christ gave it in Matthew 28 is to go into all the world and make disciples *from among all nations*. While winning the whole of India for Christ is an admirable goal, Christ has not asked us to make that the objective of our mission efforts. He

has rather asked his followers to make disciples from among all nations – not comprising everyone in all nations (Matthew 28:20). He has commanded us to *preach the gospel* (certainly in an intelligent and culturally appropriate way) to all of India and the entire world. If winning all of India to a nominal acceptance of Christ is the goal then anything less is failure. If then we have failed we must examine our methods and lower the gospel standard, which in fact is a cultural product anyway. Syncretistic contextualization then often begins with a basic misunderstanding of the gospel commission.

## **2. Accent on pragmatism over theology**

In syncretistic mission, there is a de-emphasis on sound theology and a strong emphasis on what works. If the gospel commission is understood chiefly as a command to win numbers to Christ, and if few people are won to Christ in resistant cultures, former methods are uncritically discarded as ineffective and culturally insensitive. Proponents of syncretistic mission often begin their explanations with a litany of the abuses or failures of past missionary methods as justification for newer more “culturally sensitive” models. As John Piper puts it, there is a manifest “loss of confidence that declaring what the Bible says in the power of the Holy Spirit can create and sustain the church of Christ.” (Piper: 2006) Piper goes on to state that many pastors and missionaries have lost confidence in the ability of the fullness of the Word of God to overcome the gap between the glory of Christ and the felt needs of the evangelized, as if somehow the Word of God is not directly applicable and relevant to men and women everywhere.

The pragmatic emphasis that is often a marker of contextualization’s slide into syncretism manifests itself in several ways according to Piper:

2.1 Biblically central points of faith are overlooked and ignored (Piper 2006). This is also a contention of Mark Williams when he states that Muslim converts to a syncretistic (high spectrum contextualized) mission model actually view fundamental Christian doctrine as optional (Williams 2003: 82-91). This has also been a major concern of Phil Parshall as he seeks to warn against the dangers of high spectrum, syncretistic contextualization (Parshall: 1988).

The pragmatism that supersedes theology, which is inherent in syncretistic cross-cultural mission, is easily discerned. In the following statement of a leading missionary among a resistant people, pragmatism is in evidence: “We have little hope in our lifetime to believe for a major enough cultural, political, and religious change to occur in our contexts such that Muslims would become open to entering Christianity on a wide scale.” (Piper: 2006)

2.2 Also allied with syncretistic pragmatism and their theological de-emphasizing tendency is an unclear ecclesiology. In an attempt to validate the Christian credentials of what some are now calling insider movements the definition of the church as a unified, identifiable body of believers is spiritualized away (Nikkides: 2006). Accompanying this is the adherence to selected Christian beliefs by adherents of other faiths without conversion to Christianity. If there is conversion to Christianity unbiblical beliefs and practices are conserved. The historical doctrine of the church has been clearly demonstrated to be an area of great confusion among many converts who have been won using high spectrum, insider approaches to mission. See Richards 2001, Williams 2003, and Parshall 1998.

2.3 One final area where pragmatism supersedes theology in syncretistic contextualization is in scriptural interpretation itself. Joshua Massey has been singled out for his enterprising attempts to support the supposition that *Messianic Muslims need not convert to Christianity* with Paul’s admonition of 1 Corinthians 7:18-20 in which he says that all men should remain in the state in which they were called (Massey 2000: 5-14) , (Massey 2004: 296-304), (Nikkides 2004: 1-15). Massey and others who practice syncretistic contextualization take the Pauline principle of “*Be a Christian where you are.*” (Barclay: 1975), and transform it into “*Be a Muslim or Buddhist or other religious adherent who believes in Jesus and stay where you are.*” Such negligent use of the scriptures is easily discerned when one reads the texts in question in their entirety. It is apparent that Paul is here speaking of the fact that when someone converts to Christianity there are very real and substantive changes that occur in the life and there are some things that remain constant. There is a definite change in Lordship, spiritual values, and moral behavior but not necessarily a change in race gender or social caste (Barnes 1840: Commentary on 1 Corinthians 7:18-20 in Notes on the Bible, electronic version, E-Sword).

### **3. Emphasizes strategic planning over dependence on Holy Spirit**

The trend toward a humanistic, felt needs approach to mission misses almost entirely God's intended methodology and method (Madany 1995: 1-8). There is a growing chorus of Christian voices raising concern over the accent that many in the syncretistic contextualization camp place on human methods while neglecting the need to understand the Holy Spirit's work in the conversion of men to Christ (ibid.). In the felt needs, high spectrum approach truth is reduced to propositions or to culturally delimited questions and not as the supra-cultural revelation of God (Van Rheezen 1997: 34). According to Van Rheezen "This topic framework of mental referencing is susceptible to syncretism because it is based upon conceptualizations made by Christian leaders attempting to intellectually clarify Christianity in the human cultural categories."

### **4. Diminished focus on conversion prior to church membership**

Syncretistic contextualization does not eventuate in the accession of new believers into the Christian faith. In modern times, as high spectrum approaches to mission developed in the seventies and eighties the stated goal was that the high spectrum approaches were a means to an end – that end being conversion (Smith: 2003). However, realizing that this stated goal was incompatible with the methodology many have begin to state openly that conversion to Christianity is not paramount or even necessary for "believers in Christ" (Nikkides: 2006), (Parshall 1998: 404-410). In fact it has again began clearly demonstrated that in most cases resistant peoples who do not fully identify themselves with the church at the time of belief in Christ remain in a syncretistic state of *mélange* between their old tradition and Christianity (Smith: 2003). All of this tends to destroy the concept of a universal church with supra-cultural truth but rather fragments and divides the church into locally independent fully autonomous bodies displaying little of the interdependent autonomy exemplified in the New Testament church.



## **Section II**

*Chapter 3*

*The development of the Inclusivist MPP*

## **A Inclusivism as an emergent missions paradigm**

Christianity at the beginning, more than in any other time found motivation for mission in the eschatological hope of the return of Christ and the end of the world. However as the apostolic era with its emphasis on the apocalyptic, eschatological final end of the earth and salvation in Christ wore to a close, a new era of the church gradually developed. N. T Wright (2005) identifies the eschatological focus as a major aspect of the New Testament church's theology through the emphasis on the eschatological in the writings of Paul. Braaten says, "Christianity began as an eschatological faith (Braaten 1999: 1174). According to George Purves, the New Testament is practically the only source for reliable descriptions of the apostolic church (Purves 1915: 3-8). Accordingly, any characterizations of that church's theology must begin with the New Testament. This is not the case when it comes to the church after the apostles. Accordingly, extra-biblical, historical sources provide much material for us as we seek to flesh out the development of the church and its theology.

A decade or two after the turn of the first century mark an important shift in the history of the Christian church. It is the beginning of what is known as the post-apostolic era. During these times, Christians would develop creeds, theological positions, and intellectual arguments. The church would have apologists who attempted to engage the persecuting, heathen Greco-Roman culture in philosophical discussion that sought to downplay the differences between Christianity and the culturally accepted religions and to present Jesus in the terms and figures of the mystery cults and Greek philosophers. Robert M Grant, in his book *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* says that the apologists sought to do several things: engage the wider culture making links between their group and the culture, change the development of both their group and the larger culture, and defend their own group from the false accusations or claims of others (Grant: 1988). This would be the beginnings of the *cultural Inclusivist approach*, the Inclusivist MPP, to Christian mission.

Many suggest this approach to Christian mission was a natural if not pragmatic one given the circumstances of the church in the hostile Roman Empire. As the church stepped out of the shadows of Judaism and grew exponentially, attracting adherents from all over the empire, it drew upon itself intensified persecution (Fisher 1877: 474-475). Seeking to mitigate persecution

through dialogue was a natural response. Proponents of this position suggest also that the Greek cultural milieu of the early church demanded an approach suited to the character and mindset of the people. *Inclusivism* provided a potential solution to both of these problems, ostensibly attenuating persecution through an appeal to reason and intellectual arguments.

It has also been suggested that one other reason for the *Inclusivist approach* would have been that converts and potential converts to Christianity would have been drawn chiefly from the pagan religions in the geographical areas where Inclusivism took root. Alfred Plummer underlines this fact when he says that many of the apologists and church fathers were themselves converts from paganism (Plummer 1890: 144-145). Whatever the reasons for Inclusivism's development, it would become one of the three major mission praxis paradigms throughout the history of the Christian church.

## **B Church fathers who introduced the Inclusivist MPP**

Among the Christian apologists that permeated the second and third centuries there existed several *who employed the terms and thought patterns of the modern, ambient culture to explain Christianity to the pagan world.*<sup>20</sup> They would be the initial developers of *Inclusivism* (the Inclusivist MPP) although they could not know the extent to which their theories would be employed in succeeding generations. Though ostensibly seeking to counter the Greek philosophy and Roman religions, Gnosticism, Dualism, Platonism, and other philosophical tendencies of the Greek world were harmonized with Bible doctrine in their efforts.<sup>21</sup> Johan C. Thom says that one of the major goals of the apologists was to show how Christianity was culturally acceptable (Thom 1989: 1). To do this they employed pagan philosophies and pagan ideas to explain Christianity to the masses. Three in particular, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen went a step further. They perceived and taught that Christian philosophy and Greek philosophy harmonized (Chadwick 1984: 10). These were the first of the *Inclusivists*.

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<sup>20</sup> Reference is here again made to our narrow definition of the inclusion of culture in mission approaches. For the purposes of this study culture refers to either the philosophies or the ceremonies associated with pagan religions.

<sup>21</sup> Reference is here made to a series of dogmatic works in which the apologists challenge or speak derisively of pagan belief or philosophy. An excellent example of this type of work would be Clement's exhortation to the heathen in which he demonstrates a vast store of intimate acquaintance with the Greek gods and goddesses and openly heaps scorn upon them.

## **C The ostensible reasons why Inclusivism was a practical mission paradigm**

### **1. Christianity viewed as aberrant**

During the age of the apostles, its proponents generally perceived the gospel as countercultural (Gibbon 1897: 166-168). The early apostles stressed the need of Christians separating from the culture (world) in lifestyle and practice (Courad 1841: 71-99).<sup>22</sup> The founders of Christianity also taught with a very strong apocalyptic emphasis, pointing to the final cataclysmic Day of Judgment as a strong impetus and motivation for mission (Bosch 1991: 149-159). Life in this world was to the new Christians but preparatory to what was to come at the “end of the age.” Christianity was in the era of the apostles a movement not an institution. It had no prescribed liturgy, no settled clergy shepherding flocks of established believers, and above all, it was not accepted by the culture as a legitimate contributor to the religious life of society. In fact Christianity, generally speaking, in its first two and a half centuries was seen as a dangerous and aberrant sect chiefly because of its distinctiveness – its refusal to assimilate the religious and philosophical culture of the day (Gibbon 1897: 166-170). It was the unlikeness of Christianity to the cult worship of the emperor or of the Hellenistic sages that brought upon the fledgling church the wrath of the emperor and the state.

### **2. Roman persecution of the church**

The first three hundred years of the Christian church is a history of repeated persecution. Its official status in the Roman Empire was *religio illicita* or proscribed religion (Ramsay 1893: 226-429). As such it became easy to persecute believers for a multitude of apparent reasons. Christians were despised foremost because in the Roman Empire religious belief and practice were vehicles intended to aid the prosperity of the State. Religion and patriotism were in that era almost synonymous. Christians distinguished themselves by excusing themselves from pagan rites and ceremonies with a firmness and determination that led Roman authorities to conclude that they were not loyal to the state. Since paganism was intimately tied to the state, Christians were seen as insubordinate to its authority and subversive to the prosperity of the Empire. The

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<sup>22</sup> There is really no dispute of the fact that the original Christian church was extremely countercultural in belief, lifestyle, and practice. While there may be differences of interpretation as to why the church eschewed popular culture, a plethora of sources show that the apostolic church and post apostolic church approached the world from extremely different paradigms. For a much more extensive treatment of this subject, see Bosch, the chapters dealing with apostolic Christianity and the Eastern Church.

fact that the early Christians avoided all pagan ceremonies, refused to worship the gods of state, and worshipped with some degree of concealment due to persecution amazingly brought upon them the stigma of being regarded as atheistic, unpatriotic subversives if not fools (Addis 1893: 51-65). Officially sanctioned persecution of Christians began early as a result.

The first major persecution of the church occurred in Rome in 64 AD when Nero seeking to escape the simmering suspicion that he had been the actual originator of the fire that had destroyed much of the city found in this prohibited sect a scapegoat. Tacitus records that Nero, hoping to deflect public opinion that he had done this to clear land for a new palace, fastened the guilt upon a group of people hated already for their religious abominations.

To get rid of the report Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Accordingly an arrest was first made of all who confessed; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted not so much for the crime of arson, as of hatred of the human race. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames.

(Brians: 1999)

The imperial persecutions broadened and deepened under succeeding rulers. It was under Domitian's reign that John the Revelator was exiled and at least two other of the disciples died. Under Trajan (98-117) several new punishments and tortures were proposed. Under Hadrian (117-136) the pious Polycarp was killed. Persecution against Christians persisted, became broader, and intensified into the second and third centuries under a variety of emperors. So much were Christians abhorred by the general population that mob violence in many places preceded persecution.

By the mid 2nd century, mobs could be found willing to throw stones at Christians, and they might be mobilized by rival sects. The Persecution in Lyons was preceded by mob violence, including assaults, robberies and stoning Lucian tells of an elaborate and successful hoax perpetrated by a "prophet" of Asclepius, using a tame snake, in Pontus and Paphlygonia.

When rumor seemed about to expose his fraud, the witty essayist reports in his scathing essay ... *he issued a promulgation designed to scare them, saying that Pontus was full of atheists and Christians who had the hardihood to utter the vilest abuse of him; these he bade them drive away with stones if they wanted to have the god gracious.*

(Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.7).

### 3. Other attacks against the church

Not only did the church suffer from physical persecution but also Phillip Schaff (Schaff, 1910) outlines a whole series of other challenges that the early church had to face in the literary and intellectual realms. Very articulate, reasoned, and bold critics arose who sought to tear down the basis of Christianity from an academic or scientific standpoint. Celsus and Lucian attacked Christianity directly using both wit and ridicule while the elder Pliny and the elder Tacitus sought simply to ignore it.<sup>23</sup> The younger Tacitus and Pliny thought to dismiss Christianity as bothersome yet insignificant. To this effect, Schaff says:

The Greek and Roman writers of the first century, and some of the second, as Seneca, the elder Pliny, and even the mild and noble Plutarch, either from ignorance or contempt, never allude to Christianity at all.

Tacitus and the younger Pliny, contemporaries and friends of the emperor Trajan, are the first to notice it; and they speak of it only incidentally and with stoical disdain and antipathy, as an “*exitiabilis superstitio*” “*prava et immodica superstitio,*” “*inflexibilis obstinatio.*” These celebrated and in their way altogether estimable Roman authors thus, from manifest ignorance, saw in the Christians nothing but superstitious fanatics, and put them on a level with the hated Jews; Tacitus, in fact, reproaching them also with the “*odium generis humani.*” This will afford some idea of the immense obstacles which the new religion encountered in public opinion, especially in the cultivated circles of the Roman Empire. (Schaff: 1910)

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<sup>23</sup> Schaff alludes to contempt or ignorance as reasons why these two Romans may have ignored the church in their writings.

## D Inclusionist scholars arise seeking to engage the culture

It was in this climate that there arose in various places men who sought to defend and explain Christianity to a hostile world. The apologists of the second and third centuries were a very diverse group. Only a portion of them would use a cultural-inclusive approach to mission.<sup>24</sup> Clement and Origen stand out among them as two of the early pioneers of this type of mission endeavor. *Using many of the reasoning methods and thought patterns developed and popularized by the Greeks, they assayed to help the pagan worshipers of the Roman gods and espousers of Greek philosophy understand Christianity as a religion not wholly different from their own.* This new approach drew criticism from some. Tertullian's famous query "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?" was penned in direct response to early attempts at incorporating Greek philosophy into Christian doctrine.<sup>25</sup> Origen, Clement and others attempted to highlight the similarities between the Christian and pagan religions while explaining the differences as reasonable and minimal. This was done through purposefully including and introducing Greek culture (pagan philosophies or ceremonies) into the Christian religion.

As substantiation of the preceding point, Fromm points out that by the 2nd century many of the ideas of the church fathers of the post apostolic period had already become *tainted* by the surrounding pagan philosophies (Fromm I 1950: 296-297).

Alexandria in Egypt proved to be the ideal spot for the vigorous intellectual defense and presentation of Christianity. As the second most important city of the empire politically and a great center of learning and culture it provided an ideal setting for a theological school. Oddly enough, the Inclusionism of the Christian scholars had its foundations in the work of a pre-Christian era Jewish Rabbi who was a contemporary of both Jesus and Paul.

Philo, issued from a family of means and influence in this influential city gave a theological tool that would remain a major component of Inclusionism throughout the history of the church. It is

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<sup>24</sup> For the purposes of this research a culture inclusive approach denotes specifically the inclusion of non-Christian philosophy and/or ceremonies in Christian mission.

<sup>25</sup> Tertullian, *de Praescr.* 7; *Apol.* 46. Tertullian's thinking on culture and Christianity presented a direct contrast to that of the Inclusionists. Like the apostles before him he saw Christianity as "flinging down a gage of challenge to philosophy" (Chadwick 1984: 1-4).

critical now that we regress historically to gain the widest possible perspective of the subject at hand.

## **E The theological school of Alexandria**

### **1. Pre-Christian preparation of the Inclusivist MPP**

Philo lived in Alexandria, Egypt and was a contemporary of Jesus. Though it was still early in the first century, Alexandria was already the second city of the Empire and the principal seat of culture and learning (Edersheim 1993: 40-44). It was also the center of Hellenistic culture for the Empire and became the epicenter of *Neo-Platonism*. The Jewish population that existed in Alexandria was by all accounts privileged, large, influential, and thoroughly hellenized. Philo was born into a leading Jewish family in the city.

Though the Jews were wealthy and influential they were still despised by the greater Roman culture. As a Rabbi living in this influential center of learning and culture, Philo would become the chief proponent of a new approach to acceptance for the Jews that attempted to show that the classical Greek philosophical systems were essentially the same in origin and purpose as was the Old Testament religion of the Jews. So great was his grasp of philosophy and so broad his reading that his writings became useful tools for the study of Greek philosophy. They were used not only as spiritual letters but also as tools in helping to understand Platonism, Pythagoras, and Stoicism as some point out (Sandmel 1979: 4-5).

His primary tool in attempting to blend Jewish belief with Greek philosophy was the allegoric theology that was already a major part of the rabbinic spirituality of the era.<sup>26</sup> Allegoric interpretations of the scripture suggested that a biblical text's true and intended meaning was not the apparent meaning but a secret, mystical significance apparent only to those used skillfully a set of interpretive rules that he elucidates in his works.<sup>27</sup> After his day allegorist interpretation of the Bible would always be linked to the theological history of Alexandria – especially as it related to the Christian church and the theological school built up there.

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<sup>26</sup> Edersheim in his work, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* shows very distinctly and in great detail the allegorist interpretations of the scripture then current among the Rabbis. Edersheim, Alfred. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1993, Hendrickson Press, USA, 28-32.

<sup>27</sup> One author refers to allegoric scripture interpretation as a *functional hermeneutic*, one in which the literal or historical context is not taken into consideration. In the functional the text is interpreted “functionally” lifted out of its immediate context.

Aside from allegorist principles, Philo would greatly influence the church through his emphasis on the mystical *logos* of scripture. His emphasis on this theme was such that many Christians would later regard Philo as a sort of secret Christian. In fact, the reason that Philo's writings remain extant is that Christians would build upon his treatment of *logos* in developing an early theology of the Christ. Since this was, essentially impossible most scholars argue that Philo was essentially using a familiar platonic term and using it as a *point de départ* in his reasoned attempts to show the philosophical validity of the Jewish religion. Philo's greatest contribution to Inclusivism and to the church was to be his attempts to weld Greek Philosophy and Jewish religion. Edersheim states that he held, in his theology, both Platonic and Stoic views (Edersheim 1993: 30).

## **2. What Philo taught and its affect on Inclusivist mission of the early church**

It would be good to reiterate here that although Philo was a Jew and reflected Jewish thought and opinions his writings were all produced in Greek vocabulary and culturally relevant terminology. Philo like the stoics saw the voyage to wisdom to be an arduous one (Sandmel 1979: 20). To the Stoics one attained to true wisdom by traversing and mastering the common and practical subjects such as math for instance. Philo too emphasized that the Greek philosophers were a necessary step to true wisdom found in Moses and the rest of the Old Testament (Sandmel 1979: 21).

Allegory assigns a special meaning to a passage, which meaning is, on the surface, not present in the passage. For example, Philo interprets the conflict between Cain and Abel to be that of two types of persons. Cain represents the man who is fluent in speech but who is deficient in content, while Abel is the kind of man whose content is solid but whose speech is halting. A fluent man can kill a man of halting speech, as Cain killed Abel. *There is nothing in the scriptural account that justifies this interpretation. This is normally the case with Philo's allegory* (Sandmel 1979: 18) (Emphasis supplied).

The chief purpose of allegory was to allow one to adhere to texts of scripture that were troubling (Sandmel 1979: 18). Philo presented the Old Testament to the educated of Alexandria suggesting

that texts that seemed on the surface irrational, trivial, or illogical must have a “deeper” non-apparent meaning. This was Philo’s way of dealing with these areas of scripture that he could not rationally explain.

Everything became symbolical in his hands; if it suited his purpose: numbers (in a very arbitrary manner), beasts, birds, fowls, creeping things, plants, stones, elements, substances conditions, even sex—and so a term or an expression might have several contradictory meanings, from which the interpreter was at liberty to choose.

(Sandmel 1979: 18)

Six literal days of creation proved problematic to his rationalistic mind. He said “It would be a sign of great simplicity to think that the world was created in six days or indeed at all in time; ...” (Philo 1971: 42). What was Philo’s solution to this *irrational* text? God is not speaking of the number of days at all but is simply suggesting that six is a perfect number representing completion (Philo 1971: 43).

Further, in the same work on the *Allegories of the Sacred Laws*, Philo suggests that the Gihon River cited in Genesis is by its physical position to be interpreted as symbolic of courage (Philo 1971: 59). “For the name of Gihon”, he says, “Being interpreted means chest, or an animal which attacks with his horns; each of which interpretations is emblematic of courage.” (Philo 1971: 59)

### **3. Union of the Greek and the Hebrew**

Following are several examples of how Philo deftly included Platonic dualism in his theological treatises of the scriptures thus exemplifying his belief that the two were at times harmonious. When speaking on courage in his theological treatise on the virtues he repeats the sentiments of Plato when he said

"We must not look upon all bold (tharraleous) men as courageous (andreious), for boldness is derived from human skill, or from anger, or from madness; but courage arises only from nature, and from a good disposition of the soul" Philo said the following: “now proceed in regular order to speak of courage, not meaning by courage that warlike and frantic delirium,

under the influence of passion as its counsellor, which the generality of men take for it, but knowledge.”.

(Philo Judaeus, On the Virtues)

In his same work of the virtues, he equates the concept of moderation with salvation:

Accordingly, the diseases of the body inflict very little injury on us, while our souls are in a sound state; and the sound health of the soul consists in a good admixture of the powers conversant with hunger, and appetite, and reason, the reasoning power having the predominance, and guiding the other two, as a charioteer guides and restrains restive horses; the proper name of this healthy state of the soul is moderation, which produces salvation to the thinking part of the faculties in us; for as it is constantly in danger of being overwhelmed by the impetuosity of the passions, moderation suffers it not to be sunk in the depths, but lifts it up and raises it on high, endowing it with soul and vitality, and in some sense with immortality.

(Philo Judaeus, On the Virtues: 14)

Philo’s views on human nature reflect much of Platonic dualism where the spirit is captive of the sinful, earthly body. The similarity between Plato’s view that knowledge equals salvation and Philo’s treatment of the subject is obvious when one considers the following:

Plato likens this struggle to a charioteer driving two winged horses, one noble and the other ignoble. The noble horse wishes to mount up to the sky, to the realm of the divine eternal realities; it represents the divine immortal part of the soul whose proper realm is the region above the heaven of "the colourless, formless, and intangible truly existing essence [*ousia ontos ousa*] with which all true knowledge is concerned." The ignoble horse — the lower part of the soul — drags downward toward the earth, and, if it is not disciplined, corrupts the soul with impurities. "There the utmost toil and struggle await the soul." The body is thus the enemy of the soul, for it is a mass of evil, and serves as a prison for the soul. The body hinders the soul from the acquisition of knowledge.

(Ladd, 1968, 13-40)

Ladd went on to point out that while Philo never fully and explicitly espoused the Platonic proposition that matter was evil and the spiritual realm was free and good, it is certainly implicit to his teaching.

Philo often speaks of the body as the enemy of the soul. While he does not recognize matter *ipso facto* as evil, the body is a foul prison-house of the soul, like a sackcloth robe, a tomb (*sema*), a grave (*trumbos*). Some souls "sink beneath the stream" of bodily materiality, so that the vision of the heavenly is lost. But those who pursue wisdom and philosophy, namely, God, those who discipline the body and cultivate the mind, "soar upwards" to behold the wonders of the heavenly realm. Philo describes this experience of "salvation" in the language of the Greek mysteries as though it involved ecstatic vision.

(Ladd, 1968, 13-40)

## **F How Philo's theology affected Alexandrian scholars Clement and Origen**

The theological school of Alexandria was established some time in the mid-second century by Pataenus with an express purpose: to tear down the wall of separation between Christianity and Greek Paganism. The mould had already been cast by Philo there in the same city, so it became an easy thing to follow his example. The purpose of the school of Alexandria was ultimately a missionary one because proving the cultural viability of Christianity would eventually bring converts.

However, the Alexandrian fathers found a solution. It was contained in the mission of the Alexandrian school and its teachers to develop once and for all a coherent synthesis of Greek science and religion. The result was Christian philosophy, which, Clement realized, was the only hope of joining the pagan and Christian parties together under one rational and acceptable Christian religion. While those in the like of Tertullian renounced the remolding of Christian doctrine to fit philosophical ideals, the Alexandrian party became a pioneer in both its fresh theological endeavors and in its success to finally spread the Christian faith among the intellectual circles of imperial society.

(Moussa 2003: 1)

The historian Mosheim says that Eclecticism, a school of philosophy that saw truth in all religions and philosophies and professed that the work of the true philosopher was to organize this truth in a coherent system, first took root in Alexandria. According to A.T. Jones (Jones 1891: 96), Eclectics held Plato to be the person that most fully came to truth. He goes on to state the following:

This philosophy was adopted by such of the learned at Alexandria, as wished to be accounted Christians, and yet to retain the name, the garb, and the rank of philosophers. In particular, all those who in this century presided in the schools of the Christians at Alexandria, Athenagoras, Pantaenus, and Clemens Alexandrinus, are said to have approved of it. These men were persuaded that true philosophy, the great and most salutary gift of God, lay in scattered fragments among all the sects of philosophers; and therefore, that it was the duty of every wise man and especially of a Christian teacher, to collect those fragments from all quarters, and to use them for the defense of religion and the confutation of impiety. Yet this selection of opinions did not prevent them from regarding Plato as wiser than all the rest, and as especially remarkable for treating the Deity, the soul, and things remote from sense, so as to suit the Christian scheme.

(Ecclesiastical History," Century ii, part ii, chap. I, par. 7, Maclaine's translation)

Phillip Schaff says the following:

Heathenism, as interpreted by philosophy, almost found favor with some of the more moderate Christian apologists . . . The Christians endeavored to enlist the earlier philosophers in their cause; they were scarcely content with asserting that the nobler Grecian philosophy might be designed to prepare the human mind for the reception of Christianity; they were almost inclined to endow these sages with a kind of prophetic foreknowledge of its more mysterious doctrines. 'I have explained,' says the Christian in Minucius Felix, 'the opinions of almost all the philosophers, whose most illustrious glory it is that they have worshiped one God, though under various names; so that one might suppose either that the Christians of the present day are philosophers, or that the philosophers of old were already Christians.'

(Schaff 1902: 2.09.07)

The previous quotes show that in Alexandria Philo and others paved the way for Christian attempts to evangelize pagans, attenuate persecution, and win converts through the tool of combining Greek philosophy and Hebrew religion. His allegoric interpretation system allowed for this. It also allowed for the introduction of Greek philosophy into Christianity. For as Jones (1891: 98) states allegorist interpretation allowed for much greater freedom and latitude in the admission of non-Christian ideas into Christian mission.

Clement and Origen both imbibed heavily of allegorist principles (Jones 1891: 96-100). They also used Inclusivism in their mission to win converts through dialogue through their inclusion of Greek philosophy in their Christian system.

### **G A possible link**

As has been demonstrated, a cursory look at the beginnings of Inclusivist mission suggests the possibility of a link between allegorist interpretation principles and the inclusion of Greek philosophical ideas in Christian mission. This suggestion is to this point one of association only at this point because allegorist Bible interpretation and Inclusivist mission issued from the same source- the Alexandrian theological school. However, to get at the truth of the suggested link it is important to look at the theological suppositions of allegoric Bible interpretation and then at the original sources themselves of Inclusivist church fathers to see if indeed such a link can be further substantiated.

### **H The presuppositions of allegorist interpretation**

Gerhard Hasel (1985: 2) says that allegorist interpretation presupposed a biblical hermeneutic based on the Greek philosophical system. He goes on to say that this interpretation method was not under the control of scripture itself but under the control of norms external to the Bible itself. *Allegorist interpretation then, according to Hasel, supported extra-biblical normative sources for scripture interpretation.* Another presupposition of allegorist interpretation according to Hasel (1985: 2) is that the true meaning of scripture is not to be found in the literal meaning of the biblical text but in the hidden meaning. According to Hasel allegorist interpretation was predicated upon the presupposition that *the Bible could not be best understood literally.*

We now turn to the original writings of some early church fathers of the Alexandrian school for substantiation of the preceding points.

## **I Selections from the writings of Clement and Origen with explanatory comments**

The chief aim of the Christian philosophers was to seek to enlist the Greek and pagan philosophies to prove the culture and rationality of Christianity because aside from persecution Christianity was contending on all fronts with a series of claims and accusations which Schaff summarizes as the following (Schaff 1902: 2.12).

In general, the leading arguments of the Judaism and heathenism of this period against the new religion are the following:

1. Against Christ: his illegitimate birth; his association with poor, unlettered fishermen, and rude publicans; his form of a servant, and his ignominious death. But the opposition to him gradually ceased. While Celsus called him a downright impostor, the Syncretists and Neo-Platonists were disposed to regard him as at least a distinguished sage.

2. Against Christianity: its novelty; its barbarian origin; its want of a national basis; the alleged absurdity of some of its facts and doctrines, particularly of regeneration and the resurrection; contradictions between the Old and New Testaments, among the Gospels, and between Paul and Peter; the demand for a blind, irrational faith.

3. Against the Christians: atheism, or hatred of the gods; the worship of a crucified malefactor; poverty, and want of culture and standing; desire of innovation; division and sectarianism; want of patriotism; gloomy seriousness; credulity; superstition, and fanaticism. Sometimes they were charged even with unnatural crimes, like those related in the pagan mythology of Oedipus and his mother Jocaste (*concubitus Oedipodei*), and of Thyestes and Atreus (*epulae Thyestae*). Perhaps some Gnostic sects ran into scandalous excesses; but as against the Christians in general this charge was so clearly unfounded, that it is not noticed even by Celsus and Lucian. The senseless accusation, that they worshipped an ass's head, may have arisen, as Tertullian already intimates, from a story of Tacitus, respecting some Jews, who were once directed by a wild ass to fresh water, and thus relieved from the torture of thirst; and it is worth mentioning, only to show how passionate and blind was the opposition with which Christianity in this period of persecution had to contend.

*The Alexandrian Christian scholars carried on a type of “evangelistic” education of their students and scholarly classes intended to substantiate Christianity using Greek thought and philosophy, not solely the Bible.* The scholars would appeal to that which the masses held as the highest ideal of refinement and culture--Greek philosophy.

Clement was the first of the Alexandrian scholars of note to write prolifically. His extant works include the *Instructor*, his *Exhortation to the Heathen*, the *Stromata*, and Miscellaneous writings. One criticism of his writings commonly found in the literature is that he lacked system.

Scholars have found it no easy task to sum up the chief points of Clement’s teaching. As has already been intimated, he lacks technical precision and makes no pretense to orderly exposition. It is easy, therefore, to misjudge him...*but he would also strive to remain a philosopher, and bring his reason to bear in matters of religion...*He set himself, therefore, with philosophy as an instrument, to transform faith into science, and revelation into theology. (Knight: 2006)

Clement was one of the first to seek to borrow Pagan terminology and quote from pagan authors comfortably in his instruction on Christian living. He did this quite frequently in his work *The Instructor* as the following quote exemplifies:

How a husband is to live with his wife, and respecting self-help, and housekeeping, and the employment of domestics; and further, with respect to the time of marriage, and what is suitable for wives, we have treated in the discourse concerning marriage. What pertains to discipline alone is reserved now for description, as we delineate the life of Christians. The most indeed has been already said, and laid down in the form of disciplinary rules. What still remains we shall subjoin; for examples are of no small moment in determining to salvation.

See, says the tragedy, The consort of Ulysses was not killed  
By Telemachus; for she did not take a husband in addition to a husband,  
But in the house the marriage-bed remains unpolluted.

(Clemens cir 200 b: 2.05.15)

The assertion that he freely used Greek philosophical ideas as a justification of Christianity is further substantiated by his own words:

Our book will not shrink from making use of what is best in philosophy and other preparatory instruction. “For not only for the Hebrews and those that are under the law,” according to the apostle, “is it right to become a Jew, but also a Greek for the sake of the Greeks, that we may gain all.” (1Cor. 9:20, 1Cor. 9:21) Also in the Epistle to the Colossians, he writes, “Admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ.” (Col. 1:28) The nicety of speculation, too, suits the sketch presented in my commentaries. In this respect the resources of learning are like a relish mixed with the food of an athlete, who is not indulging in luxury, but entertains a noble desire for distinction.

(Clemens cir. 200 a: 1.1-9)

In the same section of the *Stromata* he anticipates the arguments of his critics concerning his heavy dependence on the philosophers. He says that it is unfair to assume that truth is not to be found in their writings unless by minute detail one studies them. He alludes to his belief that philosophy came about with the aim of helping people to true knowledge of the divine:

In reference to these commentaries, which contain as the exigencies of the case demand, the Hellenic opinions, I say thus much to those who are fond of finding fault. First, even if philosophy were useless, if the demonstration of its uselessness does good, it is yet useful. Then those cannot condemn the Greeks, *who have only mere hearsay knowledge of their opinions*, and have not entered into a minute investigation in each department, in order to acquaintance with them. For the refutation, which is based on experience, is entirely trustworthy. For the knowledge of what is condemned is found the most complete demonstration. Many things, then, though not contributing to the final result, equip the artist. And otherwise erudition commends him, who sets forth the most essential doctrines so as to produce persuasion in his hearers, engendering admiration in those who are taught, and leads them to the truth. And such persuasion is convincing, by which those that love learning admit the truth; so that philosophy does not ruin life by being the originator of false practices and base deeds, although some have calumniated it, though it be the clear image of truth, a

divine gift to the Greeks; nor does it drag us away from the faith, as if we were bewitched by some delusive art, but rather, so to speak, by the use of an ampler circuit, obtains a common exercise demonstrative of the faith. Further, the juxtaposition of doctrines, by comparison, saves the truth, from which follows knowledge.

***Philosophy came into existence, not on its own account, but for the advantages reaped by us from knowledge, we receiving a firm persuasion of true perception, through the knowledge of things comprehended by the mind.*** For I do not mention that the *Stromata*, forming a body of varied erudition, wish artfully to conceal the seeds of knowledge. As, then, he who is fond of hunting captures the game after seeking, tracking, scenting, hunting it down with dogs; so truth, when sought and got with toil, appears a delicious thing. Why, then, you will ask, did you think it fit that such an arrangement should be adopted in your memoranda? Because there is great danger in divulging the secret of the true philosophy to those, whose delight it is unsparingly to speak against everything, not justly; and who shout forth all kinds of names and words indecorously, deceiving themselves and beguiling those who adhere to them. “For the Hebrews seek signs,” as the apostle says, “and the Greeks seek after wisdom.

(Clemens cir. 200 a: 1.1-9) *emphasis supplied*

In the following quote from *the Stromata* he proposes the idea that all of the profane and secular sciences flow from God. Keeping in mind the ultimate goal of the Christian philosophers and the historical context, it is not difficult to deduce that he alludes to the Greek philosophers as inspired in an attempt to attenuate persecution, refute the accusations of the many, vocal critics of Christianity and ultimately to win converts.

Here he terms the Babylonians wise. And that scripture calls every secular science or art by the one name wisdom (there are other arts and sciences invented over and above by human reason), and that artistic and skillful invention is from God, will be clear if we adduce the following statement: “And the Lord spake to Moses, See, I have called Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Or, of the tribe of Judah; and I have filled him with the divine spirit of wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge, to devise and to execute in all manner of work, to work gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and in working stone

work, and in the art of working wood,” and even to “all works.” (Exodus. 31:2-5) And then He adds the general reason, “And to every understanding heart I have given understanding;” (Exodus 31:6) that is, to every one capable of acquiring it by pains and exercise. And again, it is written expressly in the name of the Lord “And speak thou to all that are wise in mind, whom I have filled with the spirit of perception.” (Exodus 28:3).

(Clemens cir. 200 a: 1.1-9)

As we seek to further our quest to find a possible affinity between the linking of allegorist interpretation of scripture and Inclusivist mission endeavor in the history of Christianity, it is important to look to the work of another Alexandrian luminary.

### **J Origen and the inspiration of the scriptures:**

In no other subject area is Origen’s role as both a congealer and expander of earlier allegorist hermeneutic more pronounced than on the topic of the Bible’s inspiration. For Origen the Bible is the inspired word of God yet this inspiration is mystical. For him the scripture concealed its deepest meanings beneath the surface of the literal – which was never to be taken literally. Especially since the literal meaning of scripture was often absurd and unbelievable and therefore not to be believed.

Because the principal aim was to announce the connection that exists among spiritual events, those that have already happened and those that have yet to come to pass, whenever the Word found that things which had happened in history with these mystical events, he used them, concealing from the multitude their deeper meaning. But whenever in the narrative the accomplishment of some particular deeds, which had been previously recorded for the sake of more mystical meanings, did not correspond with the sequence of intellectual truths, the scripture wove into the story something which did not happen, occasionally something which could not happen, and occasionally something which might have happened but in fact did not.

(Origen 231: 4.2.9)

One area where Origen puts these principles into application is that of the first three days of creation. He found it *incredible* that the creation could have happened without the sun, moon and

stars first existing. He also found it beyond belief that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil could be literal. The following passage from *De Principiis* is of this nature:

Even the gospels are full of passages of this kind, as when the devil takes Jesus up into a high mountain in order to show him from thence the kingdoms of the whole world and the glory of them (Matt. 4.8). For what man who does not read such passages carefully would fail to condemn those that believe that with the eye of the flesh, which requires a great height to enable us to believe what is below and at our feet, the kingdoms of the Persians, Scythians, Indians, and Parthians were seen, and the manner in which their rulers are glorified by men.? And the careful reader will detect thousands of other passages in the gospels like this, which will convince him that the events which did not take place at all are woven into the records of what did literally happen.

(Origen 231: 4.3.1)

Origen's writings are replete with such observations. It is obvious that the allegoric hermeneutic had (under his tutelage) developed as a system that allowed for factual errors, even prevarications, on the part of God through His inspired word in order that the careful "initiated" reader might discern the underlying spiritual meaning. Early Inclusivism's chosen biblical paradigm was undoubtedly the allegoric. The "careful reader" of scripture would have to use reason and philosophy to understand the deeper truths of the Bible. The Bible due to its inconsistency on the surface level could never be relied upon as its own interpreter. Ultimately, the mysterious allegorical interpretation must be discovered and this could only be through the proper application of the principles that he would elucidate (Grant 1963: 59-60).

Grant poses the question as to why Origen seemed so willing to do away with literal interpretation. He goes on to answer that the literal meaning, that which was understood by the unlearned and the simple, and thus beneath God's intended purpose (Grant 1963: 59-60). It seems that Origen was, whether conscious of it or not, helping to develop a new intellectual elite within the church. Grant makes the following observation:

While Origen constantly tries to express what he regards as the orthodox Christian faith, the philosophical aids to faith with which he is so much occupied tend to alter the content of that faith.

(Grant 1963: 59-60)

The link between his allegorist interpretation methods and his inclusion of Greek philosophy and culture in Christian mission is demonstrated in his response to the accusations of Celsus, a severe critic of Christianity. Here we see Origen's admission of external validation of Bible interpretation taken a step further as he claims Hebraic origin (inspiration by extension) for the thoughts of the Greek philosophers.

How much more impartial than Celsus is Numenius the Pythagorean, who has given many proofs of being a very eloquent man, and who has carefully tested many opinions, and collected together from many sources what had the appearance of truth; for, in the first hook of his treatise *On the Good*, speaking of those nations who have adopted the opinion that God is incorporeal, he enumerates the Jews also among those who hold this view; not showing any reluctance to use even the language of their prophets in his treatise, and to give it a metaphorical signification. It is said, moreover, that Hermippus has recorded in his first book, *On Lawgivers*, that it was from the Jewish people that Pythagoras derived the philosophy which he introduced among the Greeks. And there is extant a work by the historian Hecataeus, treating of the Jews, in which so high a character is bestowed upon that nation for its learning, that Herennius Philo, in his treatise on the Jews, has doubts in the first place, whether it is really the composition of the historian; and says, in the second place, that if really his, it is probable that he was carried away by the plausible nature of the Jewish history, and so yielded his assent to their system.

(Origen 230: 1.15)

As Origen sought to diminish the ostensible differences between Greek philosophy and Bible religion, he has been accused of allowing pagan concepts into Christian doctrine. One example of this trend is outlined by William Webster (1995: 110-116). He suggested that the doctrine of purgatory was introduced into the church through the influence of both Clement and Origen. The

belief in purgation is something that the Greek scholars, especially Plato, taught. Origen's own writings seem to bear out the veracity of Webster's allegation that Origen believed in the idea of purgation. The following quote speaks of heaven being attained by people only after they go through an added time of purgation or cleansing for their evil deeds.

We also shall be changed", will shine forth in splendour; or at least that when the fashion of those things which are seen passes away, and all corruption has been shaken off and cleansed away, and when the whole of the space occupied by this world, in which the spheres of the planets are said to be, has been left behind and beneath,<sup>13</sup> then is reached the fixed abode of the pious and the good situated above that sphere, which is called non-wandering (αἰὲν ἀπλανήτης), as in a good land, in a land of the living, which will be inherited by the meek and gentle; to which land belongs that heaven (which, with its more magnificent extent, surrounds and contains that land itself) which is called truly and chiefly heaven, in which heaven and earth, the end and perfection of all things, may be safely and most confidently placed, - where, viz., these, after their apprehension and their chastisement for the offences which they *have undergone by way of purgation, may, after having fulfilled and discharged every obligation*, deserve a habitation in that land; while those who have been obedient to the word of God, and have henceforth by their obedience shown themselves capable of wisdom, are said to deserve the kingdom of that heaven or heavens; and thus the prediction is more worthily fulfilled, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" (Mat. 5:5) and, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven;" (Mat. 5:3) and the declaration in the Psalm, "He shall exalt thee, and thou shalt inherit the land." (Psalms 37:34)

(Origen 231:4.04.07)

Further evidence of Origen's borrowing of Greek ideology is given in the following quotation supplied from the writings of Ladd:

In his dialogue *The Face of the Moon* we find an eschatological myth about human destiny. Man consists of body and soul, but the soul is itself complex, consisting of soul and mind. Only mind is immortal, although the soul survives the death of the body. After this death, man's mind-soul must spend time in a sort of Hades, which occupies the space between the

earth and the moon. Here man must die a second death, when the soul is gently and slowly purged so that man is finally reduced to his one immortal part - mind alone. This purifying process consists in purging away the pollutions that were contracted from the body.

(Ladd 1968: 13-40)

### **K The ecclesiology of early Inclusivism**

The theology of the church of early Inclusivism was in those days in a dynamic state of change and thus cannot be here treated in any detail. This will be done in a later section. Bosch (1991: 190-213) states that as early the turn of the first century there began a shift (that continued over several centuries) in the view among Christians of what the church was. The itinerant evangelist model of the New Testament was giving way to the concept of settled elders and deacons. The Holy Spirit was stripped of its equipping function for ministry and came to be perceived as simply the “sanctifier” of the church. Somewhere in the philosophical shifts the sense of aggressive mission to the world was lost. The church now became the haven of the spiritually elite (Bosch 1991: 190-213). The church became the center of the world and the ardor of mission fervor was lost almost completely. Mission then became nothing more than the spread of culture and the church the bearer of culture (Bosch 1991: 190-213). It seems absurd given the fact that persecution against Christians continued. However, by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the work of the “Christian philosophers” had seemed to accomplish its purpose – destroying many of the barriers between paganism and Christianity. Not long after Constantine would be baptized and Christianity would become the new *official* bearer of Roman culture. During this time, monasticism became the only aggressively missionary aspect of the church in most areas where it existed.

### **L The eschatology of early Inclusivism**

The eschatology of the church in the time of the early Inclusivist seems to have carried over from the apostolic age. Up through the time of Clement, Inclusivist and Non Inclusivist church fathers seemed to hold to the pre-millennial *immanent expectation* of the return of Christ. Phillip Schaff says that the greatest change in theology during the period of the Anti-Nicene fathers was the gradual shift away from pre-millennialism to an a-millennial view of the return of Christ (Schaff 1902: 2.12.156-158). However, this did not occur quickly. Most church fathers expected the pre-

millennial (in most cases imminent) return of Christ. He said the belief carried over from the apostolic church in the imminent return of Christ was:

...through the whole age of persecution, was a copious fountain of encouragement and comfort under the pains of that martyrdom which sowed in blood the seed of a bountiful harvest for the church.

(Schaff 1902: 2.12.156-158)

Clement of Rome (Clement of Rome), not known to encourage an Inclusivist approach to mission, said in his Epistle to the Corinthians that:

Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, Speedily will He come, and will not tarry; and, The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look.

The *Epistle of Barnabus*, supposedly an Alexandrian scholar, still believed in a literal, pre-millennial coming of Christ (Barnabus cir. 100:1.05.01)

The Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of the creation [thus]: And God made in six days the works of His hands, and made an end on the seventh day, and rested on it, and sanctified it. Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, He finished in six days. This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, *for a day is with Him a thousand years*. And He Himself testifieth, saying, Behold, to-day will be as a thousand years. Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished. And He rested on the seventh day. This meaneth: when His Son, coming [again], shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the-sun, and the moon, and the stars, *then shall He truly rest on the seventh day*.

It is apparent that at least at the outset one's eschatological belief would for the most part not be conclusively indicative of any proclivity to the Inclusivist mission praxis paradigm. In fact, Iraenus, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr who differed widely in theology all held to the pre-millennialist view of the return of Christ (Allen: 2007).

Origen generally spiritualized references to the second coming in keeping with his hermeneutic tendencies (Allen: 2007).

## **M Summary of the prominent aspects of early Inclusivist mission proponents' beliefs**

### **1. An emphasis on philosophy and philosophical speculations**

Alexandrian theologians always esteemed pagan, Greek philosophy very highly (Gieseler, 1857: 211-214). Two ostensible reasons for this affinity are given by inclusivism's first and chief proponents. *Philosophy is to the pagans what the law was to the Jews, a forerunner of the gospel.* and the second is that *only through philosophy can a deeper understanding of the scriptures be attained* (Gieseler, 1857: 211-214). The initiated or those given a special dispensation by God only attained this deeper understanding according to Origen. They thus emphasized a mystical transmission of initiation that was not much different in substance than the gnosis of the Gnostics. In fact, many historians refer to these two early theologians as essentially Gnostics (Gieseler, 1857: 211-214). In the view of the Alexandrians, the body or physical form was simply a receptacle of the true person. Therefore, that at the time of the resurrection souls would not resume the habitation of the physical body.

### **2. Use of allegoric biblical interpretation**

In order to establish the foregoing principle Clement and Origen of necessity had to resort to a reading of scripture that would allow for a looser interpretation than Tertullian and other apostolic fathers had used. Allegorism would provide just such a device (Gieseler, 1857, 221). The use of the allegoric method stands in stark contrast to the more literal approach to scripture interpretation used by the apostles themselves at the very beginning of Christianity (Hasel 1985: 1-3).

### **3. Scriptural interpretation became functional**

Inclusivism became early tainted by the charge that it was not independent but the disingenuous product of ulterior agendas. The purpose of the theological school of Alexandria was to search for a synthesis between Christianity and Greek Philosophy. By starting with a

purpose one gets the distinct impression that the Bible interpretation and application of Clement and Origen were conformed to the prevailing views of the time. Allegoric interpretation as presented by Origen and Clement has long born the stigma of being a hermeneutic with no definite system. This allows for fanciful and unintended interpretations of scripture (Gieseler 1857: 223).

## **N The effects of early Inclusivism on the church**

Our chief preoccupation now is to determine what if any effect early culture-inclusive mission endeavors had on the early church so recently emerged from the apostolic age. However, before approaching this critical task, it must be underlined that whether or not the attempts at mission among resistant people by some of the early Christian apologists were positive or negative, one thing is certain. These men all believed sincerely in the correctness of their endeavors (Vaughan1834: 220-222). Though as some suggest it may be possible that these early fathers made accessions to paganism it is also true that they were ready to die for the cause of Christianity (Vaughan1834: 220-222). Indeed many were martyrs.

That settled, this historical survey shows that the general perceptions of the influence of Inclusivism on the early church were up until the age of the Enlightenment viewed as detrimental by classical Protestant theologians (Vaughan1834: 220-222).

The theme of primitive Christianity's corruption at the hands of Greek Philosophy was one cherished by heresiologists such as Hippolytus, who linked the various Gnostic sects with their supposed philosophic antecedents, and by the church historian, Adolph Harnack, who proposed the famous thesis that dogmatic developments within Christianity from the second century on (to him a most regrettable lapse from the teachings of Jesus) were the work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the gospel (Clark 1977: 1).

Post-Enlightenment historians can be divided into two classes: the neo-liberal Protestants and Catholics who viewed the Hellenized Christianity as the complete victory of the church over paganism and the conservative, mainly Protestant group who saw the Hellenized church as

compromising and connected with the rise of the papacy.<sup>28</sup> Another well documented fact is that during this age of debate (the ear of the apologists) pagan philosophy and Christian thinking acted reciprocally upon each other so that syncretism was the result (Vaughan 1834: 222-230). The inclusive mission paradigm from its inception has been plagued by the truth that the church was not always a transformer of society but was materially tainted by its acceptance of Greek philosophy (Moelier 1912: 180-181). Ellen White in keeping with a long line of Protestant historians, commentators and theologians before her had the following to say: about *cultural-Inclusivist* mission in the early church.

Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. The spirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism. But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and his apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions

(White 1911b: 51).

Bosch states that the apologists gave the church a new way of viewing itself in contrast to the apocalyptic, judgment day oriented paradigm of the apostles. The inclusion of philosophical approaches to Christian mission was a great shift away from the Spirit and ideals of Jesus and the apostles (Bosch 1991 210-212). There are two broad domains where this shift affected the church.

Vaughan taught that the greatest negative effect of the philosophical penchant of some of the church fathers was that it introduced unsound methods of biblical interpretation and biblical inspiration into the church (Vaughan 1834: 232). Especially is this the case with the introduction of the allegorical method of Bible study. As has already been underlined in this study, the church borrowed this system of study from the Hellenized Jews of Alexandria in Egypt among whom Philo was an influential thought leader (Edersheim 1993: 17-58).

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<sup>28</sup> The reader is referred to the work of William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History*, as an excellent example of the classic Protestant view of the papacy and its rise as a syncretistic mix of Christianity and paganism.

1. Allegory as developed by Philo and other Hellenized Jews was incorporated into the works of Origen and Clement and would become the chief method of interpretation of the Bible for the medieval church. Origen taught a threefold application of scripture somewhat akin to the belief in the threefold nature of the human (body, soul, and spirit). For him the flesh represented the literal or apparent meaning, the soul represented the moral lesson to be drawn from the text, and the spirit represented in his system, the hidden, mystical, or secret meaning that could only be discerned by allegory (Hall 1991: 103-105). This method was inherited from both Philo and Clement and before them from the Stoic interpreters of Homer (Hall 1991: 103-105). The way Origen and the others disregarded the literal, simple signification of the text in preference to the allegorical has come frequently under attack because with no clear set of interpretive principles grounded in the scripture itself, one is left to impose on the scriptures a sometimes whimsical view always determined by the autonomy of the investigator and not by the scripture itself (Terry 1890: 163-167). “Origen is certainly rather weak on historical reality: for him it is the universal, spiritual truth that counts.” (Hall 1991: 103)
2. Another legitimate criticism (revealing an ill effect) to which Inclusivism lent itself is that in effect *it is an avowal of a belief in a pluralistic interpretation of the Bible* (Ramm 1970: 111). Ramm goes on to point out allegorical interpretation is inconsistent with a belief in the unity of the Bible. His assertion, echoed by many theologians, is that the allegorism of the fathers virtually asserted that for any given text there could be three – possibly four meanings to be picked from at the discretion of the researcher.
3. *Extra-biblical sources became normative to Bible interpretation*. Through their hermeneutic principles, the Inclusivist church fathers suggested that human science (allegory) especially that, of the stoics and Gnostics was normative in the interpretation of scripture (Grant 1963: 52-56). Even Clement’s principles of interpretation leave the researcher to choose what the meaning of scripture is based upon his independent judgment regardless of the literal or intended meaning

of the text. This “neglect of the context” was extremely prevalent among Gnostics who sought to impose their views on secular works. Now it became the principle of the theologians of Alexandria (Vaughan 1834: 54).

*Chapter 4*

*Authoritativism*

## *Authoritativism as an emergent mission paradigm in the apostolic era*

### **A Authoritativism and the countercultural gospel in Paul, the setting**

According to Adolf Harnack the religious context for mission in the New Testament church during the time of Paul was one in which state sponsored polytheism could not tolerate Christian monotheism (Harnack 2005: 25). Jewish monotheism was tolerated, if grudgingly so, as a national religion (Harnack 2005: 26). It was during the activity of the ministry of Paul and other apostles that Christianity passed from a tolerated sect of the Jews (who had been granted status as a recognized religion) to that of a hated sect that would eventually be completely outlawed (Jones 1891: 45). However, after the church stepped out of the shadow of Judaism, Christianity had no temples, no status, images, or any basis as a national religion (Harnack 2005: 26). Christians were very simply atheists (to the polytheists, the majority of the Empire) (Harnack 2005: 26). Polytheism itself was in a dynamic state of change at that time as well. It was quickly merging with the refined and scientific philosophies of Greece. Paul himself makes mention of the fact that Athens, a great capital of learning, religion and philosophy was filled with idols and was granted a hearing by Epicureans and Stoics (Acts 17:16-18).

The attitude toward Christianity during the reigns of Claudius, Nero, Galba and other succeeding emperors was one of contempt and hatred. As has been stated Christians were understood to be atheistic, licentious criminals who practiced the worst of vices.

Suetonius, a contemporary of Tacitus, says that “punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition”

(*Nero* vi. 16; Loeb ed., *Suetonius*, vol. 2, p. 111) *cf* (Nichol 1978)

According to Tacitus: “Therefore, to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, ***loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians***. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely

in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue”

(*Annals* xv. 44; Loeb ed., *Tacitus*, vol. 4, p. 283)<sup>30</sup> [Emphasis supplied]

As has already been stated, the religious climate was a syncretistic mix of pagan Oriental religion and Greek philosophy (Cumont 1960: 60-63). As the Inclusivist apologists would later do, it would have been easy and practical for Paul and the other apostles to include deliberately Greek philosophy and/or pagan ceremonies in his mission to the gentiles.

We then begin here with the writings of Paul, as they form the single, largest block in the New Testament and as such give us a firm grasp of the early church’s mission ideology and practice. Bosch notes (1991: 134) that one cannot separate mission theology from the other theology of Paul. For him mission was theology. For these reasons we will explore his writings as they pertain to the subject at hand, the development of the Authoritative MPP in the New Testament church.

## **1. The countercultural gospel in Paul, the culture**

### **1.1 The sources, textual references**

The definition of culture in mission employed in this study is that of pagan philosophy or ceremonies. There are several texts in the New Testament that allow us to treat this subject with a relative degree of confidence as to what the attitude of the early church was toward these things.

*Colossians 2:8, ESV: See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*

This is the only text in the NT that speaks expressly of the cultural element of philosophy in and of itself. As I will discuss shortly, the NT approach to culture is more general than singling out this single aspect. Paul calls philosophy (Greek or worldly we have deduced) vain and deceptive and not originating from God but from the world (Colossians 2:8). He warns the people of

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<sup>30</sup> Nichol, Francis D., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association) 1978.

Colossi to not be spoiled by Philosophy and vain deceit. One may ask what the philosophy to which Paul was referring consisted of. Barnes (1840) says that Greek philosophy was in the ascendancy and much-adhered to in Colossae. It can safely be deduced then that it is Greek philosophy to which Paul is referring.

Barnes (ibid.) further ties the last phrase of this verse speaking of the elemental spirits (rudiments in the KJV) to the phrase in Galatians 4:3 which again speaks of the elements of the world. He applies this phrase to the aspects of the world in which one receives instruction. The following text from Barnes' notes suggests very strongly that he identifies the phrase "rudiments of the world" as referring to an integrated pattern of thought, behaviours, and or morals to which persons are subjected and of which they learn.

Under the elements of the world: The word rendered "elements" (sing. στοιχειον stoicheion), properly means a row or series; a little step; a pin or peg, as the gnomon of a dial; and then anything "elementary," as a sound, a letter. It then denotes the elements or rudiments of any kind of instruction, and in the New Testament is applied to the first lessons or principles of religion; Hebrews 5:12. It is applied to the elements or component parts of the physical world; 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12. Here the figure is kept up of the reference to the infant Galatians 4:1, Galatians 4:3; and the idea is, that lessons were taught under the Jewish system adapted to their nonage - to a state of childhood (Barnes 1840: Commentary on Galatians 4:3 in Notes on the Bible, electronic version, E-Sword)

Barnes' use of the descriptors *component parts* and *elements* is a clear reference to a very complex system. Culture has been defined as an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations (National Association of School Psychologists 2003: 1-2). It has also been described as social heritage, or tradition, that is passed on to future generations or as consisting of patterned and interrelated ideas, symbols, or behaviors, all of which are learned (National Association of

School Psychologists 2003: 1-2). Clearly then Paul is speaking of culture when referring to the world, or rudiments of the world when speaking of the whole of human behavior and activity.

There are words in the Greek that can be used in a general sense to refer to human culture (the complete sphere of human activity) they are *ainos* or age and cosmos (Logos Research Systems, Inc: 1995). Both can properly be used to delineate the complex system of human interaction and the ordered systems that this interaction has engendered. While it is true that these are not the most common or prevalent or meanings of these words, they are nevertheless plausible enough to merit our further investigation, especially when coupled with the term Sophia, wisdom (Logos Research Systems, Inc: 1995.).

The following texts in the writings of Paul all speak of the world in relation to its wisdom, in the sense of culture and human thought as I have outlined it and all speak of culture (the world) in the pejorative as something that the Christian is to live morally and intellectually independent of: 1 Corinthians 1:17-24 and 1 Corinthians 3:1-7, 13.

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

1 Corinthians 1:17-21, ESV

Barnes in commenting on the above verses says that Paul is speaking directly of the Greek philosophers of his age with whom he would have been so familiar (Barnes 1840: Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:17-21 in Notes on the Bible, electronic version, E-Sword). Paul does not appeal to the philosophers as a validation for his preaching or the content of his message. Again, he says that in all the subtle and abstruse inquiries of the Greek sages, they had failed to find the way to salvation ((Barnes 1840: Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:17-21 in Notes on the Bible,

electronic version, E-Sword). Instead of being a preparation for the gospel as Clement and Origen taught, Greek philosophy was a hindrance to salvation.

Paul again places the wisdom of the philosophers in a pejorative mold in the following text: For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

(I Corinthians 3:19-20, ESV)

Adam Clarke in commenting on this text again names the Greek philosophers specifically as here, those to whom Paul is referring. He suggests also that Paul is here categorically repudiating them and their work as folly or time spent idly (Clarke: 1832). In the context of this topic of Greek philosophy and current culture Donald Guthrie says that 1 Corinthians 14:10 is evidence that Paul's worldview was Christocentric not anthropocentric (Guthrie 1981: 120-121).

It is true that Paul in his speech at the Areopagus recorded in Acts 17:16-34 does refer to a famous poet, Aratus, from his own home region of Cilicia who was widely quoted and known in the Greek world. Yet, this single instance of reference to an external source can hardly be construed as appeal to extra-biblical sources as validation for the gospel he preached. Some have suggested that this is one instance in which profane learning may possibly be useful in gospel presentation (Barnes 1840: Commentary on Acts 17: 16-34 in Notes on the Bible, electronic version, E-Sword). There are some who suggest however, that in Corinth Paul, another city given almost wholly to idolatry, abandoned his tactic of trying to meet pagan ideas with logic and deliberately preached only the cross (White 1911a: 210). Ernst Haenchen says that Luke (the author of Acts) saw in Athens a representation of gentile culture. He also said that the Christians did not see the statues to the gods as mere works of art (Haenchen: 1971).

The thought of the distance that existed between the church and the present culture is given in another of Paul's writings: Ephesians 2:1-3. While it is true that the main emphasis of Paul in these texts is on the promiscuous lifestyle then common among the people, the comments of several theologians suggest that he was also referring to the culture at large.

... in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved ...

Ephesians 2:2-5, ESV

Albert Barnes (Barnes 1840: Commentary on Ephesians 2:2-5 in Notes on the Bible, electronic version, E-Sword) suggests that in this text Paul using the word *aiōn* is speaking of the present age with all of its moors and customs. This is a reference to culture and Paul when speaking of the world speaks of it holistically as unfit.

## **2. The difference between the AMPP and the IMPP as indicated in Paul's writings**

The first and most glaring of the differences then between the Inclusivist MPP and the Authoritative MPP is fundamental. *Authoritativism takes an opposite view to unbiblical philosophical ideas than does Inclusivism. Instead of seeing in them a sort of inspiration as did Clement, Origen, and others Paul especially takes the Greek wisdom to task for its unconcealed ignorance of God.* It is hard to mistake Paul's intent when he says the following: See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Colossians 2:8, ESV

## **B The countercultural nature of the gospel**

Pagan religions had (have) a nebulous, ill-defined concept of conversion but Christianity's claims on its adherents was (and still is) all encompassing? A thorough belief was not an important part of worship to the (pagan) Hellenist at the time of the apostles (Green, 1970: 144-145). What was important was keeping up the ritual services. In addition, there was no connection between ethics and religion, faith and practice. For Christianity to put the emphasis that it did on holy living and right practice was a radical idea for Hellenistic society of that era (Green, 1970: 144-145). Another aspect of the gospel that set Christianity at variance with the

culture was its claims on the lives of the individual. In Greek society, one could serve any number of gods without difficulty. However, Christianity was different. Christ claimed the individual body, heart, and soul for one God to the exclusion of all others.

At this period of intensive religious syncretism here was a religion that stood out like a sore thumb. Passionate monotheists, dedicated to the overthrow of idolatry, equipped with the noblest of ethic, an ancient history, a holy book, they exercised both attraction and repugnance as they spread all over the Mediterranean basin (Green 1970: 146-147).

Gustave Bardy in his book *La Conversion au Christianisme* goes into great depth in several chapters to explain how early Christian converts broke familial and social ties through their simple decision to adhere to Christianity (Bardy 1947: 211-241). He says the following of the singular way that the Christian regarded the popular cultural events of the day:

Le danger est particulièrement redoutable si l'on assiste aux spectacles qui ont dans la vie romaine une importance capitale...Le jour où le catéchumène est descendu dans la piscine baptismale il déclare renoncer au démon, à sa pompe, à ses anges, c'est-à-dire, avant tout à l'idolâtrie, quelle qu'elle soit ; ce n'est qu'après avoir fait ce serment qu'il a été reçu dans l'église. (Bardy 1947: 239)

Not only was the essence of the message of the Gospel countercultural but the apostolic church viewed the culture(s) of the world as fallen. The cultures from which Christians were being called were to the early church lacking in the essential qualities of purity and holiness. Further, the culture(s) of the day were considered incapable of being wholly guided by God since their origins were human and fallen. The following quote exemplifies the attitude of the Christians of Apostolic Age toward the cultures and customs that surrounded them.

By His own example the Saviour has shown that His followers can be in the world and yet not of the world. He came not to partake of its delusive pleasures, to be swayed by its customs, and to follow its practices, but to do His Father's will, to seek and save the lost. With this object before him, the Christian may stand uncontaminated in any surroundings.

Whatever his station or circumstances, exalted or humble, he will manifest the power of true religion in the faithful performance of duty.

Not in freedom from trial, but in the midst of it, is Christian character developed. Exposure to rebuffs and opposition leads the follower of Christ to greater watchfulness and more earnest prayer to the mighty Helper. Severe trial endured by the grace of God develops patience, vigilance, fortitude, and a deep and abiding trust in God. It is the triumph of the Christian faith that it enables its followers to suffer and be strong; to submit, and thus to conquer; to be killed all the day long, and yet to live; to bear the cross, and thus to win the crown of glory.

(White 1911b: 467)

## **C Aspects of the theology of those who first espoused the a MPP, the variables**

### **1. Eschatology**

The New Testament, understood as a missionary document provides unparalleled evidence of how eschatology shaped missionary endeavor in the church of the apostolic era.. Mission in fact, is seen in the New Testament as an essential and prerequisite component in the eschatological plan for the salvation of man (Anderson 1961: 42-43). There is a vital connection in the New Testament between Christian expectation and mission action (Anderson 1961: 42-43). As could be expected this research reveals that between inclusivism on one hand and Authoritativism on the other there existed, at least at the outset, many points of convergence. The underlying difference from which almost all others would stem is the fact that the *earliest Christians perceived the gospel as countercultural*. This cannot be said for the early Inclusivist scholars. *It may also be said that they saw the existing cultures as counter to the gospel*. Keith Pecklers says that the church and its worship will always be countercultural because the church serves as a prophetic voice challenging injustice and wrong in society. Christianity developed its own culture that repudiated many of the aspects of all earthly cultures (Pecklers 2004: 126).

This is the reason why the eschatological focus of the New Testament is so starkly different from that of the age of the apologists. While some of the Inclusivist church fathers like Origen spoke of the last days and the end times, Bosch says that their emphasis was changing from a

future oriented position to that of a culture (Greek philosophically) oriented one (Bosch 1991: 193-200). ***Authoritativism then was first defined as a mission paradigm that found great impetus in an eschatological emphasis. The impetus of early Inclusivism seemed to be cultural relevance.*** This eschatological emphasis possessed an attraction to many because of its implicitly positive orientation to the coming final day.

Gibbon (1897: 186-187) postulated that the promise of eternal happiness that was proposed to mankind through the eschatological message of the apostolic adherents of Christianity as one of the chief of five reasons for its stellar growth. He states:<sup>31</sup>

The ancient Christians were animated by contempt for their present existence, and by a confidence of immortality, of which the doubtful and imperfect faith of modern ages cannot give any adequate notion. ..It was universally believed that the end of the world, and the kingdom of heaven were at hand (Gibbon 1897: 187).<sup>32 33</sup>

It follows that if the Christians were disapproving of this present age and confident of immortality, that they perceived the ambient culture as possessing very little if any spiritual value to them and was thus something to be lived in but not to be a part of. Bosch (1991, 134) says that in Paul's writings there is an identifiable concern for a lost world en route to perdition. ***Another contrast between New Testament mission theology and that of the Inclusivist apologists is the fact that Paul and other early Authoritative proponents saw the world as in a wholly lost condition.*** Inclusivism was more discriminating in its distinctions and granted that some parts of culture (Greek philosophy) may have actually been divinely inspired and thus the learned (or initiated) were actually closer to salvation. The first Christians conceived of themselves as existing in but seeking to lead lives that were distinct from society in general.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Of the three MPPs studied in this research it is the Authoritative that consistently referred to eschatological themes as a motivation for its approach to mission.

<sup>32</sup> (Gibbon, 1897, 187)

<sup>33</sup> While it is true that there was some expectation of the imminent return of Christ in the New Testament, Cullmen points out (1961: 42-43) that New Testament teaching warned against this erroneous idea. However, whether there were misconceptions about the rapidity of the coming eschatological end does not mitigate in the least the point that Authoritativism as it developed in the apostolic age was permeated and shaped by the eschatological emphasis – an emphasis that by the age of the philosophers and Inclusivism had disappeared.

<sup>34</sup> The New Testament has little to say about culture outside of references to it in a pejorative sense. The reader is asked to examine the following passages of scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:20; 3:19; Ephesians 2:2,12; Titus 2:12; 2 Peter 1:4; 2:20; 1 John 2:15-16.

James Scherer (1990: 395-413) argues that eschatology has been a focal point of the great mission movements of history (beginning in the church of the first Christian age) and is in effect the galvanizing ideology in the conception of just what the church is and how it perceives its role in the history of humankind.

Wesner Fallaw (1946: 1146-1148) suggests two aspects of the eschatology of the primitive church : a program of evangelization based on the expectation of the near return of Christ and a lack of anxiety about “tomorrow” based on the hope of the coming Christ. He goes on to state that the mistaken belief of many that Christ would come within their lifetimes was unimportant.

The early Christians had a program of action that they followed while awaiting the expected early end of the world. True, it was a spontaneous rather than a systematized program. However, it was far-reaching. They not only worshiped together and strengthened one another in the belief that Jesus Christ would return and care for them while all things were being finished; they also liquidated their possessions, holding earthly goods in common and serving each person, particularly the orphan and the widow, according to need. These first century Christians were in training for life in a new world. Joy in the Lord of heaven and earth quite overcame anxiety about the cessation of one kind of life and the beginning of another.

The fact that these Christians were mistaken in their belief that some among them would still be alive when all things were finished is unimportant. What is of primary importance for us is the fact that they so strengthened each other in the faith that they could rejoice over the certainty they had that the world was about to end. And no less important for us is the cue which their conduct provides. Awaiting the end which they deemed a new beginning, they were constructively active serving their fellows, putting human need foremost and thrusting property far down the scale in value. Possessions were nothing more than means to an end, tools with which to enrich human life, tangible devices by which man could evidence his otherwise intangible love of God.

(Fallaw 1946: 1146-1148)

The expectant urgency of apocalypticism has ample scriptural backing, Neibuhr (1949: 235-236) says that the eschatology of the New Testament looked toward the end of time and the end of the world with faith and hope. The New Testament orients itself toward the coming of Christ the end of both physical and moral history and the guiding hand of a loving God (Neibuhr 1949: 235-236).

I will now set out here in brief fashion a few of the scriptural texts that nourished the eschatological hope of the early church. Mark 13:10 and Mathew 24:14 give the impetus to the early church for working bravely to spread the gospel (do mission) even in time of discouragement or apostasy because the end would not come until the gospel was preached in the entire world.

(Matthew 24:14 ESV) And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

(Mark 13:10 ESV) And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.

The careful observer will note in these texts a subtle but manifest tension for the apostolic church. Two antitheses had to be held in tension by them. It is evident that the time of the end was to be determined by God alone yet the church had an implied role (in hastening that end) because the end would not come until the gospel had been preached in the entire world.

In each of the texts cited here, the preaching of the gospel to the world is a sign of the end. This thought pattern and the setting in which Jesus placed mission in his description of the apocalyptic end, stayed with his disciples (Anderson, 1961: 48-49). These founders and leaders of the infant Christian movement transmitted the words and attitudes of Jesus. ***Mission became inexorably linked to apocalypticism in the emergent Authoritative mission paradigm.*** Here again the two antithesis held in tension are evident: Jesus speaking to His disciples in Acts 1:6-7 tells them that they cannot know the time when He will come again. That is the prerogative of God alone. Yet they may work until He does come knowing that the accomplishment of that task is a sign of the end (Anderson, 1961: 49).

Not only does the New Testament point toward the end of the world but also it does so with joy and hope.

## **2. Returning to Paul**

If the New Testament in general is interspersed with an eschatological focus as a main impetus for mission, the writings of Paul are permeated with it. Paul's writings also serve as a link between the eschatological focus of Authoritativism as it emerged and its other important aspects. For our insights here, we will again refer to Anderson. I summarize his views of the gospel and eschatology as the following:

- 2.1 The nature of the gospel was revelatory proclamation
- 2.2 The church was the body of Christ sent to do mission
- 2.3 The church was a movement
  - 2.3.1 Familial in nature
  - 2.3.2 No set liturgies or settled preachers
- 2.4 The gospel was necessarily countercultural
- 2.5 Emphasis on the Holy Spirit

## **3. The gospel as revelatory proclamation**

Another stark contrast is drawn here between the essence of Authoritativism and the essence of Inclusivism. The God of the gospel in the apostolic church was considered never to be the object of contemplation but it is He who is the great initiator in making Himself known (Anderson 1961: 76). The Old Testament view is that God as the one who sits above the circle of the earth (Isaiah 40:22) of whom no image is suitable or can be made (Exodus 20:4) or even imagined (Isaiah 40:8 and 46:5) is He who discloses Himself to mankind.

Paul mirrored this view in his writings. He said that the world through its own wisdom could not and did not know God (1 Corinthians 1:21). Those to whom God did not reveal Himself simply did not know God (1 Thessalonians 4:5). God made Himself known through Jesus Christ – not through philosophy. The mystery that had been hidden for many ages concerning man's salvation was now made known to all men (Romans 1:17 and 1 Corinthians 2:7). God revealed Himself in the manifestation of His son given to a world in need. This gift is efficacious for all humankind (Romans 1:17 and 1 Corinthians 2:7).

This revelation of God which He entrusted to men must then be proclaimed to others. The word *gospel* means *good news* and this good news must be given to the whole world. Faith in this

good news would spring up in many hearts from hearing the gospel. Therefore, the gospel must be proclaimed (Romans 10:14-17). Pauline theology sees Jesus as the final and fullest revelation of God to men and men must thus be persuaded of the beauty and truthfulness of this revelation (Anderson 1961: 78).

#### **4. The nature of the church**

In the emergent mission paradigm of the New Testament church, the gospel determines the nature of the church. *The church exists chiefly as a missionary movement in the Authoritative Mission Praxis Paradigm.* However, the Authoritative paradigm of the New Testament is shaped by the apocalyptic while the Inclusivist gave an ever-diminished role to such ideas (Bosch 1991: 191). Therefore, in the New Testament, and especially the writings of Paul, the church is the body of Christ doing the will of its head (Anderson 1961: 79). The church is not the bearer of culture as in the Inclusivist paradigm but the kingdom of those who have renounced the world. It is God's fortress in a rebel world. It is His kingdom in a world taken captive by His archenemy. From this kingdom, He makes assaults on the enemy's kingdom winning back loyal subjects. In the Authoritative paradigm God's wrath is revealed from heaven against the wickedness of men (Romans 1:18). The church then is not only the kingdom of the saved but also the herald of God's judgment on the twisted morality of the age (Anderson, 1961, 83).

#### **5. The familial nature of the church**

The apocalyptic proclamation of the judgment and wrath of God against the culture of sinful men would incur the hatred and persecution of the world because the world is addicted to that which is evil (John 3:19 and Mark 10:25). This hatred by the world and the persecution it engendered demanded of the church, for very practical reasons that it become like a family.

Conversion to Christianity in the early church caused troubles within the family of the convert. Often this trouble resulted in expulsion or some other form of isolation for the new Christian (Sandes 1994: 8-10). Christians were betrayed by their own parents according to Tertullian (Sandes 1994: 8-10). Celsus accused Christians of disturbing family order by preaching to women and children, upsetting the headship of the man (Sandes 1994: 8-10). It is in the context of a hostile world that the church came in the early days to hold all things in common (Acts 5).

The church as a matter of necessity was seen as a family in which brotherly love was encouraged and acts of hospitality were a necessity (Romans 12:10 and Hebrews 13:1). By contrast, as the Inclusivist paradigm developed the church was beginning to see itself as a cultural–religious kingdom. Contrary to this the self image of the apostolic church was grounded not only in the lofty teachings of Jesus and their reiteration by Paul but in very pragmatic concerns, namely that the church must supply the needs of its members taking the place of family relationships that had been lost or severed at conversion.

## **6. Summary**

The early Christians as shown from the New Testament and the writings of Paul in particular, viewed the various cultures of the world as hostile to the gospel.<sup>36</sup> The unbiblical Greek philosophies and the popular religious ceremonies of the day found no place theologically or in practice in the effort of the church to win converts.

The church's belief system was founded upon an eschatological hope in the coming of Christ and the assurance of that hope was founded in the primacy of the scriptures, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies of Christ.

Authoritativism at its outset was the reflection of a small, committed, persecuted, but quickly growing movement.

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<sup>36</sup> The reader is again referred to the specific definition of *culture* as used in this document.



## *Chapter 5*

*Authoritativism and Inclusivism in the mission field; further development of Authoritativism*

## **A Inclusivism and Authoritativism contrasted in the British Isles**

Another era of intense importance and enlightenment for our study is the period of the beginnings and early development of Christianity in Britain and the prolonged encounter that ensued between ancient, Celtic Christianity and Roman Christianity. What makes this age of Christian history especially instructive is the fact that theology and mission methodology were central to this struggle. The Celtic church approached mission from a largely authoritative MPP point of view while the Roman church approached mission to the unreached Anglo-Saxons and Picts from an Inclusivist perspective.<sup>37</sup> However, before going into the detail of this epoch it is important to give some necessary background information.

## **B The ancient British Church and Authoritativism**

There is some of dispute over whether the church in Britain originated with the Roman church or with eastern Christianity.<sup>38</sup> While claims of a papal commission of Patrick are doubtful at best, it is not clear how Christianity came to these isles. Catholic claims that the Pope sent Patrick are unconvincing because British Christianity in its original state was essentially and substantially different from Roman Christianity, as we shall soon see (Davies 1924: 1-13). Patrick's own confession of faith has very little that bears the stamp of Catholic religion.<sup>39</sup> (See the appendix for Patrick's full confession of faith) Evidence of these fundamental differences can be observed in the fact that there was a constant effort spanning many centuries on the part of the papal emissaries to get the Celtic church leaders to recognize the pope as the head of all Christianity and to get them also to accept Catholic dogma and practice (Davies 1924: 53-59). There are others who see evidence either for or against a purely Roman or Continental origin of the church in England in the linguistic style of the Latin spoken at that time in Britain (Greene, 1968, 75-86).

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<sup>37</sup> I use the term Celtic here in the most general sense to refer to the churches of Scotland, Ireland, and Britain proper that held in a large degree similar doctrines and staunchly resisted Roman Christianity's teaching and influence.

<sup>38</sup> While he does not fall on one side or the other of the argument, W.H.C. Frend very insightfully demonstrates the difficulty of seeking to determine the origins of British Christianity (Frend, 1968, 37-50). It is clear from the writings of Tertullian and Origen that Christianity existed there in the early third century AD. It is true that Christianity in Britain as it early developed was different from that which developed in Rome. This is the salient point for the purposes of this study.

<sup>39</sup> While Christianity existed before the time of Patrick, it is at the time of this patriarch of the British church that Christianity took real root in the British Isles. Patrick, whose work was largely confined to Ireland is the first missionary to Britain that historians have generally recognized. However, the history of Christianity there testifies to the fact that there were many other Christian heroes that preceded Patrick.

## C Early Christianity in Britain

Christianity existed as early as the turn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Celtic areas of Europe (Wilkinson 1944: 156) (Nichol 1978). That would seem to disqualify any argument that Christianity originated there from a papal commission since the papacy was not yet established at that time and those who would eventually do so did not yet recognize the Bishop of Rome as a universal leader of the church. In fact, there was universal rejection of the claims of the Bishop of Rome to universal authority over the church in Africa and Briton as late as the early fifth century A.D. (Davies 1924: 83-98). Philip Schaff says that the original Christianity in Britain was independent of the Rome but after centuries of struggle ended up professing the Catholic faith. “The church-history of Ireland is peculiar. It began with an independent catholicity (or a sort of semi-Protestantism), and ended with Romanism, while other Western countries passed through the reverse order” (Schaff 1902: 4.02.14).

Christianity’s origin in the British Isles is less germane to our discussion than is its development. One author sums up flawlessly the importance of the subject of the development of Christianity in Britain:

Thus, we do not know precisely when and where Christianity first came to Britain. Yet those stories are important. They show us that Britons themselves realized that Christianity reached Briton at a very early date and made considerable progress. This new religion must have been brought by scores of men, unknown to us now, who came to live or trade in Britain from other countries, chiefly from neighboring Gaul. These men would have been of all kinds, ranks, and trades; there would be busy civic officials, learned professional men, craftsmen of one kind or another, soldiers sent to a new post, tradesmen, the rich and the poor. From the influence of such unknown men, the new ideas that Christianity held were quietly established.

(Dodd and Heritage 1966: 13)

What is of primary importance to us is the character of the British church and its beliefs and how these beliefs affected its approach to mission and evangelization of its pagan neighbors.

## **D Historical background**

By the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD Britain had been fully politically integrated into the Roman Empire. Magnificent buildings, good roads and other Roman forms all attested to the fact that Rome had spread its cultural influence to the fair isles. However in about 449 the Germanic tribes began to invade Britain (Bede, 1994, 26-27). The Roman legions had been withdrawn some time before to more pressing interests in the defense of the capital of the Empire . In their absence the Angles, Saxons and Jutes began to ravage the country destroying churches and forcing Christianity chiefly to Wales. With the exception of Wales and parts of Ireland, the Saxons gradually took Britain back to its pagan roots (Wilkinson 1944: 157). It is this state of things near the end of the sixth century that formed the backdrop of the fierce competition between *Inclusivism* and *Authoritativism* as mission praxis paradigms in Britain. The Celtic church had existed for centuries and had already withstood the onslaught of the pagan tribes by withdrawing to the wilds of Wales in the West and Ireland to the North (Wilkinson 1944: 157). However, the Bishop Gregory would seek to assert Roman Christian authority over Britain (circa 597 AD) through the missionary work of Augustine (Bede 1994: 33-34). The contest did not end until the last vestiges of Celtic Christianity were swallowed up in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, just before the dawn of the reformation.

## **E Columba, missionary to the Irish and Scots**

Right at about the time of the council of Constantinople in AD 533 a young royal from Scotland was dedicating his life to the spread of Bible religion (Wilkinson 1944: 125). He built a church and school at Derry in Northern Ireland 545 and Darrow in 553 (Schaff 1897: 4.2.14-18). During this time, he was forming definite ideas about what was entailed in working among pagans to bring them to a knowledge of Christ. Having planted the church and school at Derry at the age of 25, he spent seven years after his involvement there duplicating his mission endeavors in other places around Ireland. He founded many biblical institutes and the number of churches credited to his labors seems almost incredible (Wilkinson 1944: 100-113). Some suggest that he was instrumental in founding over 300 churches.

After laboring in Ireland for many years, he set his sights on other unreached territories (Bede 1994: 77-78). He received as a gift the small island of Iona off the West coast of Scotland from a

Pict king on which to establish a school. Iona, once the burial ground of royalty and a center of Druidic, pagan learning and worship was destined to become the seat of a great missionary movement.

## **F On to Scotland**

One author (Hunter 2000: 13-50) lists three probable reasons why Columba chose Scotland as his next mission field. Most of the country was still pagan, especially the areas dominated by the Picts. In addition, his compatriots, the Dalradians, had won a kingdom there about fifty years previous. To him this must have been an open door of providence. Finally, he must have sensed that through Scotland all of Britain might possibly be influenced including, England, Wales and Ireland (Hunter 2000: 13-50). Columba customarily set up what some writers have called monasteries. Essentially these monasteries were villages and should not be confused with the monasticism common in the later medieval times. The former bore little resemblance to the latter. It must be noted that a very distinct feature of Celtic monasticism was the idea of giving up the comforts of life and the joy and pleasure of family associations to reach the unreached (Dodd and Heritage 1966: 53).<sup>40</sup> In 563 with about 200 companions, Columba disembarked at Iona to begin the work to which he had dedicated his life. This school and biblical institute would become a renowned center of Bible study that would influence the Celtic Church for centuries to come. Philip Schaff (1897: 4.2.14-18) says that the mission was a lighthouse among dark heathenism. From Iona, missionaries went out to England, the continent, and to far away places establishing Christianity unsullied with many of the corruptions infiltrating Roman Christianity.<sup>41</sup> It was not long before the influence of Columba and his school became so profound that the fierce Picts in Scotland and some of the Saxons in the North of England began to leave their pagan ways and declare themselves as followers of Christ.

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<sup>40</sup> Many authors are careful to point out that Celtic monasteries were much different in character from other types of monasticism. Celtic gatherings were like training colleges and it is reported that they became so renowned for learning that young men traveled from distant lands to study in them. An active work of Bible copying was kept up in many of the Celtic monastic centers. One other distinguishing characteristic was their unique views on mission work.

<sup>41</sup> See Leroy Edwin Froom's work for a detailed account of the development of the papacy as a result of the political favor sought by the bishop of Rome, doctrinal infidelity, and the Christianity's compromise with paganism.

## **G Relation to the culture and missionary methods**

This subsection outlines how the ancient church of Britain of which Patrick, Columba, Coleman, and Columbanus were all a part practiced missions using the Authoritative MPP. The writings of the Venerable Bede, cited here, clearly contrast the beliefs and methods of this church with those of Romanized Christianity. The latter made deliberate attempts to utilize pagan ceremonies and ideologies to win pagans to Christ.

### **1. Close Interaction with the people on an every day level by the Celtic church**

In seeking to highlight how the Celtic church beginning in the time of Patrick<sup>42</sup> dealt with culture it is necessary to delineate the Celtic Christians' methods of evangelism of the pagans that they were trying to reach. Patrick would take with him a body of artisans, priests, and common workers and first he would approach the king or tribal leader of an area. He would seek to win their approval to allow him to set up a small community near some of the Irish towns. From the monastery (as the settlement was called) the Celtic missionaries would interact with their "heathen" neighbors on an every day basis building friendships, learning the language and interacting on a very basic level with the people (Hunter, 2000, 13-26). Schaff says the following about the Celtic monastic, missionary communities.

By a primitive Keltic monastery we must not understand an elaborate stone structure, but a rude village of wooden huts or bothies (*botha*) on a river, with a church (*ecclais*), a common eating-hall, a mill, a hospice, the whole surrounded by a wall of earth or stone. The senior monks gave themselves entirely to devotion and the transcribing of the Scriptures. The younger were occupied in the field and in mechanical labor, or the training of the rising generation. These monastic communities formed a federal union, with Christ as their invisible head. They were training schools of the clergy. They attracted converts from the surrounding heathen population, and offered them a refuge from danger and violence. They were resorted to by English noblemen, who, according to Bede, were hospitably received, furnished with books, and instructed.

(Schaff 1897: 4.02)

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<sup>42</sup> We are here dependent on secondary sources for a description of the labors of Patrick. Most of what is available about him has been mythologized or has little to do with his mission work.

It seems that the Celtic practice of preaching in the vernacular (Hardinge 1972: 29-51) became a vital principle of effectively reaching the un-evangelized. Mission occurred in the vernacular as much as possible (Hunter 2000: 13-26). The Celtic Christians used the old Latin version of the Bible but carried on the worship service in the language of the people. There is evidence that some missionaries, perhaps those who had difficulty mastering the local tongue, did use translators but still the emphasis was upon reaching the people in their own language (Hunter 2000: 13-26). The salient point is that whether by translator or in the first person, Celtic preachers sought to carry on mission in the language of the people and not in the foreign tongue of the dominant empire.

## **2. Careful spiritual nurturing and modeling**

Having gained a deep understanding of the people and the culture they would seek to model what true Christianity was. Receptive hearts were invited to church that had been built and they were there taught the way of Christ. It seems that the Celtic missionaries' proximity and intimate interaction with the people on a very caring and every day level awakened a desire in the hearts of the Druids and others who worshipped pagan gods, a desire to know the true God (Hunter, 2000, 54-60).

## **3. Personal piety**

Celtic evangelists and missionaries placed a high degree of emphasis on personal piety. This emphasis overcame the human tendency toward a lingering adherence to old Druid, pagan ways by the Irish. Personal piety did not consist of rites or ceremonies but was of a very practical nature. A reading of many of the early glosses of the Irish church indicates that the conduct of the church members was an important topic of Christianity (Hardinge 1972: 135-137). In other words, Christian lifestyle was important to the early, Celtic Christians.

## **4. Celtic clerics were itinerant evangelists**

After the fashion of Paul, Celtic priests stayed long enough in an area to establish a community of believers and see that it was well founded. After leaving some behind to carry on the work, they would pass on to begin the same process again in another location. When finally an indigenous Christian community had been established in a place, a school was left for the training of children and adults in the way of the Bible. Patrick would also leave several young apprentices behind to

train and teach the people further the Christian way. It was through working with the people on a close level that Patrick and later Celtic missionaries were able to understand the people on a deep level and answer the questions that dealt with the immediate problems of every day life. Essential to this was a good knowledge of the language. Columba and others followed close this model of the formation of Christian communities. Once the community was well established another order of bishops developed. There were always the bishops who were free from monastic constraints but a newer type who saw to the spiritual needs of the monastery's (village's) spiritual needs became a necessity. This bishop lived with his wife and children in the community and preached, taught, and filled a variety of other functions (Hardinge 1972: 131-132).

### **5. The distinctive nature of Celtic missions**

It is also pointed out that the Celtic church as it grew did not seek to make converts by synchronizing its understanding of Christianity with the local Druid cult and other pagan religions. The Celtic church remained for several centuries distinct and different and yet carried on an unrivaled missionary enterprise. From Wales, from Ireland, from Iona missionaries were sent to all parts of the British Isles. They effectively won lasting converts to Christianity from among the most hostile of their pagan neighbors. Aiden's work among the Anglo-Saxons is a good example of the effectiveness of the original British – Celtic church (Wilkinson 1944: 167-169). Some of their most daring missionary enterprises were carried on in the face of mounting pressure from the Roman Christians to submit to Roman usages, beliefs and practices.

Not only was Celtic Christianity influential in Britain alone. Missionaries like Columbanus went to parts of the world where they extended the triumphs of Christianity. He worked perseveringly in Gaul (France) for many years and established a training center and community after the Celtic model in Anagrates (Wilkinson 1944: 186-187). Due to rapid growth and subsequent crowded conditions, two other centers of influence sprang up.

However, Columbanus' greatest challenges did not come from his arduous labors or the rapid growth and crowded conditions. It was continental Christianity and the bishop of Rome in particular, that created the greatest trouble for him and his mission (Wilkinson 1944: 188). The

condition of the continental church at that time is best described in the words of an historian. Especially in Gaul and among the Franks the spiritual life of the church was on the decline.

The simple narrative of the intestine divisions, which distracted the peace, and dishonoured the triumph, of the church, will confirm the remark of a pagan historian, and justify the complaint of a venerable bishop. The experience of Ammianus had convinced him that the enmity of the Christians towards each other, surpassed the fury of savage beasts against man; and Gregory Nazianzen [late 4th cent.] most pathetically laments that the kingdom of heaven was converted, by discord, into the image of chaos, of a nocturnal tempest, and of hell itself.

(Gibbon 1897: 02.21.)

By all accounts Christianity in Gaul was in a deplorable condition, similar to that described above and filled with spiritual corruption (Henry 1917: 197-200). The bishops (of Roman continental Christianity) of France called Columbanus to answer to them for introducing usages that they deemed unacceptable into the Christianity of Gaul. He refused to appear but did send a letter in his defense. A catholic historian has recorded the following:

Remonstrance was useless; they adhered tenaciously to their country's usages. Nothing could convince them that what St. Patrick and the saints of Ireland handed down to them could by any possibility be wrong. They only wanted to be let alone. They did not desire to impose their usages on others. Why should others impose their usages on them? They had a right to be allowed to live in peace in their wilderness, for they injured no man, and they prayed for all. Thus it was that Columbanus reasoned, or rather remonstrated with a synod of French bishops that objected to his practices. His letters to them and to Pope Gregory the Great on the subject of the paschal question are still extant, but he cannot be justified in some of the expressions he uses. He tells the bishops in effect in one place that they would better be employed in enforcing canonical discipline amongst their own clergy, than in discussing the paschal question with him and his monks. Yet here and there he speaks with true humility and genuine eloquence. He implores the prelates in the most solemn language to let him and his brethren to live in peace and charity in the heart of their silent woods, beside the bones of their seventeen brothers who were dead.

Wilkinson notes that the differences between the two churches are contrasted strikingly during this incident (Wilkinson 1944: 190). While the Celtic church used an approach Authoritative in its missionary paradigm as it related to the unsaved, the Inclusivist practices of Roman Christianity present an interesting contrast. The Celtic church did not make any overt efforts to include pagan ideologies or practices into their mission. The Roam missionaries did, as I will hereafter demonstrate.

## **H The beliefs of the Celtic church, the variables**

### **1. The centrality and primacy of the Bible**

Columba had at his disposal the confession of Patrick who used no less than 25 Bible verses without reference to the declarations and decisions of counsels or tradition. The short this document is full of Bible references. Columba it is stated taught his followers to receive no truth as divine unless it was drawn from the Holy Scriptures.<sup>43</sup> Schaff substantiates this by saying that the religion of Patrick was essentially different and independent of Roman Christianity and the Bible was accepted as the only rule of faith and practice by him (Schaff 1897: 4.02.14-18).

*Tradition and extra-biblical sources were not part of the Old Celtic theological horizon* (Schaff 1897: 4.02.14-18). Patrick's religion and view of the Bible were exemplary of the early Christianity of Ireland and Briton. Schaff says the following:

We have only one or two genuine documents from Patrick, both written in semi-barbarous (early Irish) Latin, but breathing an humble, devout and fervent missionary spirit without anything specifically Roman, *viz.* his autobiographical Confession (in 25 chapters), written shortly before his death (493?), and his *Letter of remonstrance to Coroticus* (or Ceredig), a British chieftain (nominally Christian), probably of Ceredigion or Cardigan, who had made a raid into Ireland, and sold several of Patrick's converts into slavery (10 chapters).

(Schaff 1897: 4.02.14-18)

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<sup>43</sup> See appendix for a complete version of Patrick's *Confession*.

## **2. Literal Bible interpretation**

One point worth noting here is that in the Celtic churches the scriptures were much more literally interpreted than they were in the Roman churches of the Empire (Hardinge 1972: 201-205). It is true that even in Ireland and Scotland some allegoric interpretation was employed but never began to approach the proportions of the churches of Rome. The Celtic exegetes used hermeneutic principles that aided them to explain the literal sense of the Bible and make practical application to the lives of the people to whom they preached.<sup>44</sup> Any belief or practice that was thought to be contrary to the scriptures was rejected with no reference to exterior sources (Hardinge 1972: 201-205). No appeal was made to the Apocrypha or councils (Hardinge 1972: 201-205). The sole use to which these tools applied was not in exegesis or spiritual application but as a means of providing imagery and words that the Celtic writer or exegete desired.

## **3. Literal understanding of the Bible**

The Celts respected the Old Testament and saw merit in its laws and application of many of its principles even in their day. Laws concerning clean and unclean food, slavery and usury, and the treatment of widows and orphans were important to a greater extent in the Celtic churches and served to demonstrate that they took the Bible literally.<sup>45</sup>

Obedience for the Celtic church grew from their understanding also that sin was characterized as disobedience. While grace was very important in the plan of salvation the Celts also believed that man's part was to obey the injunctions of God. As a result of this attitude the Celtic church from early on was identified with observation of the day of worship on the seventh day of the week. They did no work on it while Sunday was seen as a day of minor sanctity (Flick 1959: 236, 237). Religious services were conducted on Sunday but family chores and other work were done also on that day.

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<sup>44</sup> It is important to note that while allegoric interpretation was by this time the hermeneutic norm on the continent (in the domains of the Roman church), the Celts used relatively little of this in their Biblical exegesis. Their view was literal and simple. In keeping with other manifestations of the Authoritative mission principles, allegorist hermeneutics were genuinely in use by the Celtic church.

<sup>45</sup> Again I caution the reader against reading into the use of the term literal the fundamentalist, verbal inspiration position. Literal here is used in contrast to the allegoric hermeneutic and generally can be understood to refer to a grammatical-historical biblical hermeneutic.

Theologically Celtic Christians held ideas which were a natural outgrowth of the Scriptures. Theirs might be called a biblical theology. It was essentially practical and is characterized by a complete absence of discussion and definition and speculation. The supreme authority was the Bible. As the revealed word of God this revelation must be accepted and obeyed in all its parts.

(Hardinge 1972: 205)

#### **4. Celtic soteriology**

Since the human race was ungodly because of the fall, man was believed to be helpless until he became a follower of Christ. Left to his own resources he could not serve God. Only by the empowering of divine grace could man accomplish any good. Patrick was conscious of the working of this heavenly impulse in his life: “The Lord opened the understanding of my unbelief that, even late, I might call my faults to remembrance, and that I might turn with my whole heart to God ...”

(Hardinge 1972: 65)

It is evident from commentaries of the time that the Celtic church taught that salvation was attained through the merits of Christ imputed by the Savior to the believer. The believer could claim no goodness or merits of his own based on character or good works. The two vital aspects of salvation for the adherent to this church were belief in the heart and the confession of the mouth and life. The first was a prerequisite to the experience of salvation; the second was a result of that experience.<sup>46</sup>

#### **5. Eschatological views**

Celtic eschatological views were simple and concrete. Christians were commissioned by Christ to share the gospel with the ignorant. Men, having decided for or against Christ would receive their reward at the end of time when Jesus would come back. The second coming would be an event of unparalleled glory and unlike any other the world has ever seen. That trip and other early Celtic Christians believed firmly in the second coming of Christ in fact, Patrick said “And we look to His imminent coming again as the judge of the quick and the dead” to render just rewards to all,

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<sup>46</sup> The striking similarity in soteriology of the New Testament church, the Celtic church, the Nestorians, and other Authoritative mission methodologists is one of the most consistent recurrences in this MPP.

after “His dissent for the judgment of Doom” (Celtic Literature Collective). As did the apostles the Celtic the believers based much of their missionary endeavor on this eschatological conceptual foundation. This point is an important one.

Each of the missionary paradigms (approaches) that could be classified under the general heading of Authoritativism held unique but corresponding views of how the end of all things affected their current missionary enterprises. The final event in history was understood to be the second advent of Christ. His second coming would end the order of the world as it was then known. This meant that there was no second chance after the second coming. This belief imparted a sense of urgency to their mission efforts.<sup>47</sup> At the second coming Christ would judge the world and destroy the wicked who would be alive others would be resurrected to receive the either punishment or reward. It was evident that Patrick believed himself to be specially called by God to carry a unique message to those who did not know God (Celtic Literature Collective). It is also evident that that Patrick at least tended to see the return of Christ as imminent. This expectancy of immanency is a repeated characteristic of Authoritativism. It seems that the expectation of the imminent coming of Jesus and Authoritativism have gone hand in hand throughout history.

I ought to receive it with an equal mind, and ever render thanks to God who showed me that I might trust him endlessly, as one that cannot be doubted; and who heard me, so that I, ignorant as I am, and in the last days, should be bold to undertake this work so holy and so wonderful; so that I might imitate in some degree those of whom the Lord long ago foretold, when forshewing that his gospel would be for a witness unto all nations before the end of the world. And accordingly, as we see, this has been so fulfilled. Behold, we are witnesses that the gospel has been preached to the limit beyond which no man dwells ...

(Celtic Literature Collective).

## **6. Emphasized equality of believers**

Columba’s system of organizing the church was in the form of a federation of communities held together by the spiritual bonds of grace and truth. Each locality looked to the brotherhood as the final authority and not an individual. It is true that Iona was the spiritual center of the churches

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<sup>47</sup> Urgency as an impetus seem to be the chief contributions of the eschatological views of the various Authoritative MPP communities.

raised in the British Isles and the leader was called by a term akin to the term bishop. However, the term did not carry the weight and implications that it carries now or even in the places of that era dominated by the Roman church. After the time of Patrick the idea of spiritual equality became a bedrock principle of the Celtic church. This principle is evident in the communities of Wales under the leadership of Dinooth and also those of Aiden in Britain proper.

As already stated the “abbot” was, as a rule, the highest position in the Celtic monastic “settlement”, while the bishop’s sphere of influence was the “Llan” as the centre of spiritual influence in the interests of the tribe. He was set aside for evangelical work in connection with the “Llan”; and he, and his assistant ministers, resided with their families in the general settlement of which the church was the central institution.

Thus, the bishop of the Celtic church was essentially different from the bishop of the Roman church. His authority was confined to the limits of his own personal ministry.... (Davies, 1924, 53)

## **7. The doctrine of God**

The Celtic church from the time of Patrick held to a Trinitarian view of God (See the Confession of Patrick in the appendix). However, their belief system was free of the speculation about God and the proclivity for philosophical syncretism so prevalent in the Roman church. It was a matter of simple faith for them that the transcendent God who sees and knows all would predict the future and guide His children. Much doubt has been cast upon the veracity of the story that says Pope Gregory rebuked Columba for a work in which the latter failed to adequately explain the doctrine of the Trinity. Although the doctrine was not emphasized in Celtic writing it was nevertheless an important part of the ancient Celtic church doctrine.

## **8. Christ in doctrine**

Another essential part of their doctrine of God was the focus that Celtic church placed on Christ. There was a strong emphasis on the resurrection and Christ having been set above all principalities and powers. He is pictured as the mediator and there is no hint in their writings of another mediator, be that angels, Mary or another being other than Christ. Celtic Christians were ardent and their literature was permeated with expressions of adoration of God and love for Him.

The Celtic approach to the Christological controversies is very telling. It was common for them to say that the incarnation was a mystery that could not fully be understood and that simplicity and faith were essential when contemplating the matter.

There were other important doctrines held by the Celtic church. These included the doctrine of man and of creation. Celtic cosmology as well as the understanding of the fall of man was both greatly influenced by the Celtic tendency toward a literal interpretation of scripture (Hardinge 1972: 59-64). However, Hardinge does point out that after the Danish invasions that some Celtic theologians began to interpret the scriptures more fancifully (*ibid.*). However, it can be safely stated that the general tendency of the Celtic church was to interpret the scriptures literally.

*Chapter 6*

*The response of Inclusivism in the British Isles*

## **A Augustine's mission to England**

Augustine, a leading monk in Rome, was commissioned by Pope Gregory in 595 AD to evangelize the pagan Anglo-Saxons of Briton. His purpose was dual; to win the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, and to subjugate the Celtic church to the leadership of the Roman church (Bede 1994: 36-37).<sup>48</sup> At the time his arrival in the British Isles, this land was dominated by the pagan Angles and Saxons from Northern Europe. Their conquests following the withdrawal of the Roman legions from England in the 440's had effectively pushed the areas in which Christianity existed in the British Isles to Wales in the West and Ireland in the North.

Step by step the Anglo-Saxons conquered and settled England. It took them nearly two hundred years to do what the Romans did in a few years. Never was there more noble, sacrificing, and persistent resistance to despoilers. The overrunning of Italy and Spain was a migrating movement, but England was won only inch by inch and foot by foot. The defenders were farmers and herdsman as well as fighters, but the pagan invaders took their lands. Christian churches were demolished or replaced by heathen temples. During all these conflicts in England, however, Celtic Christianity was expanding and growing stronger in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

While the pagan Anglo-Saxons were pressing the Celtic church back to Wales, a revolution had also taken place in France which would ultimately affect Christianity in Great Britain. The pagan Franks, coveting the rich lands in southern France possessed by the Christian Visigoths, underwent a political conversion to Rome, strongly supported by the bishop of Rome and the Emperor. The Franks conquered the Visigoths in 508. This made their new faith dominant in France, and foreshadowed a similar advance into England. Before the revolution in Gaul was fully consummated, the conquering Anglo-Saxons in England had coalesced into a number of strong confederacies. Finally, there emerged a number of kingdoms, usually under the number seven, spoken of as the Heptarchy. Of these the

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<sup>48</sup> It can be inferred from Bede's text that Augustine's mission was not only to the pagan Anglo-Saxons. He makes the telling remark that Gregory intended to have "consecrated Augustine as their bishop if they were received by the English". If the mission were only to non-Christians there was no need to speak of bishops for there would be at the outset at least no Christian community over which to place Augustine as bishop. Considering the fact that there was no communion between the English church and the Roman church, Gregory was both implying Roman Christian superiority over Celtic Christianity and assuming headship over the Celtic church that the British church was not ready to give.

kingdom of Kent was the first to engage attention because of its early strong lead and its relationship with the church at Rome (Wilkinson 1944: 158-159).

Augustine upon arrival went to King Ethelbert of Kent (Canterbury) in Northumbria who was pagan but had married the daughter of a king in France who adhered to Roman Christianity. Augustine's success with King Ethelbert was marked (Bede 1994: 40) but his fortunes in subjugating the Celtic churches to the headship of the bishop of Rome proved to be just the opposite (Bede 1994: 40).

### **B the Roman mission methodology, Inclusivism**

The Roman mission to the pagans of Britain further developed inclusivist mission by deliberately incorporating pagan ceremonies, places of worship and philosophies in efforts to win these people to Christ. This was done through converting pagan temples and shrines to Christian places of worship, celebrating or instituting Christian feasts at pagan sites, and replacing hero worship with the adoration of saints.<sup>49</sup>

Ethelbert according to Bede gave Augustine permission to teach openly and to repair and reopen the old churches destroyed by the pagans in their conquests. As for the methodology used, we will rely on the pen of Bede for a description in his reproduction of the letter sent from the Pope Gregory to Augustine through another monk named Mellitus, outlining the methods he was to use to win the Anglo-Saxons to Roman Christianity. Bede does us the great service of recording the letter for us (Bede 1994: 56-57).

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<sup>49</sup> Early Protestant writers generally saw the Christian feasts and other usages like the adoration of saints as compromises with paganism and not truly Christian.

1 To my most beloved son, Abbot Mellitus Gregory, servant of the servants of God. Since the departure of  
2 our companions and yourself, I have felt much anxiety because we have not happened to hear how your  
3 journey has prospered. However, when almighty God has brought you to our most reverend brother  
4 Bishop Augustine, tell him what I have decided after long deliberations about the English people, **namely**  
5 **that the idol temples of that race should by no means be destroyed, but only the idols in them. Take**  
6 **holy water and sprinkle it in these shrines, build altars and place relics in them.** For if the shrines are  
7 well built, it is essential that they should be changed from the worship of devils to the service of the true  
8 God. **When this people see that their shrines are not destroyed they will be able to banish error from**  
9 **their hearts and be more ready to come to the places they are familiar with,** but now recognizing and  
10 worshipping the true God. And because they are in the habit of slaughtering much cattle as sacrifices to  
11 devils, **some solemnity ought to be given them in exchange for this.** Still on good days of the dedication  
12 more of the **festivals of the holy martyrs, whose relics are deposited there, let them make themselves**  
13 **huts from the branches of trees around the churches which have been converted out of shrines, and**  
14 **let them celebrate the solemnity with religious feasts.** Do not let them sacrifice animals to the devil but  
15 let them slaughter animals for their own food to the praise of God, let them give thanks to the giver of all  
16 things for his bountiful provision. Thus while some outward rejoicings are preserved, they will be able  
17 easily to share in inward rejoicings. **It is doubtless impossible to cut out everything at once from their**  
18 **stubborn minds:** just as the man who is attempting to climb to the highest place, rises by steps and  
19 degrees and not by the pits. Thus the lord made himself known to the Israelites in Egypt; **yet he preserved**  
20 **in his own worship the forms of sacrifice which they were accustomed to offer to the devil and**  
21 **commanded them to kill animals when sacrificing to him. So with changed hearts, they were to put**  
22 **away one part of the sacrifice and retain the other,** even though they were the same animals as they  
23 were in the habit of authoring, yet since the people were offering them to the true God and not to idols,  
24 they were not the same sacrifices. These things then, dearly beloved, you must say to our brother so that in  
25 his present position he may carefully consider how he should order all things. May God keep you and  
26 safety, most beloved son. (emphasis supplied)

We will now examine the letter of Gregory in detail as we seek to understand the various aspects of the Inclusivist mission praxis paradigm used by the Roman missionaries in Britain.

### **1. Application 1, assumption of the transfer of meaning from old pagan forms**

In lines, five and six Gregory encourages his emissary to destroy only the pagan idols found in the pagan temples but not the temples themselves. In his counsel are hidden two assumptions: 1. that the former pagan worshipers will as a matter of course make the intellectual transfer of meaning from pagan to Christian in their formerly pagan place of worship. 2. The second assumption is that these former pagans would make the emotional transfer to Christianity as well.

### **2. Application 2, use of holy water and relics**

In lines, six and seven Gregory encourages his missionaries to use holy water to cleanse the old pagan temples and in the place of idols, they are encouraged to place relics of the saints and martyrs. He suggested then that pagan worship forms and places could naturally be transformed into Christian places of worship.

### **3. The use of holy water and other pagan practices**

The use of holy water and relics are practices that church co-opted from the pagan worshippers in areas where she was seeking to establish herself. According to her reasoning sacred trees and forests, the worship of objects of nature, and the use of pagan temples could become useful instruments in the hand of the church for leading them to Christ. Will Durant (1950: 745-746) referring to this transformation process said that the church throughout its history inherited and perpetuated superstition through seeking to transform pagan rites and holidays into Christian ones. He said:

... aspersion with holy water was an ancient form of exorcism; processions and lustrations continued immemorial rites; the vestments of the clergy and the papal title of *potifus maximus* were legacies from pagan Rome. The Church found that rural converts still revered certain springs, wells, trees, and stones; she thought it wiser to bless these to Christian use than to break too sharply the customs of sentiment. So a dolmen at Plouaret was consecrated as the chapel of the Seven Saints, and the worship of the oak was sterilized by hanging images of Christian saints upon the trees. Pagan festivals dear to the people, or necessary as

cathartic moratoriums on morality, reappeared as Christian feasts, and pagan vegetation rites were transformed into Christian liturgy. The people continued to light midsummer fires on St. John's Eve, and the celebration of Christ's resurrection took the pagan name of Eostre, the old Teutonic goddess of the spring.

(Durant 1950: 745, 746)

Durant accurately also describes the reasoning of Pope Gregory when he says that the church "thought it wiser to bless these [pagan practices] to Christian use than to break too sharply the customs of sentiment". For he said in lines nineteen to twenty-one, "that it is doubtless impossible to cut out everything at once from their stubborn minds" meaning that change must be brought to the new believers gradually while they transferred their allegiance from "the devil" as Gregory said, to God.

Another scholar has said that the worship of saints, the adoration of relics, the worship of angels and demigods were all part of a of syncretistic pseudo-Christianity that has existed since the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and came about as people clung to their superstitions in spite of Christianity (Harnack 1898: 304-305). Harnack (1898: 318-319) also says that pictures of Mary and the Saints were already being worshipped by the time of Augustine's mission to Britain. Veneration of such icons and relics took the form of greetings, kisses, and prostration (Harnack 1898: 318-319). He further states that this was a renewal of pagan practice.

### **C The reasoning behind the incorporation of pagan usages into Christian worship**

Another defender of this idea of transformation said that the church (Roman) has used its power to resist the infection of the devil to transmute meaning from even the "devil's tools" to the Lord's use (Newman 1906: 371-373). He says *the rulers of the Church from early times were prepared, should the occasion arise, to adopt, or imitate, or sanction the existing rites and customs of the populace, as well as the philosophy of the educated class, when such was deemed useful to the conversion of non-Christians.*

This same principle is said to have been used by Constantine to recommend Christianity to the populace.

We are told in various ways by Eusebius, [Note 7: V. Const. iii. 1, iv. 23, &c.] that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own. It is not necessary to go into a subject which the diligence of Protestant writers has made familiar to most of us. The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holydays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleison,<sup>8</sup>[Note 8: According to E. D. Clarke, Travels, vol. i. p. 352.] are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church.

(Newman 1906: 371-373)

Addul-Haaq (1990: 12-18) says that by the time of the Catholic mission to Britain, Christianity in general had fallen into such a low state that the Christian populace by and large worshipped idols and practiced other forms of animism. Richard Littledale said that both Christians and pagans have ever used the same argument to justify adoration of idols; that these things exist to remind worshipers of the attributes of the unseen deity and not to be worshipped as ends in themselves (Littledale 1905: 37-39). Certainly modern justification of this ancient practice confirms the truthfulness of Littledale's observation. A catechism for students says that the worship (veneration) of saints is good. They should be prayed to because of their nearness to God. One of the ways that we can best honor the saints is by worshiping (honoring) their relics (Faerber, 1913: 38).

#### **D Assumption of spiritual transference of allegiance**

Gregory's understanding is that gradually the pagan Anglo-Saxons would come to a clear understanding of Roman Christianity although many of the forms, rituals, and locations of worship were identical to their godless heritage (see lines 20 and 21). Gregory goes a step further in his assumption that the Angles and Saxons, steeped in paganism, would be able to easily if not

slowly, come to an understanding of Christianity. He says that through the methodology outlined they would eventually rise up to the heights of full understanding as a man climbs a ladder.

What was the practical outcome of the application of Augustine's principles? Certainly, he won many converts very quickly. He said to have baptized ten thousand of the inhabitants of Kent at one time in a nearby river (Bright 1877: 60). It is clear that most of the converts knew very little of the faith that they were confessing (Dodd and Heritage, 1966: 66) (Bright 1877: 60). This is further evidenced by the fact that upon the death of their king most of his subjects returned to their paganism completely. Many argue that these adherents to Christianity had never fully left their old religion. Not only was it true that the inhabitants of Kent returned fully to their paganism but in the East governed by another Saxon king who also died the same results ensued (Dodd and Heritage 1966: 66). Bede's account of the return of the East Saxons to paganism and the subsequent departure of Mellitus and Justus in discouragement (the bishops that Augustine had consecrated) attests to this fact (Bede 1994: 80).

The last of the characteristics of Inclusivism that I highlight in this chapter was displayed in the interaction of Roman Christianity with the Celtic church on another two occasions. When Augustine arrived in Britain, his second desire after making progress among the Anglo-Saxons was to subjugate the Celtic church under Rome (Davies 1924: 124-127). He convened a series of two meetings with leading men of the Celtic church of the time. Dinooth of the Welsh church seemed to have been the head of the Celtic delegation.

Following the same principles as Patrick and Columba in Ireland and Scotland before him, Dinooth had set up a missionary training school in Wales. Augustine used pleading, ostensible miracles, and many solemn words to try to convince the Celtic (Welsh) pastors to submit to his authority. The Welsh bishops demurred firmly. Many commentaries suggest that the main points of dispute in this conference were those of the tonsure and the reckoning of when to celebrate Easter (Bright 1877: 86-87). However, others see broader issues at stake (Bright 1877: 86-87). Those broader issues were really a struggle for superiority on the part of Roman Christianity and a desire by the bishop of Rome to rule. While Gregory vehemently disagreed that the term *infallible* should be applied to any ruler whether political or religious, he acted from an

assumption of spiritual superiority to all other Christian leaders and to the non-Christian as well (Bright 1877: 71).

The Celts, surprised at Augustine's claims refused to accord him more favor than is due to any Christian brother (White 1911: 63). Another meeting was arranged for not long afterward. The Celtic bishops after consulting with a wise man came up with a plan of action. They would accede to the claims of the emissary of Rome if he showed a humble spirit and the meekness of Christ and rose to greet the bishops on their arrival. However, the opposite came to pass (Bede 1994: 53). When the Celtic emissaries returned Augustine, who remained seated greeted the bishops haughtily. They had their sign as to the spirit that animated Augustine and they made no concessions.

### **E The Celtic refusal to join the Catholic mission and Augustine's prediction**

Augustine warned the Celtic priests that since they would not accept friends who wanted to join with them to preach the gospel to the Anglo-Saxons; they would receive enemies who would fight them (Bede 1994: 73). Was this a prophecy or promise? Catholic historians seem to all interpret this as a warning out of concern and possibly even a prediction (Bright 1877: 96-97). Bede, himself an adherent to Roman Christianity, suggests that it was a prophetic denunciation based on their rejection of Catholic unity.

Augustine's attitude toward the British Bishops and his words of warning or of threat are open to speculation. Many Protestant writers have said that they were a threat soon to be carried out at his behest by the armies of a pagan king. Catholics like Bede have generally interpreted Augustine's words as a prophetic omen due to the obstinacy of heart of the pastors of the indigenous British Church. Maclear (1863: 107) says the following:

Thereupon Augustine broke up the conference with an angry threat, that if the British Christians would not accept peace with their brethren, they must look for war with their foes, and if they would not proclaim the way of life to the Anglo-Saxons, they would suffer deadly vengeance at their hands.

History seems to bear out that Augustine's words were more than a reverie or idle threats. It is apparent in Augustine's dealings with the British church leaders that Roman Christianity's inclusivism claimed all Christianity as under its jurisdiction (Maclear 1863: 105). Part of Augustine's mission was to see that the ancient British church conformed to Roman practices.

Dean Stanley, so far from adopting the pious opinion of Bede in the matter, does not hesitate to say that Augustine's "Malediction" against the British bishops, with Dinooth of Bangor Iscoed at their head, "sanctioned, even if it did not instigate, their massacre by the Saxons."

(Davies 1924: 129)

Whatever the case, it was not long until the Anglo-Saxons began to fight against the Welsh. Bede suggests that the Saxon slaughter of 1200 "heretic" priests as he called them was direct fulfillment of this "prophecy" while Protestants generally have taken the view of Davies.

### **E Beliefs of the proponents of Inclusive mission in Britain, the variables**

Again, it must be noted that these interactions between the Welsh Celtic church, and the Roman church took place within the larger context of the mission of each to reach all of Britain with their respective understandings of the gospel. The points of contention were many. Wilkinson gives the following reasons why the two forms of Christianity could not unite their missionary endeavors:

1. The Celtic church rejected the bull of Gregory the pope declaring that the declarations of the first four general councils were equal to the scriptures. The decisions of the first four councils Nicea 325, Constantinople 381, Ephesus 431, and Chalcedon 451 were employed to try to settle some of the most divisive early controversies in the church. The nature of these councils was to give credence to a kind of church state relationship that the Celtic church would not sanction. According to Phillip Schaff, *The Christian Graeco-Roman emperor is indispensable to an ecumenical council in the ancient sense of the term; its temporal head and its legislative strength* (Schaff 1902: 3.09.117-119). Another author lends credence to this claim when he says that in Nicea Constantine was seeking to end the Arian controversy that was splitting the church and threatening the unity of his empire (Hutchinson 1959: 55-57). For this reason, he sought the formulation of a creed around

which the church could unify (Hutchinson 1959: 55-57). *In addition, once again Inclusivism shows here a tendency to equate extra-biblical sources as equally normative and equally Authoritative to the Bible in the determination or church doctrine.* To his credit Gregory, unlike succeeding popes apparently did encourage laymen to study the Bible for themselves (Gregory the Great b).

2. They could not accept Augustine's missionary methodology. On this point Wilkinson says the following: "On the advice of Gregory, he (Augustine) proceeded to sanctify, not abolish, the idolatrous festivals he found there. It was the practice of the apostles and their immediate successors wherever possible to abolish pagan sacrifices which, they declared, were sacrificed to devils." (Wilkinson 1944: 162) See comments in the preceding section for further elucidation of the foregoing statement.
3. The Celtic bishops could not agree to the supremacy of the bishop of Rome as biblical. This area presents an interesting study, for while Gregory I (the Great) vehemently refused any titles that would suggest supreme rule by a (any) bishop over the church, he exerted an influence that was in many respects like that of the emperor over both the State and the church. Gregory, in writing to Eulogiuos, bishop of Alexandria and Anastasius, bishop of Antioch, vehemently refuses any attempt to call him the universal bishop over the church (Gregory the Great c). In another letter to Anastasius of Antioch he tells him of a certain Cyriacus who was using a proud title (whether in reference to Gregory or himself is not apparent) especially if the latter would remain at peace with him, the bishop of Rome. Gregory makes the point that for one bishop to be termed universal destroys the dignity and power of all the others and destroys the unity of the church. (Gregory the Great c). Writing yet again to Eulogiuos of Alexandria Gregory implores him not to presume to use proud titles or to command others (Gregory the Great). When writing to the emperor Mauricius Augustus Gregory states essentially the same things as he said to his colleagues with the added thrust that "...whosoever calls himself, or desires to be called, Universal Priest, is in his elation the precursor of Antichrist, because he proudly puts himself above all others. " , (Gregory the Great d).

Gregory's epistles are very indicative of two things: 1. Gregory resisted being called by a name that would suggest universal power for one bishop above all others. 2. There was a

growing trend to exalt the bishopric and especially the bishop of Rome to a level that suggested superior spiritual privileges and temporal power equal to that of rulers.

Many commentators observe that when Constantine made Constantinople the seat of the Empire in 330 he left a political vacuum in Rome that the bishop of Rome over time was forced as a matter of course to fill (Flick 1959: 168-169). Partisans of the papacy interpret the removal of the capital as a providential opening and an opportunity for the church to develop its own divinely instituted civil authority over the temporal affairs of men (Manning 1862: 11-13). Flick also makes the point that the removal of the seat of government made it inevitable that the bishop of Rome would gain temporal power and an ascendancy over his equals – even eventually claim such despite the resistance of Gregory (Flick 1959: 168-169).

It is then evident that while Gregory's desire to avoid the title of universal bishop is apparent, his desire to impose upon the British church the usages of Rome indicates an elevated opinion of his rights and position as the bishop of Rome.

4. The new import given by Roman Christianity to the term bishop was another point of faith that the Celtic bishops would not accept. They understood the bishop as a simple pastor, an equal among equals. Roman Christians understood him to be a spiritual overlord based on the supposition that he occupied "the chair of Peter". This is evidenced by a letter from Jerome to Damasus, the bishop of Rome:

Yet, though your greatness terrifies me, your kindness attracts me. From the priest I demand the safe-keeping of the victim, from the shepherd the protection due to the sheep. Away with all that is overweening; let the state of Roman majesty withdraw. My words are spoken to the successor of the fisherman, to the disciple of the cross. As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, that is with the chair of Peter. For this, I know, is the rock on which the church is built! This is the house where alone the paschal lamb can be rightly eaten. This is the ark of Noah, and he who is not found in it shall perish when the flood prevails.

(Jerome, 18)

5. A fifth point of contention was that of the day of worship. Multiple historians (Flick, 1959, 237) have detailed that among the Celtic Christians Seventh-day Sabbath keeping was observed. This was a problem for Augustine and Roman Christians because most of the Western church had by that time adopted Sunday as the day of worship. William Skene in his book *Celtic Scotland* says that as late as 1070 Queen Margret, a strong defender of Roman Catholicism, urged some of her Celtic followers to cease from labor on Sundays according to the custom of that time (Skene, 1877, 348-350). Skene observed that this group was following the ancient practice left to them by their ancestors.

*Chapter 7*

*Authoritative MPP of the Waldenses*

## **A Overview of the Waldenses**

I now turn to another era in the struggle between Inclusivism and Authoritativism that is well documented. Occurring later in history, we have at our disposal a richer body of extant resources from which further to develop the thesis that throughout the history of the church, theology in general, not just a theology of mission has been the single most influential determinant factor in the coice of missionary methodology. We now turn to the history of the Waldensian church of Piedmont and the Alps of southern France and northern Italy.

There is quite a great deal of ambiguity about the exact origins of the Waldensian church. This church is connected in most literature to the Poor of Lyons and Peter Waldo or Valdés as he is otherwise known and who is thought to have been a wealthy merchant who after hearing the gospel decided to act out his convictions and become truly religious. He gave up his riches and committed his life to doing good deeds especially among the poor in about 1170 AD (Gonnet and Molnar 1974: 44-45). Eventually, his position and his understanding of Bible religion, his disdain for the priests, and his desire to follow the Bible fully brought him and his followers into disfavor with the powerful priests of the Roman Catholic Church. He was eventually driven from Lyons with his followers. They subsequently established themselves in the foothills and on the plains just below the Alps (Stephens, 1998: 9-24).

Others historians like Wiley trace the origins of the Waldensian church to the churches of northern Italy that remained independent of Rome into the ninth century (Wylie 1860: 9-23). Ellen Scotta Davidson said that Peter Waldo's group was only the center around to which were attracted the Albigenses, the Ardoldiditi and the Humilati of Itali and other groups (Davidson 1927: 237). She also suggests Claude, Bishop of Turin as a possible founder (Davidson, 1927: 252-253). Names like those of Claude, Vigilantes, and Ambrose are inextricably linked to these churches and in the minds of many, form the foundational teachers of what would in after centuries develop into the Waldensian church.

Whatever their origins may have been, the Waldensian church beginning in the 1200's was a missionary church that would impact Europe far and wide and in many ways lay a foundation for

the Protestant Reformation. What is of great import is their beliefs and how these may have influenced their approach to mission. For a summary of their beliefs we rely on the pen of both an admirer and an enemy. Their accounts of the major beliefs of the Waldenses are striking in both their concurrence and their similarity. This alone is however not the only impressive aspect of their beliefs. Another more impressive facet of their system is its similarity to both the original apostolic church and that of the later Protestant reformers.

## **B The character of the Waldensian church and her beliefs**

The Waldenses were lauded for their spirituality and high standards of living by even some of their severest critics. They were thus known to be a church of high moral standards even by their avowed enemies as is here recorded (Anissonii 1677: 264). “They [the “Leonists,” or the “Poor Men of Lyons,” i.e., Waldenses] live righteously before men, they believe well everything concerning God and all the articles which are contained in the creed; only they blaspheme the Roman Church and the clergy” (Anissonii 1677: 264).

### **1. The major beliefs**

Following is the statement of faith of Morel a Waldensian pastor at about the time of the beginning of the reformation (Comba 1899: 291-293).

1           With regard to our articles of beliefs, we teach our people, as well as we can, the contents  
2 of the twelve articles of the Symbol, called the Apostle’s Creed, and every doctrine deviating  
3 from it is looked upon by us as heresy. We believe in a God in three persons; we hold that  
4 the humanity of Christ is created and inferior to the Father, who wished by means of it to  
5 redeem mankind; but we admit at the same time that Christ is both very God and very man.  
6 We hold also that there is no other mediator and intercessor with God than Jesus Christ. The  
7 Virgin Mary is holy, humble, and full of grace; the same with the other saints; and they await  
8 with her in heaven the glorification of their bodies at the resurrection. We believe that, after  
9 this life, there is only the place of abode of the elect, called paradise, and that of the rejected,  
10 called hell. As for purgatory it was invented by anti-Christ, contrary to truth, therefore we  
11 reject it. All that are of human invention—such as Saints’ days, vigils, holy water, fasts on  
12 fixed days, and the like, especially the mass—are, as we think, an abomination in the sight of  
13 God. We believe the sacraments to be the signs of a sacred thing, or a visible figure of an  
14 invisible grace, and that it is good and useful for the faithful sometimes to partake of them, if  
15 possible; but we believe that, if the opportunity to do so be lacking, a man may be saved  
16 nevertheless. As I understand it, we have erred in admitting more than two sacraments. We  
17 also hold that oral confession is useful, if it be observed without distinction of time and for  
18 the purpose of comforting the sick, the ignorant, and those who seek our advice, according to  
19 the Scriptures. According to our rule, charity ought to proceed as follows:—First, everyone  
20 must love God, above all creatures, even more than his own soul; then his soul more than all  
21 else; then his neighbour’s soul more than his own life; then his own life more than that of his  
22 neighbour; finally, the life of his neighbour more than his own property...  
23 We ourselves do not administer the sacraments to the people—they are Papists [Latin,  
24 “members of Antichrist”] who do this; but we explain to them as well as we can the spiritual  
25 meaning of the sacraments. We exhort them not to put their trust in anti-Christian  
26 ceremonies, and to pray that if they be compelled to see and hear the abominations of anti-  
27 Christ, it may not be imputed to them as a sin, but that such sort of abominations may soon  
28 be confounded to make room for truth, and that the Word of God may be spread abroad.  
29 Besides, we absolutely forbid our people to swear. All dancing is prohibited, and, generally  
30 speaking, all kinds of games, except the practice of the bow or other arms. Neither do we  
31 tolerate vain and lascivious songs, delicate clothing, whether striped or checked, or cut after

32 the latest fashion. Our people are generally simple folk, peasants, having no other resource  
33 but agriculture, dispersed by persecution in numbers of places very distant from each other.

## **B The testimony of enemies**

I now juxtapose a summary of their beliefs taken from inquisitional records so that from cross-referencing and comparison of the two I may draw out their most prominent major beliefs. The text beginning on the following page is drawn from the records of an inquisitional trial (Comba, 1899: 284-285).

1 Concerning the Waldenses of Freyssinières, a Barbe named Martin, arrested at Oulx, and a  
2 woman belonging to the diocese of Valence [the trial records are extant]. If we examine them  
3 with attention, this is what we find: ...

4 Purgatory is rejected because it does not exist, except in this life, inasmuch as it was invented  
5 by the avarice of the Priest. Our fate is decided here below: after death, devotions will in no  
6 way change it. Worship belongs to God alone, as to the Creator; the Virgin Mary and the  
7 Saints being but creatures, have no share in it; besides, is it not doubtful whether they hear  
8 our prayers? At any rate help can come from God alone. What is to become of the Ave  
9 Maria? Should it be repeated as a penance? No: it is not a prayer like the Lord's Prayer,  
10 which being taught us of God, should suffice. Images are vain; as to festivals we must make  
11 a distinction. There are the festivals, properly so-called, which God has ordained, namely,  
12 Sunday [see No. 1469] and the festivals of Christmas, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. Of  
13 course we are bound to observe those; the others cannot be obligatory nor do they exclude  
14 work. Everyone is free to act according to his own cons[c]ience, but above all, let Sunday be  
15 observed; whilst the memory of the Apostles or of any who are among the Saints may also  
16 be honoured. However, God is not in the Church more than elsewhere. He may be equally  
17 well prayed to at home, nay, even in a stable; he is present everywhere. The Romish Church  
18 has become a Babel, a Synagogue of Satan; it is the Church of the wicked. The Prelates are  
19 worldly and lead scandalous lives, hence they are unsuited to their office; for legitimate  
20 power in the Church of Christ is always in proportion to the holiness of those who exercise  
21 it. The office of the Romish clergy is therefore an empty for- [p. 285] mality; its practices are  
22 worthless, and its holy water very harmless. God blessed the waters from the beginning of  
23 creation, and He blesses them every year on Ascension Day, together with every one of His  
24 creatures. Rain water is just as good. Aspersions are, therefore, matters of indifference, as  
25 well as the singing that accompanies them. If this be so, has the Church a right to tithes and  
26 offerings? Certainly not. As for alms, we shall give them to the poor instead of handling  
27 them over to the curates. What matters it to us if these latter remonstrate? Clerical censures  
28 affect us but little; we are not bound to obey either the Church or her Prelates; not even her  
29 Pope, for he is very far from being holy. It is a long while since he usurped the power he is  
30 wielding; since Sylvester, of blessed memory, there has been no true Pope. Once we had the  
31 same ordinances: but the Priests having given themselves up to avarice and worldly vanities,

32 we have been obliged to separate, in order to hold fast the rule of poverty. As we are not  
33 numerous, we live concealed, and for very good reasons; but, whatever may be said, we are  
34 the Church of God, and those who are not with us will go to perdition. We are but a handful  
35 of people; but it may be on our account that the world has not perished. Our rule forbids all  
36 swearing, even mitigated oaths; it also condemns the death penalty, except for the crime of  
37 killing a man. We recognize in our Barbes the power to bind and loose; it is to them that we  
38 are bound to confess our sins; that is to say, mortal sins. In pronouncing absolution, the  
39 confessor lays his hand on the penitent's head. Penance consists in repeating the Lord's  
40 Prayer a certain number of times, without the Ave Maria, in fasting—not on Saints' days, nor  
41 after the Lenten rule—but on the eve of the four great festivals and of Sunday, and at any  
42 rate on Friday. The Barbes do not receive the communion at Church any more than their  
43 flocks. They bless the bread, and that serves us as Eucharist. Their benediction is more  
44 effectual than ecclesiastic consecration. This latter is null and void; hence we desire no  
45 communion with Catholics. We avoid also uniting ourselves with them in the holy bonds of  
46 matrimony, were it only out of respect for this last Sacrament, which is not badly kept in the  
47 nest of the Alps.

## **A Summary of major beliefs**

### **1. Adherence to the Apostle's creed**

This simple creed is a confirmation of the doctrine of the trinity and is the first thing that Morel mentions as a belief of the apostolic church (see line 1-4 of his treatise (Schaff 1919: 45).

### **2. The Consecration and blessings of the priest**

The Waldenses opposed the idea that the consecration ceremonies made priests, ashes, candles, bishops, churches, baptismal water, cemeteries, altars, and other objects holy. Their belief was that the words spoken may have been holy and good but could not endow these things with a unique holiness that was retained in the object itself (Melia, 1870: 106).

### **3. Rejection of the universal authority of the Pope over the church**

The Waldenses did not recognize the authority of the Pope of Rome. In fact, the Waldenses believed that the papal system was the apocalyptic beast of Revelation. They were accused of open hostility to priests and were said to have called him the chief of heretics (Melia, 1870: 108) (See Morel lines 28-30).

It is true that the Waldensian church did oppose throughout most of its history the papal, hierarchical system. It is also true that just as the Celtic church and just as in the Apostolic church the Waldenses revived apocalyptic emphases of scripture, looked forward to an imminent return of Christ, and saw in the papacy a fulfillment of the beast of apocalypse.

### **4. The Bible in the vernacular**

While not apparent in the confession of Morel this is a very important point. To the Waldenses, as with others who practiced *Authoritative* mission the Bible to the exclusion of tradition or the teaching of the church was central. Defenders of the Roman position state that the church never really restricted the use of the Bible in the vernacular:

What many, indeed, fail to appreciate, and what, moreover, non-Catholics consider a grave abuse—as they put it of the Roman Curia, is the action of the Church in hindering the printing and circulation of Holy Writ in the vernacular. Fundamentally, however, this

accusation is based on calumny. During the first twelve centuries Christians were highly familiar with the text of Holy Scripture, as is evident from the homilies of the Fathers and the sermons of the mediaeval preachers; nor did the ecclesiastical authorities ever intervene to prevent this. It was only in consequence of heretical abuses, introduced particularly by the *Waldenses, the Albigenses, the followers of Wyclif, and by Protestants broadly speaking (who with sacrilegious mutilations of Scripture and arbitrary interpretations vainly sought to justify themselves in the eyes of the people; twisting the text of the Bible to support erroneous doctrines condemned by the whole history of the Church) that the Pontiffs and the Councils were obliged on more than one occasion to control and sometimes even forbid the use of the Bible in the vernacular...*

Those who would put the Scriptures indiscriminately into the hands of the people are the believers always in private interpretation—a fallacy both absurd in itself and pregnant with disastrous consequences. These counterfeit champions of the inspired book hold the Bible to be the sole source of Divine Revelation and cover with abuse and trite sarcasm the Catholic and Roman Church.

(Merry, 1930, ix-xi) cf (Neufield, 1962) [emphasis mine]

The Waldenses were among the first in the middle ages to translate the Bible into the vernacular. Just as with the Celts the Bible was largely translated from the Vulgate. They were for a long time at the forefront of possessing the Bible in the language of the common people (Stephens 1998: 76). It seems that Valdés and his followers produced Bibles in various Galic dialects and German (Stephens 1998: 76). The Metz Bible, which was the subject of a complaint to the Pope, Innocent III in 1199, contained the Gospels, Pauline epistles, the Psalms, and other books (ibid.).

## **5. Practical piety**

Another area of divergence was that of practical Christianity. Like the apostolic and Celtic churches, the Waldenses placed great stress on personal piety of believers. Lying and cheating were to be avoided at all costs by the Waldenses. For this reason, they refused to take oaths lest they not be able to fulfill them (Stephens 1998: 84). Part of their obedience to scripture and the piety it demanded required them to obey the voice of God (revealed in the scriptures) in all

honesty and to reject the supremacy of a church that they saw as corrupt and admitting other influences than the word of God.

## **6. Rejection of non Christian practices gradually introduced into the church**

In this class of things are found the idea of purgatory, which the Waldenses called an invention of avaricious priests and the Antichrist (see Morel lines nine through eleven and the inquisitional document lines six through nine). The Waldenses (Morel lines seven through nine and inquisitional document lines six through nine) also rejected the intercession of Mary and the saints. Images, icons, relics, and pagan festivals were all heaped together as of human (not divine) origin. This above all other areas marks a great difference between Waldensian mission and that of the medieval church.

## **7. Ecclesiology**

The Waldenses rejected completely the hierarchal system of the Church of Rome. Their Barbes (pastors) were in charge of a parish church where they taught the young, admonished the old, often led out in schools, worked along side the common members, trained young missionaries, and often took part in and supervised Bible manuscript reproduction.

They did not accept the doctrine that there was no salvation outside of the Catholic Church. Their belief was that salvation was the product of faith and produced good works (Stephens 1998: 89). They emphasized the atoning power of Christ's sacrifice yet they believed that faith must produce obedience. This again was a divergence from the more prevalent Catholic doctrine that equated intellectual assent to a few key, church membership, and obedience to the Pope and the priests were considered to be the sum of the Christian's duty and adequate for salvation (Bosch 1991: 217-222).

## **B The missionary methods of the Waldenses**

The Waldensian missionaries generally carried out an active missionary work throughout their history. Waves of persecution caused them at times to temper or change their manner of working but even in the most difficult times when they were proscribed anathematized and tortured, the Waldensian mission work was never fully erased (Wylie 1860: 65). In fact, throughout their history they were hunted to a greater or lesser degree by the Catholic Church and the inquisition

so if adversity and opposition were allowed to stop their work, the insistence of persecution would have stopped it altogether. However, the Waldenses did not stop altogether their missionary activity (Wylie 1860: 66). So great was the Waldensian missionary enterprise that they are credited with sowing the first seeds of the reformation in Germany – the Bible – over a century before Luther (Comba, 1899: 80). One enemy – a persecutor - was known to have said, “Where is,” he exclaimed, “the country to be found, in which their sect does not exist?” (Comba: 1899, 150)

### **C How the Waldenses spread the gospel**

As in the apostolic church, the Waldenses dispersed as a result of persecution (Audioso, 1999: 33-39). It has been postulated that as the Waldenses spread out from Southern France to the northern Italy along the main trade route between Lyons and Milan they naturally preached and won adherents (Stephens 1998: 49-65). It is known that they believed in the priesthood of all believers so for the women to share their faith (Gonnet and Molnar 1974: 190-191). Winning converts to Bible religion was a deliberate activity of the Waldenses it seems even as they traveled and settled in other places (Stephens, 1998: 49-65). As these groups of Waldenses spread out, the Church of Rome became more aware of their presence and their beliefs and soon their teaching were seen as heretical. It was not long before word was being spread along the trading routes that the Waldenses rejected obedience to the hierarchy, refused to acknowledge the power of the Church of Rome to bind and loose (probably a reference to salvation) and encouraged laymen to preach. Persecution followed shortly and these simple people began to spread throughout Europe (Stephens: 1998, 73-82).

By the fourteenth century, the Waldenses had spread into Austria and had placed a bishop outside of Vienna. At Steyr they had established a training college. In just that area of Austria there were ten of these training colleges. Missionaries also penetrated into Saxony, Nuremburg, Würzburg, and Thuringia (Stephens, 1998: 49-65). By 1336, there was a strong colony of Waldensian believers at Wittenburg. Remarkably, the Waldenses spread throughout the German speaking and Slav lands. At this point in their history, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the work of the missionaries and the desire to escape persecution. The point is that wherever the Waldenses spread they won converts. It is known that many peasants were moving into

Brandenburg and Pomerania. It is believed that some Waldenses accompanied these peasants in the desire to escape the reach of the persecution (Stephens 1998: 49-65).

From meticulous inquisitional records it is also known that the Waldensian faith had spread to the Baltic States (Stephens 1998: 49-65). Their progress there can be traced in the German speaking cities between the Baltic and the Alps. In these cities some had even climbed the social ladder and acquired some wealth. Some converts were even of noble birth.

In spite of inquisitional efforts to stop its spread, the Waldensian faith spread to Cracow, Breslau and to communities on the shores of the Baltic Sea between Stettin and Königsburg. So pervasive had been the spread of Waldensian missionaries and Waldensian beliefs that although the Roman church tried for centuries to stamp out its spread, and to exterminate the adherents to this faith, that when the reformation started in Germany the Waldenses existed there in some numbers and were known to Luther.

#### **D Main missionary method, sharing the Bible in the vernacular**

##### **1. The barbes and the missionaries**

During much of medieval times, the imperial church neglected preaching (Stephens 1998: 84). The Waldenses considered it a solemn duty. Dependant as they were on the scriptures they accepted the model of the itinerate evangelists of New Testament times (Gonnet and Molnar 1974: 194-196). However, due to relentless persecution many shifted to an itinerant shepherd's role (Stephens 1998: 66). They would establish a circuit of visits to different communities staying a few days in each. They catechized the young, admonished, and directed their parishioners to the Bible. They only visited two or three times in a year but these visits were vital in maintaining cohesiveness in the movement that was spread out and under constant threat of destruction (Stephens 1998: 66).

In contrast to the parish priests, the Waldensian pastors (barbes) were known for their piety, self-denial, and sincerity and were thus greatly loved by their parishioners (ibid.). They were referred to as "good and holy men" by their followers. The term *barba* was a term derived from Piedmont language and meant uncle. The people thus affectionately regarded the pastors as revered

“uncles” to their flocks underlining the close association of the pastors with the people. In Germany, the barbas (barbes) came to be known as magistri who performed all of the functions of the barbes or barbas. Their authority was derived from the respect the people held of their holy and disciplined lives.

## **2. Bible Preaching**

The Waldensian pastors often possessed a small, hand copied Bible or New Testament (Stephens 1998: 67). They would gather the believers together somewhere and read to them the stories of Jesus or other passages in the language of the people. They preached from it, taught from it, and occasionally left copies behind. This gave the followers direct access to the scriptures, a privilege denied to the followers of the Roman church. While all could not read, almost all had an initiation in scripture and were aware of its teachings. Many Waldensian laymen were thus more knowledgeable of the scriptures than were the parish priests.

## **3. The missionaries**

If the Waldensian barbes held the movement together, their missionaries helped it to grow, even in the realms of those who were their persecutors. After a period of careful selection and training, Waldensian young men went out as students to some of the greatest universities in Europe not only to learn but also to stealthily spread Bible truth. During his rigorous training of three or four years in which these youth learned to read, write, and do manual labor, he was introduced thoroughly to the scriptures. They would also copy out and memorize whole sections of the scriptures. They would also learn the language of the countries that they were to visit and learn some medical skills as well. The account of one young barbe arrested by the inquisition gives a glimpse into the lives and training of both the barbes and the missionaries

Griot, who was a muleteer, had come to Provence from the upper Chisone valley in company with ‘one of the principal barbas’ named Louis. He arrived among the rolling hills of the Luberon, where many emigrants from his own valley had settled, to be an apprentice barba – a training that lasted four or five years. After only two years, Griot already knew by heart the whole of Matthew, ‘the canonical epistles’ and two chapters of Luke in his own alpine dialect briançonnais. He was also learning surgery, a typical trade for barbas, and owned a set of surgical instruments. He studies during the winter; and in the summer went out with

his senior colleague Louis, who persuaded him to begin preaching. Griot was reluctant at first; he was not yet qualified, he objected. ‘You will learn by little’, replied Louis. Very soon Griot was reading from the scriptures and preaching.

According to Griot it was customary for the senior barba to preach in the farms and houses of the more educated while his junior companion preached in the humbler dwellings. They would wait until it was dark, then knock on the door of a household they knew to be Waldensian. The family would immediately alert any neighboring friends of their faith. When they had all gathered, the service would begin. Someone would guard the door; for if anyone entered who was not of faith, the service would immediately stop...

Finally, after being examined in the faith, the apprentice would be ordained at an annual synod by the laying on of hands by all those present, and would take the monastic vow of poverty, chastity and obedience. The young man would be assigned to an experienced barba, who would be given money for their journey. Then dressed in the coarse grey cloth of poor men, they would sling their bundles of small books, spare cloths and trinkets for sale over their shoulders or over their donkey and take to the road, joining other travelers—pedlars and pilgrims, knights and beggars, monks and merchants, jugglers and friars. For the next six to ten years, this would be the young barbas life while he proved his quality.

(Stephens 1998: 68-69)

After their period of training among those of like faith, the barbes began the precarious, missionary part of their occupation which involved taking the gospel to those not of like faith. For their own security, they adopted what has been called an “organized elusiveness”. They would often enter a home selling their jewels, trinkets, or other goods. When the opportunity presented itself and when they sensed that their audience was open to hearing they would share portions of scripture. The risk of discovery, arrest, and death were constant. Some scholars intimate that at certain times the Waldensian missionary could only expect to live for two years after beginning his mission work before discovery and certain death. Even though they were discovered often and imprisoned or tortured to death, the Bible was spread by the Waldenses and believers were raised up all over Europe by this method among all classes of society.

(White 1911: 30-34)

## **E Further insight into their methods, disguise and share**

The object of the Waldenses in thus disguising themselves was not merely to escape danger; they frequently only desired to disarm prejudice and gain a more ready access as missionaries; in such cases they assumed the *rôle* of pedlars. An Inquisitor [see editors' note] has given us such a faithful description of one of their visits, that we can almost imagine ourselves to be present. The scene is laid on the confines of Austria and Bavaria.

They endeavor to insinuate themselves into the intimacy of noble families, and their cunning is to be admired. At first they offer some attractive merchandise to the gentlemen and ladies—some rings, for instance, or veils. After the purchase, if one ask the merchant: Have you anything else left to offer us? The latter will reply: I have stones more precious than those gems; I should be very willing to give them to you, if you will promise that I shall not be betrayed to the clergy. Being assured on this point he will add: I have one pearl so brilliant, that with it any man may learn to know God; I have another so resplendent that it kindles the love of God in the heart of whoever possesses it. And so on; of course he speaks of pearls in a figurative sense. After that, he will recite some passage of Scripture

(Comba 1899).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Mr Comba is here quoting from: The "Passau Inquisitor," a designation of either the monk Reiner (Reinerus or Reinerius Saccho) or another anonymous person in the Inquisition at Passau whose writings have been attributed to him.

*Chapter 8*

*Inclusivist mission in the middle Ages*

In what is one of the most difficult eras of mission to study or write about, I now discuss the mission principle of coercion as it developed in the medieval church. One might ask what this has to do with either Christian mission or one of the MPPs. I argue that to compel conversion (if such is possible) was one of the most prominent mission tools used to gain adherents to lead others to re-conversion. As I will demonstrate, it was such a major factor in the mission of the church that it cannot be ignored. I will also demonstrate that it fits squarely within the I MPP because the church of the time used a tool that was originally non-Christian. Coercion to force re-conversion or prevent conversion was employed first by the non-Christian Roman State against the church. I argue that the methodology and the philosophy behind it were both unchristian and but fall within the confines of this research because it was a missionary principle. It ostensibly added adherents to Christianity.

### **A Compulsion and Christian mission**

Bosh identifies the chief attribute of Christian mission during the Middle Ages as one of compulsion (Bosch 1991: 236). In fact, forced conversion was the culmination of a long trend, one that took centuries to develop. As early as the sixth century Pope Pelagius said that it was wrong to suggest that forced (using sanctions and physical punishments) adherence to church doctrine was persecution. He said that persecution was the use of force to do what is evil (Pope Pelagius 1848). The implication is that forcing to do what is good is not wrong. Pelagius was writing to Narses, a state official who had shied away from using force in enforcing church dogma. Pelagius was encouraging him to use force in his (Pelagius's) epistle to him (Barmby 1887: 297). Bamby (1887) states that this was early support for the principle of force. It can be seen then that at a very early stage the door was opened for the further development of coercion in conversion that would eventually become a mission principle.

### **B Persecution of Christians, a pagan Roman practice**

Persecution started early against Christians under pagan Rome. As has been recorded earlier in this study, Nero's opportunistic persecution of Christians in and around Rome was more done out of self-preservation than out of conviction that the Christians were worthy of persecution. Pliny (the younger) in a letter to Trajan (98-117) tells of his course in trying Christians and allowing them to repent by offering devotion to the Gods (Pliny 1935: 401-405). Trajan's response reveals that while persecution of Christian's was spreading it still had not reached the point where they

were being searched out deliberately. However, if they were found to be Christians they were required to demonstrate their loyalty to the gods or suffer persecution as a Christian.

You have adopted the right course, my friend, with regard to the Christians; for no universal rule, to be applied to all cases, can be laid down in this matter. They should not be searched for; but when accused and convicted, they should be punished; yet if any one denies that he has been a Christian, and proves it by action, namely, by worshipping our gods, he is to be pardoned upon his repentance, even though suspicion may still cleave to him from his antecedents. But anonymous accusations must not be admitted in any criminal process; it sets a bad example, and is contrary to our age ...

(Schaff 1902: 2.02.12-19)

Emperor Hadrian encouraged clemency toward Christians unless their accusers could produce proof that they had broken some law. He also urged restraint to be used in hearing accusations against supposed Christians lest any person be accused as a matter of personal vengeance (Hadrian 1842: 189). In this same letter Hadrian swears by the god Hercules and by this name urges Minicius to practice justice (Hadrian 1842: 189). Marcus Aurelius who reined from 161 to 180 again stoked the fires of persecution against Christians. He ordered that Christians should be persecuted in various places in the empire for “sacrilege” (Walter Woodburn Hyde 1946: 171-183). He was himself known to be a stoic and was trained to see Christianity as opposing the imperial cult (worship of the emperor). In his mind the religious principles of paganism were being overthrown, or at least challenged, by Christians and he would not tolerate this. Eusebius says that a leader from Gaul wrote to the emperor asking for advice and Marcus’s response was that the Christians should be “tortured to death” unless they recanted (Walter Woodburn Hyde 1946: 171-183). Deaths of Christians under Marcus spread to many parts of the empire with the worst in Gaul where 48 people were killed in 177. Eusebius again reveals the religious underpinnings of the persecution of Christians by pagan Rome. It seems that in particular one persecution which he describes in great detail pagans felt that their gods were angry at the impiety of the Christians in rejecting their religion. (Eusebius 11-19).

On being asked by the governor who was the god of the Christians, he said, “If you are worthy you shall know.” Then he was dragged off harshly and endured many blows. Those near him struck him with their hands and feet in every manner, regardless of his age; those at a distance threw at him whatever they had in their hands; *all thinking that they would sin extremely and be guilty of great impiety if any insult to him was omitted, for they thought thus to avenge their own gods*. And scarcely breathing he was cast into prison and died after two days... (Eusebius 15)

The pagan emperors and the pagan populace thought that they were doing their gods a service in forcing Christian converts to recant their belief or to die. This trend continued with many of the Roman emperors to a greater or lesser degree up until the time of Constantine. Pliny the younger’s letter to Trajan is also instructive as to the reasoning behind the persecution of Christians. Three things become apparent about the general view of Christians in the Roman Empire.

- Christians were being tortured and killed for not burning incense, praying or showing other forms of devotion to the gods or the emperor.
- They were being persecuted because they were believed to be very superstitious because of their belief in Jesus.
- They were given the chance to *repent* and return to paganism as a means of clemency (Eusebius, 11-19).<sup>51</sup>

At the outset of this study it was pointed out that the early Christians were perceived as disloyal to the state, atheist, and disrespectful of the emperor. All of these factors combined to create a general perception of the part of the Roman governors that for the good of society and the preservation of the Empire it was not only acceptable but also commendable to persecute the Christians.

### **C Persecution grows as a missional tool of the church**

Of great interest to the reader of this study is the fact that the Church of Rome would eventually aggressively pursue a policy of forced integration or reintegration as the case may be, of the Waldensian *heretics* (and other heretics) into the Church of Rome. In other areas it would force

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<sup>51</sup> See the appendix for the full text of Eusebius’ gripping account of the martyrdom and persecutions of those at Lyons and Vienne.

Jews and Muslims to convert or expel them.<sup>52</sup> This brand of mission spanned several centuries and took various forms but well documented evidence by a variety of reputable historians both ancient and current corroborates the facts.

The elevation of Innocent III to the papal throne was the signal for sterner measures. The murder in 1208 of a papal legate, which was falsely ascribed to Count Raymond of Toulouse, kindled the flame of the first Albegensian Crusade, and the patron of St. Dominic placed the sword in the hands of Simon de Montfort, who bathed the banner of the Cross, “in a carnage from which the wolves of Romulus and the eagles of Caesar would have turned away with loathing.” For thirty years the dreadful contest continued and the wretched remnants of these massacres escaped only to fall into the still more ruthless hands of the inquisition, an institution which the counsel of Toulouse called into operation in 1229. (Maclear 1863: 380)

#### **D Compulsion as a Christian mission principle, retracing the history**

Compulsory conversion was a prominent mission paradigm when Roman Christianity met with the Moors and Jewish peoples of Europe. Very severe persecutions were set afoot in parts of Europe as the domination of the Muslims began to wane. Though many in the church decried the false rumors that were the immediate source of the hatred that fuelled the persecution, it was in vain. Admittedly, there had been a growing distaste for all things Jewish fostered in part by the teachings of Romanism from the early centuries. The most intense persecutions were concentrated in the Spanish peninsula. In 1391 popular violence broke out against the Jews, largely based upon superstitious and erroneous beliefs about Jewish religious ceremonies (Maclear 1863: 382, 383). *It said that 35,000 converted to save themselves from the persecution* [emphasis mine]. Those who stayed true to their faith suffered the severest civil penalties.

Things became so appalling that requests by priests to exterminate Jewish heretics were multiplied before the Spanish nobility. A Dominican friar from a monastery in Seville and the Papal Nuncio took the lead (Maclear 1863: 384). *They suggested that the “holy office” of Inquisition would help speed up the conversion of the Jews.* Isabella hesitated then eventually

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<sup>52</sup> The term heretic is used here not as reflective of the author of this studies opinion but serves as a reflection of the dominant church’s attitude toward the Waldenses during the epoch in question.

acquiesced to the importunity of the priests. She however begged that more measures that were lenient be tried. Although she was able to hold off the inquisition for two years, in 1481 it started in full and in the space of a few short months almost three hundred lost their lives (Maclear 1863: 385). Things continued in a terrible state until in 1492 when all un-baptized Jews were ordered to leave the country (Maclear 1863: 385).

Another example of coercion in mission is the inquisition, instituted by the council of Toulouse, to effect the extermination of the Albigenses, and to effect the persecution of other “heretical sects” as all manifesting the medieval church’s preoccupation with forced submission to her dogmas. Maclear (1863: 381) makes the following pertinent point in summation of this section:

When therefore the fanaticism of the Crusades was thus further inflamed by the antagonism of reforming sects at home, it is not to be wondered that *the rational spirit of proselytism was quenched and forgotten* [emphasis mine]. The days of Boniface and Anskar were gone by, and when the Church made her final effort to Christianize the Moslem and the Jew, her weapons were no longer those of her purer missionary age, or in harmony with the faith, she sought to propagate.

According to Coulton it is Gregory the IX that had the distinction of applying existing church law and principle and thus creating that great engine of forced conversion that we know today as the inquisition. (Coulton 1959: 110, 1124-114).<sup>53</sup> Kenneth J. Benrath points out that the inquisition was in fact the outgrowth of an historical trend toward sterner and sterner church government (Benrath 1910: 1). Yet, how changed from church discipline to mission principle is still somewhat unclear.

## **E Examining the beliefs, the variables, of medieval Inclusivism and the use of force**

### **1. The ideological and theological development of use of force in conversion**

The single most influential ideological factor in the idea that mission was one of force was found in the writings of Augustine of Hippo (Beet 1910: 57-58). As Augustine dealt with the very

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<sup>53</sup> Some may take exception to calling the inquisition a tool for conversion. Although this was not its only or primary goals, the citations quoted above indicate that it did serve to “reclaim” many to the faith of Rome.

powerful schismatic Donatist movement he arrived – after some struggle –to the point at which he felt that force was appropriate when seeking to bring “heretical” persons and sects back to the “true church”. He reasoned that by leaving the church they were committing a grave sin that should be dealt with in the sternest measures. It was the church’s duty to save people from grave sin. The reasoning was that persecution then was really an act of mercy.

The Donatists as Bosch points out (1991: 217) “*expressed the anger and despair of those who saw an absolute contrast between the gospel of Christ and the worldliness of the church ...*” The Donatists were in fact more Orthodox than was Augustine (Bosch 1991: 217) in their understanding of personal piety, holy office, and the affects of sin on the church. To Augustine’s mind moral authority was not necessarily tied to morality but was the divine prerogative of the church regardless of the moral integrity of its leaders.

Not only did Augustine sanction the use of force against schismatics but he urged the use of the arms of the State in applying that force (Deane 1963: 187-189). These ideas he more fully developed in his work *The City of God*. His reasoning was that in this world, from the beginning of time there have been two cities (or kingdoms), the spiritual and the temporal. The temporal exists to serve the spiritual, which is God’s true and chosen kingdom. As such, the State was to be subservient to the church and aid in the application of laws that would facilitate the salvation of those outside of the church.

Augustine insists that it is only right for the public authorities to punish wrongdoing, since in so doing they are acting as ministers of God, but that such punishment is an act of love which is intended to lead to correction and reform of those who are punished. The punishment itself does not change a man’s evil will or improve his conduct, but it may serve as a warning to him and as an inducement to change his attitude and his way of life. He sees no necessary conflict between free will and the warnings that are given by the correction of the laws;

He elaborates on this idea in another place:

No one is indeed to be compelled to embrace the faith against his will; but by the severity, or one might rather say, by the mercy of God, it is common for treachery to be chastised with

the scourge of tribulation...For no one can do well unless he has deliberately chosen, and unless he has loved what is but free will; but the fear of punishment...at any rate keeps the evil desire from escaping beyond the bounds of thought.

*Contra Litt. Petil.*, II 84 186; CSEL LII, 115-116; S IV, 574; cf (Deane 1963: 188).

## **F Further development of the principle of forced conversion**

Thomas Aquinas would build upon Augustine's work and formulate a doctrine of persecution in which the church had the authority to correct heretics and schismatics through physical punishment and even death. The steps in the formulation of this doctrine are here outlined for us by G. G. Coulton:

The orthodox doctrine, as formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas and confirmed and elaborated by later Dominicans and by Jesuits like the Blessed Robert Bellarmine and Suarez, runs as follows:—

1. All baptized Christians are, *ipso facto*, subjects of the Roman Catholic Church.
2. That Church is “a Perfect Society” in the medieval philosophical sense.
3. Therefore she has full rights of coercion and punishment over all her subjects.
4. Not only of spiritual punishment, such as excommunication, but also corporal punishment.
5. Not excluding the extreme penalty of death.
6. Heresy—*formal* as apart from mere *material* heresy—is a crime.
7. And therefore punishable in proportion to its sinfulness and to the damage it causes.
8. *Formal* heretics are all who, not being invincibly ignorant (or practically in other words, intellectual deficient) refuse pertinaciously to accept the Roman Catholic faith when put before them.
9. It is not for the individual to judge the point at which this refusal becomes pertinacious, nor for the state, nor for society in general: the sole judge here is the Roman Catholic Church.

(G.G. Coulton, 1959, 42)

Over the course of 1,000 years the church had changed from the persecuted to the persecutor with a fully developed theology of coercion. It is striking how similar the reasoning of the medieval

church is to that of pagan Rome when she was persecuting Christians. Pagan Rome used persecution and coercion to win back converts to the faith in the gods and now papal Rome by the 1300's and through the institution of the inquisition used persecution and coercion also to win and hold converts.

### **G Institutionalized salvation**

Through progressive centuries, the church would build on Augustine's ideas and an erroneous application of Cyprian's statement: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, there is no salvation outside of the Church (Bosch 1991: 218). Finally, based upon this understanding the Popes began to authorize, sanction, and encourage Crusades against "heretics" and Muslims with their attendant atrocities (O'Collins and Farrugia, 2003: 74).

Hand in hand with the belief that the spiritual kingdom was to reign over the temporal was the belief in an institutionalized salvation. Salvation became less and less personal. People were saved through membership in the church (Bosch 1991: 218-219). Conversion and salvation naturally began to be a mechanical consent to what the church taught. This could be done under duress or pressure or for a variety of motives but if assent to Catholic teaching was given salvation was attained.

Eventually Thomas of Aquinas would summarize this practice as one for which the sole condition was a "simple, obedient acknowledgement of that which the church has always taught, even if any more precise knowledge of this teaching is lacking", (quoted in Kahl 1978: 49—my translation).

(Bosch 1991: 219)

So the principle became thus: *Jews and pagans were not to be coerced (although even the Jews were eventually coerced) and apostates and heretics were to be forced to fulfill what they had promised—namely obedience to the church.* The implication was that Christians had promised to obey the dictates of the church.

## **H Beliefs concerning the scriptures**

As Inclusivism developed in Roman Christianity, all of its distinctive theological tendencies and beliefs find their source in their relation to scripture. Allegory continued to play the most important role in scripture interpretation in the medieval Roman church until the time of the Reformation

(Hasel 1985: 1-5).

Since the days of the apostolic church Authoritative mission has been associated with the belief in the primacy of scriptures. I now turn to various scholars for a clearer delineation of the Inclusivist mission paradigm point of view concerning the scriptures at the period under review in this section. The following texts indicate the attitude of Roman Christianity toward the scriptures that had developed by the time of the Waldenses.

Catholics place the pronouncements of the Church before the statements of Scripture in determining doctrine. After all the Magisterium teaches that Church not only existed before the New Testament but was mother to it.

(Williams 1989: 36)

Despite its high doctrine of biblical inspiration, Catholic Christianity is primarily a religion of the word, not of the book. God's living word handed on and constantly reactualized in worship, teaching, and the whole life of the community, *takes certain precedence over the inspired writings*.

(O'Collins and Farrugia, 2003: 104-105) (Emphasis supplied)

At least in the view of the authors cited above, Inclusivist mission proponents during the period under study taught that the Bible was equal to tradition and the church's teaching authority. Thus, scriptural interpretation became subject to a variety of influences outside of the Bible itself. John Moehler makes the claim that it was entirely within the prerogatives of the church to determine what constituted the canon of scripture and to interpret the Bible according to the tradition

handed down to the church (Moehler, 1906: 292-293).<sup>54</sup> It would seem that the chief concern of church authorities was that through reading of the Bible without their guidance, individuals would be led outside of accepted and approved teaching and might actually be deceived into believing that which was not according to the church's teaching (More 1928: 142-144). It is for this reason that the Bible in the vernacular languages was prohibited (More 1928: 142-144).

***Medieval Inclusivism's theology of the Bible and inspiration teaches that the Bible is not above other forms of revelation.*** The Bible was believed to be equal with tradition and the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the church. In the days of the Christian philosophers, external sources become important and normative in scriptural interpretation. It seems that later Inclusivist MPP practitioners displayed the same understanding of the Bible and its inspiration.

The medieval church went a step further and forbade the reprinting of the Bible by anyone other than a priest or other church official except by special permission. This dictum became part of Canon law (Pope Pius XI 1930: 14-15, 17). The ostensible reason for this restriction according to protagonists of this position is that the Waldenses and other similar groups were subverting the faith of many people through indiscriminately handing out the scriptures. The clear teaching of the church at that time is that the Bible is (was) beyond the comprehension of the common people and therefore must be taught to them by church officials in light of the church's teaching. The assertion that the scriptures were too difficult to understand then eventually developed into the doctrine that no person had the authority to teach the bible in a manner that disagreed with previous teaching of the Roman church as Phillip Schaff indicates here:

No one, relying on his own skill, shall,—in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine,—wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,—hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. *Council of Trent, Session IV (April 8, 1546), Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures*

(Schaff 1919: 83)

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<sup>54</sup> Mr Moehler says that the church must set the list of acceptable books pertaining to the canon of scriptures because if such existed in the Bible it would be of questionable authority. His argument however is that such does not exist. (Moehler, 1906, 292-293)

The basic belief in biblical primacy was the ideal in Authoritative mission has been that of *sola scriptura*. Inclusivism has always relied on philosophy, science, tradition, and previous doctrine to be normative in scriptural interpretation.

The “analogy of faith” refers to the collective teachings of the Church which form a framework. This framework enables Catholic exegetes (or interpreters of the scriptures) to use one truth to explain another. Thus, when a Catholic Biblicist attempts to analyze what Matthew and Luke say about Mary, they must keep in mind what the Church infallibly pronounced about her (the Immaculate Conception, the Perpetual Virginity, etcetera)

(Williams 1989: 39).

Errors and inconsistencies have been seen to abound in the Scriptures. The account of the world’s creation being accomplished in a week (Gen 1:1-2; 3) looks incompatible with the findings of cosmology and the theory of evolution. The Psalms and other OT books reflect in places the view that the world is a flat disc and the sky above is a solid vault supported by columns at the end of the earth. Particular books have their special puzzles. How could Jonah have survived three days in the belly of the whale, not to mention the puzzle in this passage into and out of the great fish?

Add to this the fact that the Bible gives to us conflicting facts of the same episode. How did the Israelites evade their Egyptian pursuers? In describing the escape through the Red Sea, Exodus 14-15 offers three versions ...

(O'Collins and Farrugia, 2003, 111)

We see then that just as in the Inclusivism of the philosophers the Inclusivism of Roman Christianity held (holds) the belief that portions of the Bible are unreliable. Therefore, it follows that the *Magisterium*, the churches teaching authority, holds equal weight with scripture. It is the church then that determines what is to be believed by Christians because the scriptures not only contain inconsistencies but are hard to understand (Redford, 1997, 38-39).

## **I The mission between the church and the state**

Undeniably, the church became closely tied to the state in the middle ages of church history. Bosch (1991: 220-223) that this also is the lasting legacy primarily of Augustine of Hippo (1991: 220-223). While indeed this may be the case, it is also true that other influences had encouraged the state's involvement in the mission of the church (Jones 1891: 290-291). This requires that we step back a little further in history to the time of Constantine's struggle to establish himself as sole emperor of the Roman Empire.

It is now important to give some attention to the development of Christianity in relation to the Empire at the time of Constantine. As was stated much earlier in this research, the Christian philosophers had helped to create a climate in which it became conceivable that Christianity was to pagans a logical religion. Subtly over time, Christianity began to win adherents from the cultured classes and persecution began to lessen.

Constantine was involved in the early fourth century in a battle for the throne of the Roman Empire (Jones 1891: 112-114). At the height of this struggle he converted to Christianity, a fact celebrated by some historians as the triumph of Christianity and decried by others as political opportunism (Jones 1891: 112-114, 247). From the time that Constantine declared himself a Christian, granted Christians protection, and gave to them privileged status in the Empire, he became involved in the church as no other leader had been before him (Boak 1955 432,433). Constantine profited politically from the growing influence of the church in uniting the empire under his leadership (Boak 1955 432,433). Ironically, according to Jones (1891: 112-114), he never gave up his sun worship. It is his overt efforts to combine Christianity with pagan religion, or obscure the lines between the two, that make him historically susceptible to the charge that his conversion to the church was the product of a "low utilitarianism" (Jones 1891: 112-114, 245-247, 259-261) (Angus 1929: 104).

Added to the political struggle of Constantine (who would eventually become emperor) was a growing tendency for church bishops to involve themselves in secular and business affairs (Jones 1891: 106-108). The church history of Constantine's era is replete with political rivalries, competing anathemas, and contests for dominion (Jones 1891: 106-110). There grew up a desire

for more secular authority and dominance on the part of the bishops. While the bishopric of Rome had no special or general ascendancy before the time of Constantine, it gained ascendancy gradually as both the bishop of Rome and Constantine saw advantages to closer union.

Constantine would eventually move the Seat of the Empire to Constantinople and leave Rome in a power vacuum soon to be filled by the bishop. Ultimately, a century later, the bishop of Rome would be the sole surviving authority in the “Eternal City” when the barbarian invaders began to attack it (Beet 1910: 57-59). The Church naturally became a symbol of stability and continuity for an empire shaken to the core by the demise of the city of Rome (Beet 1910: 57-59).

Thus favored by circumstances and freed from the overshadowing rivalry of an imperial court—the head of the Church which had stood unshaken as though founded on eternal rock, against the waves of barbarian invasion had broken in vain, alone surviving while all other political and social institutions had crumbled in ruin ... (Beet 1910: 59)

With the prestige of political power came increasing authority in both spiritual and secular matters. By the sixth century, the Roman pontiff effectively ruled what was left of the western half of the Roman Empire. Now the state had become in theory an extension of or at least a part of the church’s mission. This backdrop combined with the very influential opinions of Augustine helped form the basis for the church’s use of force as a mission principle. Bosch (1990: 218-222) says that it was Augustine and Aquinas who provided the theological underpinnings of the forced conversion idea.

By the thirteenth century and the time of the official institution of the inquisition, persecution as a means of winning adherents to the Catholic faith had become a doctrine with the full weight of canon law behind it. I close my observations of this distressing era of church history with the observation that the methodology of pagan Rome in seeking to control Christianity had become a mission principle of the church.

*Chapter 9*

*Nestorian Authoritativism*

The term Nestorian or Assyrian designates one of the branches of eastern Christianity that for many centuries carried on very successful mission enterprises in hostile circumstances. The Nestorians, at least for the first part of their history, were Authoritative in their MPP, not including the philosophy or the religious practices of the evangelized in their mission efforts.

There is no evidence to support the conjecture that Nestorius founded the church of the same name (Dauvillier: 1983). In fact, that would have been impossible since the church had already existed in eastern lands for four hundred years by the time of his birth (Emhardt, Chauncey and Lamsa 1928: 49). In fact, Western Christians gave the name Nestorian to them (Emhardt, Chauncey and Lamsa 1928: 49). .According to some historians, just a century after Christ ended his earthly sojourn the church had been planted among the Turks, the Parthians, the Medes, the Persians, the Bactrians, the Scythians, and the Huns (Wilkinson 1944: 111). They generally called themselves the Eastern Church, differentiating themselves from the church of the Roman Empire (both East and West). One other important distinction to be made is that the Church here referred to is often called the Chaldean church. This name while descriptive of its center of gravity during its long and expansive missionary enterprise was not given to it until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Dauvillier: 1983). By this time, it had succumbed largely to the onslaughts of Islam and Buddhism or to syncretism. Since then the Chaldean church has come largely back into unity with Catholicism and bears little resemblance to the Syriac, Nestorian church, sometimes also referred to as the eastern Syrian church in contrast to the Syrian church of the Empire.

The Nestorian church existed outside of the bounds of the Roman Empire and while the Empire was rocked with religious intrigue scandal and controversy, the Nestorians were suffering intense persecution under the rule of the Persian Empire. Persecution under Decius and Diocletian in the West added vigor to the church of the East. Refugees moved into the vast expanses of the Persian Empire seeking refuge from the persecution in (Stewart 1928: 17). There were also refugees from the East including those who were persecuted in the Monophysite controversy of the eastern Empire and the persecutions of those who sympathized with Nestorius also in the eastern half of the Roman Empire. This sympathetic openness of persecuted believers from the Empire (including Nestorians) gave the Church of the East its name. Henry Lammens made the

observation that in spite of the fact that this church was "...proscribed by the Byzantine emperors, repulsed by the Catholics, anathematized by the Monophysites or Jacobites," it still carried on an impressive missionary program (Lammens 1894: 119,120).

### **A The extent of Nestorian Mission**

Few places in Asia were not touched by the mission endeavors of the Nestorians. India, China, Mongolia, and Saudi Arabia were all areas where the gospel penetrated in its first 50 years of activity (Lammens 1894: 119,120). So much was this the case that the Arabian Peninsula had a sizeable representation of Christians by the time of the birth of Muhammad in 570 AD (Abdul-Haqq 1980: 11-13). In addition, Alopen, a Nestorian missionary was received in China in 635. The Emperor had portions of scripture translated and placed in the Imperial library. From that point in time, Nestorian missions prospered there for at least two and a half centuries (Neuffer 1995). So great was the extent of Nestorian missionary endeavors that at the time of the Birth of Athol in 640 that the Catholicos of Ctesiphon is said to have had 200 bishops and 20 Metropolitans under his charge (Nestorian 2007: 119-120).

One of the greatest factors in the marvelous expansion of this church was indeed persecution. For while in the Roman Empire persecution eventually was ending toward most Christians, the persecution of Christians under the Persians were much more severe and extended than in the realm of the Romans (Stewart 1928: 17-19).

### **B Missionary aspects of the Nestorian church mission methods**

#### **1. Persecution**

The first notable aspect of Nestorian missions is that they were dispersed by persecution by both other Christians and the Persians. Nestorian Christians suffered very extensively under Sapor, Bahram, and Yezd'gerd of the Persian Empire (Stewart 1928: 9-30). A countless number were killed instead of denying their faith and their Lord. Some crossed back into the expanses of the Byzantine Empire reversing the previous trend under Byzantine persecution. Some moved into Arabia, taking Christianity to that peninsula long before the advent of Islam. The persecuted believers also passed to furthest extremes of the Persian Empire as well as Turkestan. Wherever

they went their pattern followed that of the Waldenses and that of the first churches suffering under Jewish persecution.

Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Wherever they went, whether merchants or artisans, clergy or laity, they carried the gospel with them. Supporting themselves by the labour of their own hands or filling appointments as secretaries, physicians or stewards in the households of the nobles and princes of those lands to which they went, they were one and all missionaries of the cross

(Stewart 1928: 17).

When Sapor II came to power in the Persian realms Rome was already officially Christian and Constantine wrote to him asking for protection and clemency for professed Christians in Persia. This request however increased Persian hatred of Christians since the two empires were in a constant state of warfare.

Later however, it appears that the Persian emperors saw the possibility of clemency toward their Christian subjects as a way of ensuring their loyalty, since they were hated and execrated by the Romans and the Byzantines (Nestorian, 2007). Even though the Eastern Christians as they have been called were not part of the Nestorian Christological controversy, they did refuse to anathematize or reject him and were thus labeled Nestorians later by West.

However, the dawn of Islam brought reprieve for the Nestorians. According to Lammens Muhammad actually felt an affinity for and promised protection of the Nestorians.

If we can believe the assertions made by the Hashimite ÔAbdallah, son of IsmaÔÉ-l, in his famous letter to \_ÔAbdalmasé-h the Kindite, the preferences of the Prophet's disciples for the followers of Nestorius were of even more ancient origin. "Of all the Christians," he says, "they are the most congenial to the Moslems, and the closest to them in their beliefs. The

Prophet praised them, and bound himself to them with solemn promises. He purposed to thus express his appreciation for the service rendered him by the members of the Nestorian religious orders in predicting the high mission to which he was called. Moreover, Mohammed loved them [p. 121] with the most sincere affection, and he liked to talk with them.”

(Lammens 1894: 120)

## **2. Bible Training schools**

Another of the missionary methods used by the Nestorian or Syriac church was that of missionary Bible training schools. The chief subject of study was the scriptures. Wherever the Nestorians went a strong system of education and Bible training went with them (Stewart 1928: 36-37). They introduced letters and learning among the Turks, Uigurs, Mongols, and Manchus all of whom derived their alphabet from the Nestorian Syriac. During the persecutions under Sapor teachers became a prime target indicating that even in the fourth century a vigorous educational program was beginning. For higher education, Syriac Christians went to Edessa and later Nisibis. A school of renown was opened in Seleucia which was eventually transferred to Baghdad. Others existed in Dor Koni and Mkhozi d'Arimu. Amr, who lived in 1340 speaks of colleges for Tartars at Merve and other for Arabs at Hithra and Prat d'Maishan. Every bishop maintained a school and the course was heavily theological. Many students could recite the Psalter by heart and candidates for ordination were expected to do so. Education was free although parents were expected to give for the support of the teachers. In contrast to the monastic schools in Catholic Europe, begging was prohibited. Students were expected to maintain themselves by labor during the long school break.

### **C Nestorian beliefs, the variables**

We get a glimpse of Nestorian beliefs from several sources. The most startling of these is the testimony of other religions. At the time of the advent of Islam, the predominant Christian sect in Arabia was that of the Syriac. Furthermore as Islam developed there arose many points of similarity between the Nestorian and Islamic faiths which strongly suggests that Mohammed borrowed Nestorian doctrine in his teaching. One area of undeniable influence of Nestorianism on Islamic theology is that of the theology of the judgment.

There are many points of similarity between Muslim teachings and Nestorian Christianity, but the circle of ideas most prominent and characteristic, according to Tore Andre, is eschatology with its extraordinary stress on the Day of Judgment.

(Zwemer: Forward to Nestorian Missionary Enterprise, Stewart, T & T. Clark, 1928, p. 8)  
cited in (Abdul-Haqq, 1980, 11)

Research has also revealed that while there is no clear evidence of an Arabic Bible in Arab lands before the eighth century that Syriac churches commonly used Arabic in their worship services as early as the sixth century (Abdul-Haqq 1980: 13). It may then be safely deduced that Nestorian missionaries and ascetics believed in reaching the people in their vernacular.

### **1. The centrality of the Bible in Nestorian mission**

Another of the aspects of the belief system attributes of the Nestorian church that can be ferreted out of its history is its simplicity. Its teaching was Bible centered and avoided the allegorist and philosophical tendencies (at least initially) of western Christianity (Riddell and Cotterell: 2003, 71). If this were not the case it could never have withstood the onslaught of the Muslim hordes across its territory. Churches in the Roman realms, especially North Africa, were all but obliterated by the Muslims.

There is a lesson there for the church to learn: When it buries its head in monasteries and libraries, when it concerns itself primarily with philosophy and abstract theology, when it loses sight of the people, the consequences for both church and people are likely to be catastrophic

(Riddell and Cotterell: 2003, 71).

For almost a thousand years while Christianity in the West, with a few notable exceptions, was devastated by theological controversy and later by Muslim armies, the church in non Roman Asia carried on extensive and expanding missionary work. Bosch refers to the Nestorian church as the mission church “par excellence” for all of Christianity in medieval times (Bosch 1991: 204).

Finally, however after many years of valiant missionary endeavor the church is said to have yielded to syncretism or been swallowed by Islam. It has since ceased to be a major force, since about 1400, in central Asia or the Middle East (Bosch 1991: 205).

## **2. The beliefs a summation**

Mar Odisho, the Metropolitan of N'siwin and Armenia in 1298 wrote a treatise on the beliefs of the Nestorian Christians called the Book of Marganitha (the Pearl) in which he outlines among others the following beliefs of this church:

- I. God is the creator of the world.
- II. He is not many but one
- III. He is eternal
- IV. He is incomprehensible
- V. He is triune
- VI. Christ is the savior of mankind
- VII. The doctrine of the church

*Chapter 10*

*Authoritative mission and the reformation*

## **A Protestant Reformation missions and Authoritativism**

The purpose of this section is not to give a history per se of the reformation but rather to highlight those aspects of the reformation, especially its theological moorings, which directly led up to and influenced Protestant mission before the Enlightenment. Therefore, while reformation history is discussed it is only within the confines of this narrow purpose.

### **1. Factors leading up to the Protestant mission movement**

The reformation itself was not a mission movement but rather a reaction to the excesses of the imperial church of the Medieval Age.<sup>55</sup> Phillip Schaff observed that next to the introduction of Christianity it was the single greatest movement in history (Schaff 1919: 204-205). Foremost among the factors that led to Protestantism and its mission movement was a forsaking of tradition and a renewed interest in the Bible.

There were many “reformers before the Reformation,” and almost every doctrine of Luther and Calvin had its advocates long before them. The whole struggling of mediaeval Catholicism toward reform and liberty; the long conflict between the German emperors and the popes; the reformatory councils of Pisa, Constance, and Basel; the Waldenses and Albigenses in France and Northern Italy; Wycliffe and the Lollards in England; Hus and the Hussites in Bohemia; Arnold of Brescia, and Savonarola, in Italy; the spiritualistic piety and theology of the mystics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; the theological writings of Wesel, Woch, and Wessel, in Germany and the Netherlands; the rise of the national languages and letters in connection with the feeling of national independence; the invention of the printing-press; the revival of letters and classical learning under the direction of Agricola, Reuchlin, and Erasmus,—all these, and similar movements, were preparations for the Reformation.

(Schaff 1919: 204-205)

Schaff said that the reformation was a groundswell of theology that had its beginnings in previous movements. He also says that it was a culmination of political and economic factors that

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<sup>55</sup> A succinct discussion and summary of this point can be found at the following web site: <http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/indexaz.html>. The reformation eventually, in its final outcome, changed every aspect of Catholic theology and resulted in the formation of numerous new church denominations. These all would eventually develop their own unique approach to Christian mission based on the unifying “protestant” principles outlined in this chapter.

converged creating a climate right for such dramatic change. I will now trace the most prominent aspects of the reformation as they relate to pre-Enlightenment Protestant mission.

## **2. The use of the scriptures and the Bible in the vernacular**

According to both Protestant and Catholic writers, the Bible and beliefs regarding its role and inspiration were central to the Protestant Reformation. One historian would go so far as to say that the “Bible and the Bible only” is the best descriptor of Protestant religion (Chillingworth 1888: 463). A former President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, suggested that the translation of the Bible and its study (at the time of the reformation) helped bring to men political, intellectual, and spiritual liberty (Wilson 1912: 502). Luther also espoused the position that the study of the Bible by the masses brought about liberty and enlightened the consciences of many people (Luther 1958: 74).

The Waldenses, who were the first continental Christians to possess the Bible in the vernacular, have been said to have paved the way for the reformation in much of Europe through their work in Holland. There, Vaudois missionaries early translated the Bible into the vernacular of the common people. Although in Holland, persecution against Protestants was some of the worst, the Bible in the vernacular had a far-reaching influence.

From one of the provinces of Holland came Menno Simons. Educated a Roman Catholic, and ordained to the priesthood, he was wholly ignorant of the Bible, and he *would not read it*, for fear of being beguiled into heresy. When a doubt concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation forced itself upon him, he regarded it as a temptation from Satan, and by prayer and confession sought to free himself from it; but in vain. By mingling in scenes of dissipation, he endeavored to silence the accusing voice of conscience; but without avail. After a time he was led to the study of the New Testament, and this with Luther's writings caused him to accept the reformed faith. He soon after witnessed in a neighboring village the beheading of a man who was put to death for having been rebaptized. This led him to study the Bible in regard to infant baptism. He could find no evidence for it in the Scriptures, but saw that repentance and faith are everywhere required as the condition of receiving baptism.

(White 1911b: 239) (emphasis supplied)

In Germany it was Luther that coined the protestant watchword *Sola Scriptura*, the Bible only. In England Wycliffe translated the scriptures into English making them available to the masses. Tyndale also provided a vernacular translation of the Bible. Zwingli upon his introduction into his influential parish of Zurich proposed to teach the scriptures to the masses concerning the life of Christ. For him the Bible was the *architeles*, the first and last word Scripture was to him *architeleus*—the first and the last word (Nichol 1978: 78). Farel and Calvin in France relied heavily on the Bible with no appeal to papal tradition and dogma.

### **3. In the vernacular**

There were two aspects of this central role of the Bible in the reformation: First that the Bible alone was sufficient as a rule of faith and second the Bible was its own and best interpreter (Pierson 1910: 106). Wherever possible the Bible was translated into the language of the people. The first of the major persecutions of the inquisition was against the Waldenses of Northern France and parts of Italy and the Albigenses of southern France and a large share of the reason that they were persecuted was because of the distribution of the scriptures by their missionaries. When count Raymond, an Albigensian noble, was captured the pope decreed that laymen not be allowed to read the Bible in the count's domain (Foxye 2001: 58-59). As the inquisition spread in Europe it came to even prosecute those who read the Bible in the common language (Foxye 2001: 61). Bosch says the following when referring to the central role of the Bible in the Protestant Reformation:

The centrality of the scriptures as guide for life marked an important advance over the view that all matters of faith and life are to be ruled, sometimes arbitrarily by popes and councils. At the same time it opened the way for a "paper pope" replacing the pope in Rome—hardly an advance over the Middle Ages. Sometimes the Bible was hypostatized and almost regarded as though it were working on its own. It is important to keep in mind that the reformers did not yet teach biblical inerrancy, they were interested rather in the cause that scripture promotes.

(Bosch 1991: 243)

While I differ with the conclusion that Bosch draws in his analysis and further elucidation of which the preceding statement is but an introduction, it does serve to underline the point that the Bible for the Protestant reformers was not an figurative book but rather a firm rule of faith and life.

Whether by papal magisterium, church dogma, or the sophistries of schoolmen, canonists, and allegorists, this was a leading target of Luther's "Reformation Treatises" of 1520. In 1519 he had denied the infallibility of general councils. The Reformers liberated the Bible, by vernacular translation (notably Luther's German Bible), expository preaching (recommended by Zwingli), and straightforward grammatical-historical exegesis (best exemplified in Calvin's commentaries). Disputations, often critical in the pacing of reform, operated like communal Bible studies. Thus were the Scriptures enthroned as judge of all ecclesiastical traditions and the sole source of authentic doctrine, as well as experienced as the living power of God in judgment and grace.

(<http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/indexaz.html>)

Aside from the refutation of church dogma, custom, and the primacy of the Bible there were a set of other less obvious but equally important factors in the shaping of early Protestant missionary movements:

#### **4. Involvement of laymen and ecclesiology**

One idea that accompanied the centrality of scripture was the teaching that each member of the church had an individual responsibility to make known the word and will of God (Bosch 1991: 243). This broke with the old idea of the inability of the ordinary lay members to understand the word of God and to participate actively in what was for a long time considered the work of monks or other clerics. Since the time of the reformation the concept of *the priesthood of all believers* has been a fundamental principle of many Protestant churches providing a basis for missionary endeavor. The believer stands in a direct relationship to God. There is no need for the mediation of the church or the priest for personal salvation. Protestant Reformation ecclesiology followed to its logical conclusion, suggested that the believer had an individual responsibility not only to the church but more importantly to his God. J Kolstin said that the Waldenses following

this line of reasoning broke with long held views and considered themselves part of the church of God even if they were hated and excluded from the earthly church (Kolstin 1909: 81-83). As Doctor Bosch points out this relationship and responsibility were perceived as existing independent of the church.

Both Huss and Wycliffe expressed their belief that the church was the “totality of the predestined” and denied the divine origin of the papacy and hierarchy of the church (Kolstin 1909: 81-83). Luther defined the church as the “communion of the saints” and again denied the church was exemplified in the polity and structure of Roman Christendom (Kolstin 1909: 81-83). The Augsburg Confession describes the church as the “congregation of the saints” (Kolstin 1909: 81-83). The church then for the reformers took on a different significance from the medieval, Catholic concept of the church as the dispenser of sacraments and the designated administrator of the salvation of God. The church became the community of the saved used to minister to the lost by God leading them to an individual relationship to Him. The reformation gave to the church a newer (maybe much older if one refers to the book of Acts) more spiritual definition of itself that depended from first to last on the concept of *righteousness by faith* because the church is composed of the saved (Kolstin 1909: 81-83).

## **5. Revival of grammatical-historical exegesis**

Gerhard Hasel (1985: 100-104) in his book, *Biblical Interpretation Today* suggests that the Protestant reformers helped restore a very basic, straightforward form of biblical interpretation that had been lost in the allegorical and scholastic methods used up unto that point. He says that this method of biblical interpretation is in fact grounded in what the Bible teaches about itself and has the following component presuppositions:

- 5.1 An assumption that the Bible is God’s word
- 5.2 God is the author; inspired men are the writers
- 5.3 There exists an indivisible union of the human and the divine in scripture
- 5.4 The authority of the Bible is the authority inherent in the word of God
- 5.5 There exists a unity in the Old and New Testaments
- 5.6 The Bible is its own interpreter

5.6.1 Any truth that the Bible declares is normative

5.6.2 There is an abiding need for the illumination of the Holy Spirit

The foregoing listed presuppositions largely reflect the principles and presuppositions inherent in the grammatical-historical hermeneutic approach to the scriptures as opposed to the more widespread and historically employed historical-critical method of which allegorical interpretation can arguably be said to belong to.

## **6. Summation of Protestant Reformation principles of mission**

The MPP of the Protestant Reformation would be that of Authoritativism. Although the mission movement would not begin until 200- 250 years after the beginning of the reformation, it was characterized by the following emphases:

6.1 The principle of sola scriptura and grammatical-historical interpretation methods

6.2 Renunciation of church dogma and tradition deemed to be not according to the Bible

6.3 Involvement of laymen in active mission service, not just theologians or monks

6.4 Scriptural translation in to the vernacular of the people

6.5 Salvation by faith in Christ and not by works or acts of penance

## **B The eschatology of the reform, renewed emphasis on the end**

The historicist hermeneutic in which the symbols of the book of Revelation are compared with the actual course of history is known as the standard Protestant Reformation eschatological framework (Pieters 1950: 43-46). This is because a whole host of reformers including Bullinger, Foxe, Luther, Wycliffe, Bale, Brightman and generally all early reformers ascribed to this view and saw the Revelation as a forecast in symbols of the history of the church and the world (Pieters 1950: 43-46).

Historicism perceives real historical events and personages in the mysterious symbols of revelation (Tenney 1957: 137-138). It is sometimes called the continuous historical view because it sees the book of Revelation as the history of the church in symbols from its beginning to the end of the world (Ladd 1956: 32-34). This was generally the view of the Protestant reformers (Tenney 1957: 137-138). So much so that Calvin could say, "Scriptures uniformly commands us

to look forward with eager expectation to the coming of Christ, and defers the crown of glory which awaits us till that period (Calvin 1936: 253).” Martin Luther also spoke not infrequently of his hope in the second coming of Christ: “I ardently hope that, amidst these internal dissensions on the earth, Jesus Christ will hasten the day of his coming”, (McNicol 1910: 126-127). John Wesley, the great Protestant missionary, gave yet another reason why during the time of the reformation there was a revival in the theme of the end of the world and the hope of the second coming of Christ. He said, “The spirit of adoption in the bride in the heart of every true believer says, with earnest desire and expectation, ‘Come and accomplish all the words of this prophecy’” (McNicol 1910: 126-127). Milton also expressed ardently his hope in the soon return of Christ.

Yet another text from Luther emphasizes the renewed focus given to this topic at the time of the reformation and following:

I hope the last day will not be long delayed. The darkness grows thicker around us, and godly servants of the Most High become rarer and more rare. Impiety and licentiousness are rampant throughout the world, and we live like pigs, like wild beasts, devoid of all reason. But a voice will soon be heard thundering forth: *Behold, the bridegroom cometh*. God will not be able to bear this wicked world much longer, but will come, with the dreadful day, and chastise the scornors of his word...

The prophets spoke and preached of the second coming of Christ as we do now; we know that the last day will come yet we know not what and how it will be after this life, but only in general, that we, who are true Christians, shall have everlasting joy, peace, and salvation. The prophets held likewise, that soon after the coming of Christ, the last day would appear. First, they named the day of the Messiah the last day. Secondly, they set the signs of the first and second coming both together, as if they would happen at one time.

(Luther 1902: 7-8, 90)

In yet another place Luther says the following:

I do not wish to force any one to believe as I do; neither will I permit anyone to deny me the right to believe that the last day is near at hand. These words and signs of Christ compel me

to believe that such is the case. For the history of the centuries that have passed since the birth of Christ nowhere reveals conditions like those of the present. There has never been such building and planting in the world. There has never been such gluttonous and varied eating and drinking as now. Wearing apparel has reached its limit in costliness. Who has ever heard of such commerce as now encircles the earth? There have arisen all kinds of art and sculpture, embroidery and engraving, the like of which has not been seen during the whole Christian era.

(Luther 1905: 62)

The renewed emphasis on the second coming and an actual hope that it would be in the not distant future reflected back to an era of the church long since forgotten for as Judith Shklar says the emphasis of the medieval church was on the kingdom of God as it existed on earth. There was no real emphasis on the nearness of the coming of Christ or tangible and general hope in it during those many centuries (Shklar 1957: 179-180).

### **C The problem of early Protestant mission**

The actual carrying out of a Protestant Reformation mission praxis paradigm was delayed so much that some have postulated that early Protestants had no mission. While in some senses this may be true, it has also been postulated that the first century or two of Protestantism were consumed with the emerging Protestant church's identity as it threw off the mantle of Catholicism and forged its own identity. Once this identity was fairly established and the unifying principles of Protestant mission (as outlined above) were set in place, a Mission Praxis Paradigm gave shape to actual mission enterprise.

While Bosch argues forcefully that, it is inconsistent to judge the reformers as unconcerned about cross-cultural mission by later mission movements. While it is true, cross-cultural mission was not a major part of the reformers' theology, it is also true, as I will demonstrate, that the foundation of Protestant missions was laid by the reformers.

This does not suggest however passivity and quietism. For Luther, faith was a living, restless thing which could not remain inoperative. We are not saved by works, he said, yet added,

“But if there be no works, there must be something amiss with faith” (quoted in Gensichen 1960: 123). Elsewhere he wrote that is a Christian should find himself or herself in a place where there are no other Christians, “he should be under obligation to preach and teach the gospel to the erring pagans or non-Christians because of the duty of brotherly love, even if no human being had called him to do this” (quoted in Holsten 1961:145 – my translation).

(Bosch 1991: 245)

### **Obstacles to Protestant mission**

There were a great many practical obstacles to a Protestant mission movement. The very first of these is that Protestants at the beginning were facing the prospect of obliteration in many places at the hands of angered Catholic rulers or rulers spurred to anger by Catholic Priests or other church representatives. Luther in Germany, Huss and Jerome in Bohemia, the Vaudois in Italy and France, Menno Stevens and other reformed believers in the Netherlands, Farel, Zwingli, Calvin, Lattimer, Ridley, Wycliffe, Tyndale, and many others were chiefly preoccupied with rediscovering long hidden Bible truth and surviving papal and state persecution. It was not until after the Enlightenment and the advances of colonialism that cross-cultural mission overcame these impediments and became the force behind modern missions. There would eventually be two streams of Protestant mission, the first followed in the path of Authoritativism. The second stream became the third and final Mission Praxis Paradigm – Neo-inclusivism.

It must be noted that one other mitigating factor against Protestant mission was the influence of the Enlightenment on the Protestant church. However, since the topic is so vast it deserves wider treatment than can now be given. I will speak particularly of this when developing the section on the Neo-inclusivist paradigm.

## **D Authoritativism as the initial Protestant Reformation MPP**

### **1. The Moravians**

A shining example of Protestant mission based on the principles of the Reformation itself is the work of the Moravian missionaries. It has been noted that in 1785 only twenty Protestant mission stations existed, fully half of them operated by the small group of Moravians (Maxwell 1985: 130). The Moravians trace their roots to the Pietest movement in Europe of the mid eighteenth

century. According to researchers like Alexander Campbell, the Protestant Reformation bogged down and formalized into many denominations, each with its own creed beyond which it would not proceed (Campbell 1853: 15). He further conjectured that Protestantism in many cases reformed but did not completely do away with all papal doctrine and suggested that the reformation was incomplete (Campbell 1853: 15).

The Pietist movement arose not as a reform movement against Catholicism but as a reform movement of (CRB 1936: 275-276) Protestantism with roots in Germany and Holland. It was not the purpose of this group to break away from or start a movement separate from the Protestant bodies of their time. Rather their emphasis was spiritual. They sought a revival of true spirituality. The Pietists opposed the administration of religion by the State and they clearly delineated the differences between the domain of the secular authorities and the church (Moore 1912: 31-32). Pietism also lifted religion from the sphere of the mechanical and intellectual to include with these a warm and close relationship with Christ as a personal savior (Bosch 1991: 252). In fact, Pietism would greatly accentuate the personal, individual experience in salvation. As a result, they tended to eschew the formation of organized churches in their mission work. For the Pietists the priesthood of all believers was a living reality. Thus, in its belief practice the Moravians reflected the Protestant and Authoritative mission principles of salvation by faith, the priesthood of all believers, and opposition to Catholic dogma and tradition. The American continent would eventually become the epicenter of Pietism due to persecution at the hands of the state churches in Europe. It is thought that Pietism waned in Europe because most adherents migrated to the American states (CRB 1936: 275-276).

It was Zinzendorf (1700-1760) under the influence of Pietist writers like Philipp Jacob Spencer who sponsored a group of Moravians who came to live on his estate in a village called Herrnhut. These Moravians were closely linked by strong spiritual ties and like other Pietists concentrated on group Bible study and prayer. Once again, the propagation of the scriptures played a fundamental role as in other Authoritative mission. It was here, at the Bible study, that the decision was made to send out missionaries to some of the hardest places on earth at that time such as the emerging American colonies and South Africa. One aspect of the belief structure of the Moravians held by earlier movements engaging in Authoritative mission was a strong

apocalyptic emphasis (Maxwell 1985: 128). There was an urgency about their work as they believed that they must do all they possibly could to save the lost before the coming of Jesus (Maxwell 1985: 128). This emphasis on the apocalyptic return of Jesus and the need to work earnestly to save the lost was in reality the realization also of a childhood aspiration of von Zinzendorf. He had entered into a solemn pact with a friend in his childhood years to win the pagans to the savior (Bosch 1991: 252).

The Moravians sent missionaries to the American colonies that carried on a successful work among some of the American Indian tribes winning many to Christ. Almost incidentally, on a ship bound for the colony of Georgia during a storm on the Atlantic Moravian missionaries remained extremely calm while John Wesley who was also on the boat was extremely afraid (Maxwell 1985: 128). This began Wesley's own quest for a deeper faith. In a conversation about faith and confidence in Jesus with a prominent Moravian leader after the storm, Wesley was shown in a new way his need for full faith in Christ. After some time, he found that he himself arrived at a fuller faith and his resulting revivalism in England helped to spark the awakening of Protestantism in England that led to the modern mission movement. Whitfield, a close friend of Wesley's, carried on a similar work of revival in eastern America that helped toward the founding of the Baptist church and the awakening of the Congregationalist churches on the North American continent and the founding of the Methodist church in England and later America.

Not only then did the Moravians carry on a healthy mission enterprise but they had at least an indirect influence on the great Protestant mission movement that was centered in England and the British Empire in the second half of the eighteenth century.

## **2. The era of revivals and mission, the centrality of the scriptures**

It was in England during the evangelical awakening that Protestant Authoritative mission began in earnest. British Christians resolved to take advantage of the rising power of the British Empire and take the gospel on the wings of its military might (Maxwell 1985: 130). Protestant missions centered generally on the propagation of the Bible in other languages and a large part of the work of many of the first missionaries was the translation of the Bible. In the support of this work

Bible societies began to proliferate in the late 1790 and early eighteenth hundreds in England and the United States.

### **3. The Wesleys and revivalist mission**

Several people were catalysts of the revival movement in England. Foremost among these are the Wesley brothers and John Whitfield. Originally sent from England to America as missionaries, the Wesleys dated their conversion to contact with Moravians on their way to North America on a particularly stormy ride aboard the ship (White 1911b: 255). Upon arrival in Georgia, (a colony in America) they stayed for a while with the Moravians and were so deeply affected by their spirituality that upon their return to England they continued their tutelage under a Moravian and attended their meetings until they were fully converted (White 1911b: 255). Methodism, the result of their revivalist preaching and teaching served as a catalyst to the revivals in both America and England (Bosch 1991: 278-279).

### **4. Their beliefs, the variables, and mission methods**

The missionary work of the Wesleys centered in preaching and otherwise propagating the message of the Bible, as they understood it. This was the basic approach of all Protestants at the time. It is important to note here that the Wesleys saw no difference between formal Christians and pagans as Bosch states (1991: 278). The beliefs central to them were those of the reformation with the Bible fully at the center:

Methodism's theological perspectives are best understood in relation to what some of its leaders *have considered to be the cardinal principles of Protestantism, and especially of the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century*. The power of the Wesleyan movement was in part due to the timeliness of its message. Certain emphases in its theology reflect the needs of that age and the spirit of both intellectual and practical relevance in succeeding centuries.

Among the cardinal principles of Protestantism which Methodists stress are: (1) the authority of Scripture; (2) the right of private judgment, with its implications for the idea of tolerance and religious liberty; (3) justification by faith; (4) freedom of will (breaking sharply here with predestination); (5) the sanctity of the common life; and (6) faith as both a human and a

divine act, stressing moral and rational elements in faith, the divine initiative through grace, and the importance of religious experience

(Muelder 1952: 158-159).

It is apparent that in the major points the tendency of Methodism were generally in agreement with Protestant Reformation theology. John Wesley believed in the centrality, primacy, and unity of the Bible just as other Authoritative mission proponents had (Wesley 1952: 8-9). Closely tied to this belief in the primacy of the Bible and its exposition to all is his belief in religious liberty. Religious intolerance whether Catholic or Protestant was something he urged his followers not to take part in (Wesley, 1872, 357).

Wesley also believed in the literal second advent of Christ and taught this to his followers (McNicol 1910: 127). He also encouraged the reading or revelation and the right exposition of it (Wesley 1952: 934).

## **5. Methods**

Authoritative Protestant preaching shifted the center of worship from the alter of the Roman church to the pulpit (Parker 1956: 132-133). This shift was naturally based on the centrality of the Bible to Protestantism from its outset. The pulpit was/is the place where the exposition of the Bible to all takes place (Parker 1956: 132-133). Thus the main mission methodologies of early Protestantism of the Authoritative MPP is that of preaching, teaching, Bible translation and other forms of dissemination of the Bible. These tendencies are perceptible in the missions of the Pietistic Brethren churches that left Germany and Switzerland and established themselves in the American colonies, chiefly Pennsylvania (CRB 1936: 273-276). They were known for their preaching and famous for the spar presses, which produced a variety of religious materials and Bibles (CRB 1936: 273-276).

### **E William Carey and others, the centrality of the scriptures**

Protestant mission became more obvious and deliberate when William Carey a Baptist lay pastor and shoemaker raised money that set off the mission movement in England. That movement resulted in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society (Maxwell 1985: 130), the first ever of its kind. The London missionary society was the next to be formed three years after the BMS in

1793. Another formed in Holland and another in Berlin. In 1810 the first American mission society, The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), was started (Maxwell 1985: 130-132). Following the Protestant and Authoritative principle of the Bible in the vernacular of the people Carey and others made Bible translation into the local language a vital part of their work.

Concurrent with the rise of mission societies was the rise in the formation of Bible societies whose purpose it was to support and facilitate the printing of Bibles in the new languages into which the missionaries (Maxwell 1985: 130-132) were translating the Bible. For instance, in 1804 the British and foreign Bible society was born.

The work of Moffat who translated the Bible, Livingstone who worked with Moffat and preached in the vernacular could be said to accord with early Protestant mission principles. For both, preaching factored heavily into their work. For Moffat scripture translation was also vital.

Amy Carmichael, who learned the language of the people, Hudson Taylor who lived closely with the people, and Judson who experimented with adapting local religious forms continued in authoritative mission while going a step further. While they too would participate in the ministry of preaching, scripture teaching and dissemination in the local language, communal living among the people being ministered to, medical missions, schools and literacy training, they also sought to come even closer to the people through the adaptation of cultural forms.

*Chapter 11*

*Neo-Inclusivist mission*

## A Neo-inclusivism

By the middle of the nineteenth century, many people eminent for their piety began with almost one voice to mark a decline and stagnation in the spirituality and the missionary enterprise of most of Protestantism (Campbell 1853: 15). Finney would say the following about the spiritual condition of the churches:

"We have had the facts before our minds, that, in general, the Protestant churches of our country, as such, were either apathetic or hostile to nearly all the moral reforms of the age. There are partial exceptions, yet not enough to render the fact otherwise than general. We have also another corroborative fact, -- the almost universal absence of revival influence in the churches. The spiritual apathy is almost all pervading, and is fearfully deep; so the religious press of the whole land testifies. Very extensively, church-members are becoming devotees of fashion, joining hands with the ungodly in parties of pleasure, in dancing, in festivities, etc. But we need not expand this painful subject. Suffice it that the evidence thickens and rolls heavily upon us, to show that the churches generally are becoming sadly degenerate. They have gone very far from the Lord, and he has withdrawn himself from them."

cf (White 1911b: 376-377)

Albert Barnes the famed author of the biblical commentary alike deplored the low spiritual condition of the churches. He stated that

"There are no awakenings, no conversions, not much apparent growth in grace in professors, and none come to his study to converse about the salvation of their souls. With the increase of business, and the brightening prospects of commerce and manufactures, there is an increase of worldly-mindedness. Thus it is with all denominations."

(White 1911b: 376-377)

Christian historians like Maxwell (1985: 127) suggest that one of the greatest single factors in this shift was the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment introduced ideas into the faith of Christianity that greatly changed (many would say negatively affected) the faith of the majority or Protestantism (Maxwell 1985: 286-287). Neo-inclusivism is largely a product of Protestantism

but not that of the reformation. It is rather the result of the branch or Protestant thinking that was greatly altered by the scientific, humanistic, and secular elements of the Enlightenment.<sup>56</sup> Neo-inclusivism presents an interesting study in contrasts. Its language as I will show is that of the Bible and the Bible only; its praxis of mission is something far different for it uses many of the tools and methodologies, imbibes the major presuppositions, and develops the theories of many non religious elements of the Enlightenment.

## **B NI's major characteristics and presuppositions, the variables**

### **1. Scientific criticism of the scriptures**

The Enlightenment materially changed the faith of many Christians in several ways. The first major way in which Protestantism was affected was that for the first time she embraced “scientific” Bible criticism (Moore 1912: 4). The methods of criticism of literature and history now became the popular method of examining Bible history and literature. As Moore said. “It has completely altered the view of revelation and inspiration. The altered view of the nature of the documents of revelation has had immeasurable consequences for dogma (Moore 1912:4).”

This new approach to Bible study did away with the idea that the scriptures were a book of divine origin and proffered many new concepts of what inspiration is, many of which (or variations thereof) are still in use today. These new views of inspiration would have far-reaching results.

1.1 One of these views of inspiration is the supposition that *the Bible contains both human and divine elements which must be separated*. Ernst Troeltsch did much to develop this theory (Coleman 2004: 19). He suggested that the Bible could not achieve a super-cultural dogmatic truth that transcends cultural and historical circumstances (Hasel 1985: 73-74). His principle of correlation suggested that all history, divine or human must correlate to our present world and be judged on present reality and the probability of similar circumstances occurring in the present. Like those ancient theologians of the Alexandrian school who following in the theological footprints of Origen and Philo, gave another more “believable” meaning to that which did not seem plausible from a human standpoint. The supposition was that the Bible included divinely inspired thoughts that were somehow

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<sup>56</sup> In my research I have not found a more thorough discussion of the affect of the Enlightenment on the Protestant church than that which Bosch gives in *Transforming Mission*.

encumbered by human intervention and that the only way to arrive at a correct separation of the divine and human was to use his “higher” critical tools (Troeltsch 1913: 729-753). The inspiration of the scriptures became a subject of imperial research and the miraculous aspects of scripture were doubted. Troeltsch postulated that the critical historian could not make use of supernatural intervention as a principle of historical explanation because that would shatter the causal nexus (Hasel 1985: 73). The higher critical methods critically applied to the Bible carried with them a set of suppositions that would greatly change the mission of the Protestant church:

- a. The secular world is the normative starting point for determining meaning and probability of historical events (Reid 2001: 1-8).
  - b. The Bible is to be studied as any other secular book (Zinke 1981: 1-8).
  - c. The Bible is culturally conditioned and therefore cannot be totally free of this weight unless higher critical science is applied (Reid 2001: 1-8).
  - d. Dogmatism and universal truths are not possible since the Bible is culturally biased and one’s own culture may impose biases on the interpretation of the scriptures (Reid 2001: 1-8).
  - e. There must be more weight given to the changeable nature of revelation and truth (Reid 2001: 1-8).
2. ***A fragmented view of cosmology began to appear in Christian theology.*** Humankind, animals, the social realm, and the other realms of life were no longer seen as necessarily integrated parts of a cosmological whole. Science, anthropology, God, and mankind were all seen as separate fields of study and in some ways equal in their ability to be studied from a scientific viewpoint. This fragmentation was both horizontal and vertical (Bosch 1991: 262-263) (Moore 1912: 4). The fragmented view of cosmology and *sectorization* combined with the idea that the Bible is both divinely inspired and culturally bound has led to the trend of subsuming worldview and religion under the heading of culture. Religion in effect became a subcategory of culture. Following this thought to its logical conclusion Christianity, however pure, is a cultural expression and therefore absolutes are almost non-existent. The culture then becomes the determinant, normative factor in religious belief (Smith 1995: 1-3). Charles Kraft has been one of the most influential

among modern scholars of this type of thinking. His book *Christianity in Culture* expresses this view. He has however come under severe criticism himself as doing away with objective absolutes, elevating culture to a central, normative role and deviating from the Bible's teaching concerning its own inspiration (Smith 1995: 1-3).

3. ***Missiologists came to see the culture as a central factor in transmission of the biblical message*** (Winter 1995: 127-128). Building on the foundation laid by the Enlightenment and further extended by Kraft and others, culture has been given a key role in biblical interpretation principles. This link is vital because Protestant mission has from the beginning been involved in scriptural translation into the language of the people. Here a difference must be noted between the work of early Protestant translators and missionaries like Carey, Wycliffe, and Tyndale and the later post-Enlightenment translators. The difference lies in the later group's view of inspiration. The latter group stresses a disjointed approach to inspiration based on Enlightenment scientific thinking viewing some parts of the Bible as uninspired and alleged to be able to decipher the difference between the culturally inspired parts and the divinely inspired ones. Hermeneutic principles came into play as Bible translation passed into primitive languages. Culturally suitable "dynamic equivalences" were sought to replace difficult Bible concepts. Should Jesus be called the "Lamb of God" in societies where the lamb was not known or could this phrase be substituted with another in societies where the ox or pig were used in much the same fashion? Many felt free to do this based on the idea that the Bible and Christianity are culturally bound. Scriptural translation passed from translation into interpretation and Bible paraphrases came into being in an attempt to meet the local cultural need. Tyndale's approach to the problem of finding suitable conceptual equivalents to biblical language in the English language was to translate directly the concept from original language instead of looking for a "suitable" and substitutable equivalent in the host culture. He thus created new phrases (or terms) that have become integral to the English language. Words like *Jehovah*, *mercy seat*, and *scapegoat* were first used by Tyndale and exist in usage to this day (Fish 2000: 201).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The authors of Tyndale's biography make the following statement unwittingly supporting the argument that Tyndale's approach to Mission and culture fell squarely within the principles of Authoritativism: "Through the King James Version, William Tyndale has continued to shape the culture of English speaking world, even to our day.

4. ***The Enlightenment replaced divine purpose with a direct causality.*** The scientific method looked for direct causes in the existence of the world (Bosch 1991: 265). Spiritual considerations were now seen as foreign to science. Why the world exists was no longer a question with which scientists concerned themselves. They became concerned only with the immediate scientific causes of problems answered previously only from a religious perspective. This process of separating divine purpose from science and looking solely at the world from a scientific cause – effect relationship elevated science to a standing equal with religion. Even Christians began to view the domain of science as separate from but equal to religion. Science was no longer subsumed under religion but became a separate area of study not necessarily to be reconciled with religion. There are several areas where this new scientific focus to the detriment of a spiritually centered worldview have affected Christian mission.

***4.1 The scientific approach to scriptural study:*** This newfound approach allowed for the full development of higher criticism. Higher criticism carried with it a set or presuppositions that became the foundation of faith in the Bible for many Christians. The idea began to be proffered that one must approach Bible study with an attitude of doubt and questioning just as was current at that time in the study of literature and history. The idea also developed that the scriptures were culturally biased and therefore compromised in their ability to be applied to non-biblical cultural settings without further interpretation and the assistance of the anthropological sciences.

***4.1.1 Diminished role of faith in biblical studies and in mission.*** The new scientific focus caused faith to be supplanted by reason to the extent that the miraculous and direct intervention of God in human affairs began to be discounted as unscientific.

***4.1.2 Anthropological sciences became normative.*** In the twentieth century a sector of the Christian community became interested in translating the Bible into vernacular, tribal languages. The practical dilemma presented by these languages, often developed in primitive settings was that they were not conceptually equipped to accept biblical language and concepts in some instances. The interpreters, following the example of Eugene Nida who coined the phrase “dynamic equivalent” began to produce paraphrases of the Bible in popular vernacular. These paraphrases allowed

interpreters to more loosely translate the text. They (the translators) began to look for closely equivalent concepts or words in the host language that produced the same “reaction” in the new culture as in the culture of the original language. At the base of all of this were certain anthropological concepts about equivalence and meaning across cultures (Anderson, 1998). This theory of translation and paraphrasing into the vernacular later developed into a theory of mission and evangelism known under various names such as dynamic equivalence theory.

### **C Scientific theory superimposed on Protestant belief**

Protestantism has faced a serious dilemma since the Enlightenment. It no longer was unified in mission praxis. As time has past the gap has widened between the conservative, Authoritative leaning practitioners and Inclusivist proponents. Neo-inclusivism’s challenge has been to meld the Authoritative principles of its reformation origins and the modern scientific approach largely affected by the Enlightenment. Authoritativism and Inclusivism are each internally consistent. The presuppositions match the praxis paradigm. Neo-inclusivism however seeks to blend the two other paradigms into one. This has created a spectrum of approaches within the NI MPP that make consensus nearly impossible. As one example of this dichotomist dilemma one can easily see that belief in *sola scriptura* and higher criticism at the same time presents a terrible contradiction as to how one views the inspiration of the Bible. However, neo-Inclusivists are faced with the disagreeable task of seeking to blend the two. The debates are long and loud.

### **D The methodology**

#### **1. Examples of Neo-inclusivism**

One excellent example of Neo-inclusivism is found in modern movements toward what is termed insider movements where converts (to Christianity) are encouraged to stay fully attached to their previous religious communities and attend their services whether they are in the synagogue, the mosque, or the temple. The reasoning is based on anthropological principles of recognition. Thus, those for example coming from a Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu background are encouraged to continue as recognized believers in these systems. It may not be apparent to others of their co-religionists that they have switched their allegiance to Jesus.

John Travis argues that one need not become a Christian in the historical sense of the word but rather that remains Muslim (Travis 2005). Others suggest that Hindus may stay devoted to a Hindu-like system of Christianity (Richard, 1999). This method of cross-cultural mission is quickly becoming the norm in many mission agencies.

The variations of application are numerous but the following basic principles are common to all NI mission:

1.1 One begins with a focus on the culture and a thorough understanding of it. This focus on the culture takes into account the great difficulties that people from specific cultural contexts have in accepting the gospel (Travis 2005: 12). The focus then becomes the removing of all unnecessary cultural barriers (Travis 2005: 12). In this line of reasoning the church itself is seen as a cultural barrier for those who want to come to Christ and “converts” are encouraged to stay recognized as non-Christian and yet believe in Christ—while staying fully connected with their non-Christian way of life (Travis 2005: 12)

1.2 Stress is placed on God’s work in the culture and thus accommodation of non-Christian elements into the church is accepted in order to make it more accessible to resistant people. These accommodations may include worship forms like prayer or attitude in prayer; where one worships (i.e. at shrine or temples, or churches); architecture of buildings, how one sits, what he eats, and how he dresses. These are considered important areas to include in methodology.

1.3 The Bible is perceived as culturally bound and thus its message is reinterpreted for different cultures. This is not seen as necessarily negative but does suggest a localizations of theology in which every culture has a theology that is specific for it (Helderbrand 1982: 134-138).

1.4 Conversion is seen as an assent to certain truths with no tangible acceptance of Christ (Helderbrand 1982: 134-138). This point remains a challenge for proponents of the Neo-inclusivist system because one of the accusations to which they are predisposed is that one never knows at what point the convert may say he is converted or Christian (Nikkides, 2004). If conversion is a full acceptance of the Lordship of Christ in the life as the divine-human Savior, the question is put to proponents of this system how they can know when a seeker is converted since he still adheres to his old religion. Also empirical studies (the few that exist) show that

those who remain in their former religions do not always know that Christ is their savior and really do not always want connection with the church.<sup>58</sup>

### **E The imprecise character of NI missions**

Neo-inclusivism remains the hardest of the three MPPs to measure quantitatively because it often by nature is ambiguous in its results. In fact while many people profess to be part of such movements or at least to promote them, identifying the members of an “insider movement” as they are termed is difficult because they are defined as groups of believers in Jesus who do not join the Christian church and remain in their cultural and religious tradition. Muslim followers of Isa, Buddhists who follow Jesus and Hindu worshipers of Christ all fit within the NI MPP.<sup>59</sup>

One of the leading proponents of the NI MPP lists the following areas as the major components of this praxis paradigm.

- 1.1 Culture and politics are a barrier to religious change and therefore a change of religion should not be required of all people.
- 1.2 Changing religion is not a prerequisite of salvation faith in Christ is.
- 1.3 Jesus was not concerned with founding the church but establishing the kingdom.
- 1.4 There is a gap between what is taught and what is believed by adherents to non Christian religions.
- 1.5 There are good and bad beliefs to be found in other religions.
- 1.6 One cannot know when in the process one changes from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ.
- 1.7 Contextual theology should be determined not only by bible study but by experience on the ground.

(Travis 2005: 12-15)

### **E The problem of NI missions**

Neo-inclusivism is the ascendant mission praxis paradigm. It has especially found resonance with missionaries to the Muslim and Hindu worlds where resistance to the gospel is highest. Its

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<sup>58</sup> Mark William’s empirical study (which I cite in this study) found that inside movement “converts” generally did not assent to or believe several vital Christian doctrines and do not view themselves as Christians. Phil Parshall found that less than half the converts in a particular insider movement even knew Christ’s role and person.

<sup>59</sup> I treat the theoretical aspects of this MPP in the analysis section of this research. Concrete examples of this type of mission work just do not exist in any great number other than the anecdotal evidence proffered by its proponents.

success remains difficult to quantify and qualify due to its nature but perceptibly includes non-Christian elements in its mission endeavors.

The challenge that many Protestants have with NI mission is upon his point. There is a professed allegiance to the Protestant principle of the Bible as primal to mission. Yet many are concerned that the message of the Bible is lost through *dynamic equivalence* and other ideologies brought in from the social sciences (Williams 2003: 82-88) such as the *homogenous unit* principle. For all of the study and theorizing and application of complicated principles there seems to be no increase in converts no decrease in syncretism (in fact it has been argued that such methods actually increase syncretism). Others worry that placing the accent on scientific and anthropological principles in mission diminishes the felt need of the Holy Spirit in reaching resistant peoples with the gospel.

**Section III**  
**Analysis**

## *Chapter 12*

*Comparing, analyzing the paradigms and drawing conclusions*

## **A Revisiting the goal of this research**

At the outset of this research, the stated goal was to discover any possible links between the Mission Praxis Paradigms and the theological leanings and presuppositions of their proponents. This study did uncover some remarkable associations, which I will catalog in this chapter. However, a refinement of these initial findings and taking the postulates to a greater level of certainty calls for more research beyond the scope of this present work. I will however outline the initial findings about potential links between the three paradigms and theological tendencies in the following pages. I believe that the conclusions offered in this chapter, although tentative, proceed as natural and logical conclusions to the evidence herein presented. First, however it is in order to review the findings of this descriptive, historical research.

## **B What this study revealed**

### **1. Authoritativism, from the beginning consistent presuppositions**

The Authoritative MPP is the mission praxis model that was employed by the church of the apostles and as such is the model of missions that can arguably be said to most closely align with scripture. The major presuppositions and theological underpinnings of Authoritativism have become clear as we trace its theological and practical development throughout the history of Christian mission.

Although there was some variation, this research details that generally the Authoritative MPP historically holds to the following tenants:

- 1.1 A literal hermeneutic of the scriptures as opposed to the higher critical presuppositions of the other two (see footnote 44).<sup>60</sup> In modern times, we would most likely align this approach to scripture with the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. Generally, throughout history from the days of the apostles and throughout the periods listed in this research, the emphasis of the A MPP proponents regarding the Bible has been the following: The scriptures are to interpret themselves; Martin Luther said that “Scripture is its own light” (Davis 2003: 6). This was the position of the early church

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<sup>60</sup> I here use the term liter hermeneutic approach. This is in contrast to the allegoric or higher critical approach and does not in any way apply a literalistic verbal inspiration approach to scripture.

- 1.2 The scriptures are the only safe guide of belief and practice for the Christian. See the section of chapter five entitled *1. The centrality and primacy of the Bible*.
- 1.3 The Bible is primal and serves as the final arbiter or norm in all areas of belief
- 1.4 The Bible although revealed in a Jewish context is not culture bound and supersedes cultural limitations. Reference to this is made in the section of chapter four entitled: The countercultural nature of the gospel.
- 1.5 The church is seen as the kingdom of God on earth. This kingdom is not however a political one but a spiritual one that transcends nationalism and culture.
- 1.6 The church is the manifestation of Christ's kingdom on earth. The perceived dimensions of this kingdom according to the Authoritative MPP are outlined in chapter four under the heading: The countercultural nature of the gospel.
- 1.7 The church's main task is the salvation of the world Knowing that the world will end in an apocalyptic judgment, it is the duty of all Christians to tell the world about Christ. Please refer to footnote number 47.
- 1.8 The church's teaching ministry is not subject to human tradition, church councils, or earthly powers. See page 164.
- 1.9 Salvation is a gift and its benefits compel the believer to active mission service wherever he may be. See page 109. Salvation is by grace through faith and the saved associate together into the Body of Christ.
- 1.10 Culture is seen as fallen due to the fallen state of man. While God works to draw men to him in various cultures, often it gets in the way of gospel transmission and faith in Christ. See the section entitled, *The countercultural nature of the gospel* in chapter 4.
- 1.11 Culture is often counter the gospel and is not a good arbiter of proper mission practice.
- 1.12 All human culture is fallen and not necessarily of divine origin.
- 1.13 Eschatology and a coming Day of Judgment some time at or after the return of Jesus to destroy the wicked and restore peace and harmony was another significant presupposition. See pages 45, 46, and 88.

## **2. The Authoritative MPP common missionary methods**

The link between theological presupposition and mission methodology begins to become exceptionally clear in this part of the study. I will now outline the most common features of the Authoritative MPP approach to mission in general practice among the groups, mission movements, and events studied in this research and classified under the Authoritative MPP. Generally, the Authoritative approach requires that missionaries speak the language of the people to whom they are ministering. In the New Testament church, this was done through the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and more mundanely for the other groups treated in this research through language study and living with the people.

- 2.1 Speaking the language of the people included worship in the vernacular of the people. On the day of Pentecost this was achieved through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The A MPP mission movements herein researched all showed a proclivity for ministry in the language of the people.
- 2.2 It also included scripture translation into the vernacular of the people as done by every Authoritative group in this research aside from the apostolic church.
- 2.3 In later Protestant Authoritativism literacy training became a branch of scripture translation.
- 2.4 Authoritative mission requires close interaction with the people. The Celtic missionaries established villages next to areas where the targeted people lived.
- 2.5 Often this interaction took the form of schools and centers of learning and education.
- 2.6 Even the Waldenses who were so fiercely persecuted visited their parishioners regularly and kept up contact with the outside world at the risk of their lives. Also, they sent missionaries out to all parts of the Empire who secretly shared the Bible.
- 2.7 The Bible is central to Authoritative mission in spite of culture
- 2.8 There is no record of appeals to authority of the church or to tradition in Authoritative mission. Generally, what marked the A MPP was translation of the Bible into the local language or use of the vernacular in worship. In Patrick's confession, the Nestorian history, the New Testament Church, and the Celtic Christians one sees frequent reference made to the Bible.

2.9 Authoritative Mission was/is often unwitting mission. It was mission that flowed out of the lives of believers as a natural result of their faith in the face of persecution and trial.

### **3. The evident aspects of Inclusivism's philosophy**

Although Inclusivism took on a variety of forms and evolved over the centuries it possesses some consistent characteristics that consistently come to the fore in all of its manifestations.

3.1 Popular cultural philosophies used as a starting point. See pages 33 and 34.

Whether it was the early Christian philosophers or the work of Augustine in Britain, Inclusivism seeks to capitalize on popular religious ideas in an effort to show their "closeness" to Christian ideas as a means of lessening the barrier between non-Christian religions and Christianity.

3.2 Extra biblical sources are given an equally important role as the Bible in hermeneutics and in mission praxis. See pages 34, 81-83. The tendency to appeal to the Greek sages as a vindication for Christian ideals was the earliest manifestation of this trend. The Medieval church developed a three-fold system of normative influences: the Bible, tradition, and the teaching authority of the church, each equally normative as the others.

3.3 The early allegorist and/or higher critical hermeneutics tend to be attached to this type of mission. A literal understanding (in the reading of the Bible) may be eschewed. See pages 39-40. Yet the important point here is that less literal reading of the Bible allows for a greater variety of beliefs and inclusions from other traditions into the message of Christianity.

3.4 Cultural concepts become a useful tool in transmitting the church's teaching. One example of this can be seen in the encouragement that Gregory gave to Augustine to use pagan temples and shrines as places of Christian worship.

3.5 Divinely inspired scripture is difficult to understand and thus free access to it without the teaching ministry of the church or priests leaves the common, uneducated people likely to be misled.

3.6 The church came to be seen as the great civilizing force, the bearer of culture. Especially was this the case during the Middle Ages. See footnote 33 and further notes on page 64.

3.7 Pragmatism takes precedence over doctrine. As an example of this, Gregory's advice to Augustine in his mission to Britain was that it was a practical adaptation to try and convert heathen temples into Christian churches by seeking to change the allegiance of the people. See page 43.

#### **4. Inclusivism's missionary methods**

Based on its fundamental understandings and presuppositions the following are the missionary methods most often employed in cultural Inclusivist mission:

4.1 There is purposeful and overt inclusion of cultural philosophy and worship forms. This was the case with the early Christian philosophers as it was the case in Britain in the Augustinian mission. The ostensible goal is to win converts through practical compromise.

4.2 Inherent in this aspect of Inclusivism's MPP is the suggestion that other sources of revelation exist on an equal level with the Bible. By contrast with the Authoritative MPP the Inclusivist does not make the Bible so prominent in its mission.

4.3 Inclusivism as it developed did not stress the use of the vernacular in worship and suppressed the free translation of the scriptures. Latin came to be seen as the language of the Church and the language of culture. The practical result was that the multitudes of the church who did not speak or read Latin remained in ignorance of the Bible and were little better in their knowledge of it than pagans.

4.4 Salvation came to be seen as a matter of mere assent to the church's teaching and in many cases such assent was forced.

4.5 Mission also at times has also involved intimate ties with rulers and kings. The civil power was expected to enforce the religion and dogma of the church.

4.6 Centers of education and learning developed in Inclusivism just as it did in Authoritativism. These centers of learning are varied and many.

## 5. Neo-inclusivism's evident presuppositions

As a mission praxis paradigm Neo-inclusivism is a study in contrasts. Nearly all of the presuppositions of both Authoritativism and Inclusivism can be found in it. Rather than a single, reasoned position, the NI MPP is a pool of potentially applicable and at times contradictory principles.

5.1 The Bible is said to be the axis of mission yet extra biblical sources hold at times normative value. A good example of this is the use of the Koran seeking to substantiate the veracity of Christianity in missions to Muslims. Biblical teachings are even adapted to fit Koranic teaching especially as it relates to the teachings about Christ.

5.2 While Authoritativism tends toward a simple, literal understanding of the Bible except where symbolism is clearly in use and Inclusivism holds a more allegorical one, Neo-inclusivism tends to be fully neither, including aspects of each in its view.

5.3 The Bible in the vernacular is taken to another level using principles of anthropology. Dynamically equivalent terms are used for difficult to express passages (or those hard to understand) for/in a particular culture.<sup>61</sup>

5.4 In Neo-inclusivism the universal aspect of the church is de-emphasized and ideally the church appears completely unique for every culture with its own set of teachings, beliefs, and worship. Mission then deliberately attempts to make the church reflect the culture. In earlier times this was done by emphasizing local leadership, liturgy, and architecture. It has evolved over the last two decades into insider movements.

5.4.1 One prominent part of this aspect of the NI methodology is in the fact that the insider movements (one manifestation of the NI MPP) avoid allegiance to any larger body or authority (Grafas 2006). They are considered Spirit driven and unique to their own cultural setting.

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<sup>61</sup> Dynamic equivalence is a term first used by Eugene Nida in scripture translation. It described the process of seeking culturally "equivalent" terms in a new language for hard to understand Bible passages. Using such a concept some commentators have suggested that in some cultures "pig" or "ox" of God could be more suitable than "lamb of God."

5.5 Neo-inclusivism stresses the “newness” of what God is doing. This is in reality another aspect of the mission as localization trend. Thus “newness” or stressing the experiential which takes on different forms in different contexts is not only a methodology but a justification of the “strangeness” of insider movements.

## C Conclusions

The thesis of this research is that certain theological presuppositions have historically predisposed the church to certain mission praxis paradigms. I hence draw the following conclusions from the trends observed and the information gathered.

1. Where mission movements of the past have not held to the principle of the Bible only, the Bible's primacy, and the Bible's sufficiency there is seen a greater willingness to do the following:

1.1 Assign normative value to the culture, cultural philosophies, or other non Christian or extra-biblical sources.

1.2 Include non-Christian elements in Christian worship and in Christian mission

1.3 Those who practiced the A MPP showed an ambivalence to culture in mission while the I and the NI actively seek to use it to their advantage.

2. While other views of the nature of the church, salvation, and eschatology showed some variation among the proponents of the three MPP, the view of inspiration is indicative of the place one is willing to give to culture in mission. As already outlined in no. 1 above, a broader view of inspiration and special revelation allows missionaries to look further and include more potentially divinely inspired sources in Christian mission.

Another fact leads me to this conclusion: Some of the notable church fathers that were not of the Alexandrian school (the theological position that saw divine inspiration in pagan, Greek philosophy) were either opposed to appealing to Greek philosophy to explain Christianity were largely ambivalent to it. While I admit that such an undertaking has an inherent risk I suggest that in comparing the writings of Clement or Origen with those of Tertullian for instance one will find a similar condition of things to that described below:

If one takes up the first volume of Tillich's Systematic Theology and looks at it side by side with Barth or with Brunner's Dogmatic, they appear as different as night from day. Where Barth and Brunner depend upon continued reference to biblical sources and work out theology

in closest relation to a systematic biblical exegesis, Tillich's work seems filled with philosophical terms. He discusses God only after he has clarified the metaphysical meaning of being and nonbeing. He discusses sin in relation to an existential analysis of anxiety. Anxiety is interpreted in relation to the metaphysical structures of space, time, causality and substance. This weaving together of theology and philosophy is the key to Tillich's method. His aim is to produce an apologetic theology [p. 68] which will bring the Christian message into specific relation with the ways in which contemporary man understands his experience.

(Williams 1959: 67-69)

One could in the paragraph above replace Tillich's name with that of one of the Alexandrian scholars and not have to change much else for the paragraph to remain true. While one group of scholars bases biblical exegesis on the Bible itself the other bases its hermeneutic on philosophy combined with scripture.

D.H. Kromminga has said that one's eschatological views should be governed by a biblical hermeneutic – principles that the Bible itself outlines for its own interpretation (Kromminga 1945: 288-290). Accordingly, all of the other belief variables are essentially indicators of the missionary's hermeneutic and view of inspiration. Eschatology, ecclesiology, soteriology, and the other variables outlined in this research are functions of one's view of what the Holy Scriptures are saying and just how it is to be interpreted.

It is this foregoing reason that explains why when the church was elevated beyond persecution her views of inspiration changed through the influence of Greek philosophy. After this change in hermeneutic principles, the interest in eschatology and the hope in the soon coming of Christ was no longer a focus of the church. Phillip Schaff says the following to this point:

The elevation of Christianity as the religion of the state presents also an opposite aspect to our contemplation. It involved great risk of degeneracy to the church... The christianizing of the state amounted therefore in great measure to a paganizing and secularizing of the church... The mass of the Roman empire was baptized only with water, not with the Spirit and fire of the gospel, and it smuggled heathen manners and practices into the sanctuary under a new name.

(Schaff 1902: 03.05)

Yet another scholar solidifies our belief that as the Bible hermeneutic of the church changed so did the mission principles of the church and the theological underpinnings on which those principles were founded.

The revival of apocalyptic expectations among the orthodox is particularly startling since it is not sanctioned by tradition. The Catholic Church has long repudiated the hope of an early second coming which the early Christians cherished, for these expectations threw doubt upon the doctrine that Christ founded the church [that is, as the kingdom of God on earth]. Again Bossuet's belief in a slow evolution of God's design in history postpones its fulfillment indefinitely. In any case, the historical despair of the present does not even resemble the milleniarism of the past, for it is derived from the deductions of social theology and from political analysis.

(Shklar, 1957, 179-180)

#### **D The principle of correlation**

I now turn to one other argument, as a substantiation of the fact the primal determinate factor in one's mission paradigm as outlined in this research is one's conception of biblical inspiration. In scientific observation and statistical analysis, the principle of correlation says that when one variable changes it potentially tends to vary in conjunction with the outcome. This is known as a correlation. A correlation in turn signifies a causal relationship. In every mission methodology here outlined the view of the primacy and inspiration of the Bible changes in conjunction with the methodology. This strongly suggests a causal relationship between ideas (beliefs) on inspiration and the MPP held by the missionary.

#### **E Recommendations for further study**

While some causality has been shown between hermeneutic and mission praxis paradigm, further study is needed to determine what the nature of the correlation is and what other factors may be involved in the determination of mission praxis paradigms.

## **F Measuring the MPPs against Boff's Categories of Syncretism**

Of all of the three mission praxis paradigms Neo-inclusivism and Inclusivism have often come under criticism as syncretistic. This accusation has continued throughout the history of the church since the reformation and continues in the present. Even before Vatican II, Catholicism was often viewed by Protestant historians as practicing adoptionism and syncretism.

### **1. Inclusivism and syncretism:**

This study showed that Inclusivism of the culture as an integral part of mission effort has resulted in many cases in syncretism (O'Neil 1989: 249-252). Syncretism happens when the basic values of Christianity is changed by the cultural values of the context (Martin 2006: 123). By almost all accounts Christianity was changed by Inclusivist mission principles. Gibbon describes the process.

The sublime and simple theology of the primitive Christians was gradually corrupted; and the monarchy of heaven, already clouded by metaphysical subtleties, was degraded by the introduction of a popular mythology, which tended to restore the reign of polytheism... The Christians frequented the tombs of the martyrs, in the hope of obtaining, from their powerful intercession, every sort of spiritual, but more especially [p. 215] of temporal, blessings... Edifying pictures, which could not long escape the abuse of indiscreet or idolatrous devotion, represented the image, the attributes, and the miracles of the tutelar saint... The most respectable bishops had persuaded themselves that the ignorant rustics would more cheerfully renounce the superstitions of Paganism, if they found some resemblance, some compensation, in the bosom of Christianity. The religion of Constantine achieved, in less than a century, the final conquest of the Roman Empire: but the victors themselves were insensibly subdued by the arts of their vanquished rivals.

(Gibbon, 1897, 214,215)

Here points out that slowly pagan practice crept back into Christianity. He also said that the mission principle of accommodating pagan beliefs would help converts feel more comfortable if they found an equivalent in the "bosom of Christianity" as he states it.

Cultural inclusive mission during the time of Augustine used the same ideology in seeking to reach the masses of pagans. Augustine's directives from the Pope were to convert pagan practices to Christian ones. His goal was to let the former Pagan practices of the British be a link to the

newfound Christianity of the converts. Syncretism could be said to have occurred because upon Ethelbert's death masses of his followers returned to Paganism. Some have argued that what these people accepted was a veneer of Christianity over their pagan beliefs which were never really eradicated. What occurred was syncretism as adaptation and syncretism as addition according to Boff's categories. See the subheading *Classes of Syncretism* in chapter 2.

During the middle ages the church and the state were closely united forming a politically entangled church that viewed itself as the kingdom of God on the level of nations (Bosch 1991: 372-380) with the divine right to rule over people and to oppose heresy through force of arms, torture and even death to the heretics. After the church united with the state in many countries during medieval times and she dominated, syncretism as accommodation could be said to have occurred. Not only did missionaries practice syncretism but non-Christian (non Catholics) who were persecuted accepted the religion of the state to avoid further persecution.

## **2. Authoritativism and syncretism**

This study revealed very low – even non existent levels of syncretism in the Authoritative mission praxis paradigm. If there is one accusation that is made against Authoritative mission it is that it is under contextualized which some suggest leads to syncretism. However this would not seem to be a vital issue since it is Authoritativism that stresses the use of the Bible in the vernacular, teaching and worshipping in the vernacular, and close association with the people. Authoritative mission did not register in the danger zone for syncretism.

## **G Neo-inclusivism and syncretism**

This MPP has the most difficulty reconciling its various parts and beliefs. Neo-Inclusivist, postmodern and post Enlightenment mission has several areas where syncretism is a real concern.

It is accepted that the NI MPP does have syncretistic leanings. The real argument is not if but where exactly it begins. There exists a wide variety of proponents championing the same basic set of religio-anthropological principles but falling at different places along an contrived contextualization syncretism spectrum. Insider movements with their rationalization of allowing “believers” in Christ to remain in their non-Christian religions and practice non-biblically approved cultural forms, fall squarely within the syncretism categories of Boff – all of them.

The NI MPP has come under heavy criticism from within its own ranks as possessing serious problems with syncretism. This is largely the result of two facts:

1. The presuppositions of both other paradigms are included within it and thus are discordant and hard to reconcile.
2. Its very existence is as a result of the blending of two almost opposite MPP. One could say that it is a syncretistic blend of the A MPP and the I MPP.

NI has always been susceptible to the accusation of syncretism because it seeks to create a *new* religious experience for new believers. This experience is highly individualized or culturally centered. In fact, this dependence on the social sciences has proved to be one of the areas where syncretism is said to have occurred (Douglass 1994: 69-73). Furthermore, some NI practitioners go farther than others in the application of the principles of this MPP and are considered to be practicing syncretism (Parshall 1998: 404-406).

The greatest evidence of syncretism however can be found in the insightful study of Mark Williams in which he suggests that NI strategies brought people from a particular resistant religion into the church leads them to a sort of exclusive pseudo-Christianity (Williams 2003: 82-88) using what is called the homogenous unit principle. According to this principle people are won best when they are won to Christ in a cultural setting where everyone is like them. Williams points out that the evidence indicates that this church growth principle in reality has worked

against bringing MBB's into the church. Some of their beliefs have also been considered less than Christian.<sup>62</sup> The following is excerpted from William's study

Simply put, have theological orthodoxy and biblical fidelity been seduced by a [high-spectrum] contextualized strategy that crosses the line into syncretism? A few illustrations of observed "strategy" highlight my concerns:

- Recitation of the Shahada ([Muslim] creed) that states, "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet."
- Lining up in the prayer line and performing salat [ritual prayer] as Muslims do.
- Calling oneself "Muslim" with no qualifier, such as "Muslim, follower of Isa."
- Encouraging MBBs to remain in the mosque permanently.
- Avoidance of affirming the deity of Jesus.
- Not adequately teaching that the Quran is not one of the four holy books of Scripture given by God.
- Going on the Hajj [pilgrimage to Mecca]
- Official conversion or re-conversion to Islam.

(Williams 2003: 82-88)

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<sup>62</sup> In the study referred to the context is that of Muslim Background Believers, but the principles apply across religions.

## **H Measuring the 3 MPPs by other standards**

### **1. Results orientation and syncretism**

Which of the three MPPs has proven the most efficacious, the most efficient? The answer to that question is a function of what standard is used to measure the MPPs. If the standard is one of sheer numbers of new converts then the Inclusivist MPP would be the most efficacious.

Inclusivism's proponents have always outnumbered those of the Authoritative method or even Neo-inclusivism. However Inclusivism throughout this study has faced many (more than the other MPP) serious questions about the spiritual allegiance of its converts to Christ. If syncretism is the measure and low syncretism is the standard of efficiency then Authoritativism is the most effectual.

### **2. A practical standard**

However, if numbers alone are not the standard and syncretism is given secondary consideration but the tenacity of the believers in the face of persecution, the ability to carry on missionary work in very tiring circumstances, and the longevity of the Christian communities founded under an MPP then Authoritativism would prevail. For both the friends and avowed enemies of the apostolic church, the early British church, the Waldenses, and the Nestorians attested their resolve and Christian vigor. They were objects of wonder. Each of these groups, practicing the Authoritative MPP carried on extensive mission work under great opposition and at times overwhelming persecution. Yet the mission stations that they started, the schools they founded, the translation work carried out, serve as models of mission service to this very day.

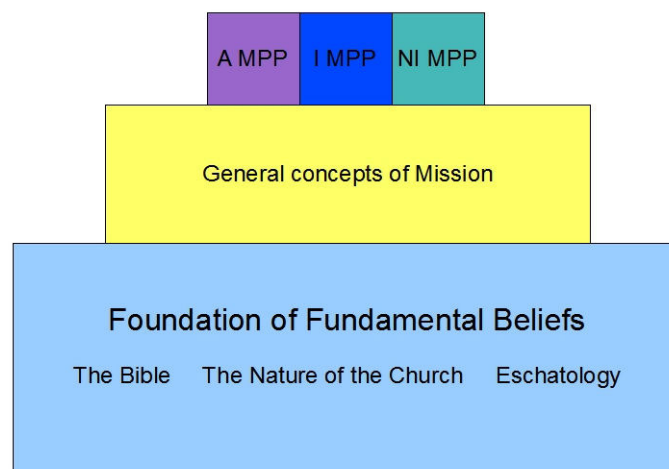
### **3. Only one final standard**

For Christian missionaries there is only one ultimate standard; it is this presupposition that has guided this research. The Bible is to be to the Christian missionary, his compass, his guide, his anthropological manual, his teacher. In it he can read and then seek to imitate such peoples as Paul, Peter, Stephen, and Jesus himself. The Bible is above anthropology, science, and human standards the ultimate missionary training manual. Nothing in his research has disproved or done violence to these presuppositions concerning Holy Scripture.

## **I The Bible, the beginning and the end of all missionary enterprise**

Judged then by the Bible the ideal MPP is the Authoritative. In this praxis paradigm the missionary learns the language, lives with the people, understands them, seeks to help and reach them, and accepts the Bible as the Word of God which has all final normative authority. Higher criticism is avoided and while the social sciences are important, they hold a role subservient to the Bible. The church is God's kingdom but not in a sense that it came to mean in the middle ages. It is spiritual and does not seek to involve itself in the political kingdoms of this world.

In the great task of giving the gospel to the world unnumbered methods have been tried but only that which is grounded in the Bible will stand the test of eternity. This research has shown that Authoritative mission praxis paradigm principles most closely reflect the ideal set down by God in His word, the Holy Bible. It has also shown the close link between fundamental belief and missionary practice.



**Figure 7, building blocks of the MPPs**

*APPENDIX I*

The Confession of Patrick

# The Confession of Saint Patrick

The Celtic Literature Collective

**1.** I, Patrick, a sinner, a most simple countryman, the least of all the faithful and most contemptible to many, had for father the deacon Calpurnius, son of the late Potitus, a priest, of the settlement [vicus] of Bannavem Taburniae; he had a small villa nearby where I was taken captive. I was at that time about sixteen years of age. I did not, indeed, know the true God; and I was taken into captivity in Ireland with many thousands of people, according to our deserts, for quite drawn away from God, we did not keep his precepts, nor were we obedient to our priests who used to remind us of our salvation. And the Lord brought down on us the fury of his being and scattered us among many nations, even to the ends of the earth, where I, in my smallness, am now to be found among foreigners.

**2** And there the Lord opened my mind to an awareness of my unbelief, in order that, even so late, I might remember my transgressions and turn with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had regard for my insignificance and pitied my youth and ignorance. And he watched over me before I knew him, and before I learned sense or even distinguished between good and evil, and he protected me, and consoled me as a father would his son.

**3** Therefore, indeed, I cannot keep silent, nor would it be proper, so many favours and graces has the Lord deigned to bestow on me in the land of my captivity. For after chastisement from God, and recognizing him, our way to repay him is to exalt him and confess his wonders before every nation under heaven.

**4** For there is no other God, nor ever was before, nor shall be hereafter, but God the Father, unbegotten and without beginning, in whom all things began, whose are all things, as we have been taught; and his son Jesus Christ, who manifestly always existed with the Father, before the beginning of time in the spirit with the Father, indescribably begotten before all things, and all things visible and invisible were made by him. He was made man, conquered death and was received into Heaven, to the Father who gave him all power over every name in Heaven and on Earth and in Hell, so that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, in whom we believe. And we look to his imminent coming again, the judge of the living and the dead, who will render to each according to his deeds. And he poured out his Holy Spirit on us in abundance, the gift and pledge of immortality, which makes the believers and the obedient into sons of God and co-heirs of Christ who is revealed, and we worship one God in the Trinity of holy name.

**5** He himself said through the prophet: 'Call upon me in the day of' trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.' And again: 'It is right to reveal and publish abroad the works of God.'

**6** I am imperfect in many things, nevertheless I want my brethren and kinsfolk to know my nature so that they may be able to perceive my soul's desire.

**7** I am not ignorant of what is said of my Lord in the Psalm: 'You destroy those who speak a lie.' And again: 'A lying mouth deals death to the soul.' And likewise the Lord says in the Gospel: 'On the day of judgment men shall render account for every idle word they utter.'

**8** So it is that I should mightily fear, with terror and trembling, this judgment on the day when no one shall be able to steal away or hide, but each and all shall render account for even our smallest sins before the judgment seat of Christ the Lord.

**9** And therefore for some time I have thought of writing, but I have hesitated until now, for truly, I feared to expose myself to the criticism of men, because I have not studied like others, who have assimilated both Law and the Holy Scriptures equally and have never changed their idiom since their infancy, but instead were always learning it increasingly, to perfection, while my idiom and language have been translated into a foreign tongue. So it is easy to prove from a sample of my writing, my ability in rhetoric and the extent of my preparation and knowledge, for as it is said, 'wisdom shall be recognized in speech, and in understanding, and in knowledge and in the learning of truth.'

**10** But why make excuses close to the truth, especially when now I am presuming to try to grasp in my old age what I did not gain in my youth because my sins prevented me from making what I had read my own? But who will believe me, even though I should say it again? A young man, almost a beardless boy, I was taken captive before I knew what I should desire and what I should shun. So, consequently, today I feel ashamed and I am mightily afraid to expose my ignorance, because, [not] eloquent, with a small vocabulary, I am unable to explain as the spirit is eager to do and as the soul and the mind indicate.

**11** But had it been given to me as to others, in gratitude I should not have kept silent, and if it should appear that I put myself before others, with my ignorance and my slower speech, in truth, it is written: 'The tongue of the stammerers shall speak rapidly and distinctly.' How much harder must we try to attain it, we of whom it is said: 'You are an epistle of Christ in greeting to the ends of the earth ... written on your hearts, not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.' And again, the Spirit witnessed that the rustic life was created by the Most High.

**12** I am, then, first of all, countryfied, an exile, evidently unlearned, one who is not able to see into the future, but I know for certain, that before I was humbled I was like a stone lying in deep mire, and he that is mighty came and in his mercy raised me up and, indeed, lifted me high up and placed me on top of the wall. And from there I ought to shout out in gratitude to the Lord for his great favours in this world and for ever, that the mind of man cannot measure.

**13** Therefore be amazed, you great and small who fear God, and you men of God, eloquent speakers, listen and contemplate. Who was it summoned me, a fool, from the midst of those who appear wise and learned in the law and powerful in rhetoric and in all things? Me, truly wretched in this world, he inspired before others that I could be-- if I would-- such a one who, with fear and reverence, and faithfully, without complaint, would come to the people to whom the love of Christ brought me and gave me in my lifetime, if I should be worthy, to serve them truly and with humility.

**14** According, therefore, to the measure of one's faith in the Trinity, one should proceed without holding back from danger to make known the gift of God and everlasting consolation, to spread

God's name everywhere with confidence and without fear, in order to leave behind, after my death, foundations for my brethren and sons whom I baptized in the Lord in so many thousands.

**15** And I was not worthy, nor was I such that the Lord should grant his humble servant this, that after hardships and such great trials, after captivity, after many years, he should give me so much favour in these people, a thing which in the time of my youth I neither hoped for nor imagined.

**16** But after I reached Ireland I used to pasture the flock each day and I used to pray many times a day. More and more did the love of God, and my fear of him and faith increase, and my spirit was moved so that in a day [I said] from one up to a hundred prayers, and in the night a like number; besides I used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me at that time.

**17** And it was there of course that one night in my sleep I heard a voice saying to me: 'You do well to fast: soon you will depart for your home country.' And again, a very short time later, there was a voice prophesying: 'Behold, your ship is ready.' And it was not close by, but, as it happened, two hundred miles away, where I had never been nor knew any person. And shortly thereafter I turned about and fled from the man with whom I had been for six years, and I came, by the power of God who directed my route to advantage (and I was afraid of nothing), until I reached that ship.

**18** And on the same day that I arrived, the ship was setting out from the place, and I said that I had the wherewithal to sail with them; and the steersman was displeased and replied in anger, sharply: 'By no means attempt to go with us.' Hearing this I left them to go to the hut where I was staying, and on the way I began to pray, and before the prayer was finished I heard one of them shouting loudly after me: 'Come quickly because the men are calling you.' And immediately I went back to them and they started to say to me: 'Come, because we are admitting you out of good faith; make friendship with us in any way you wish.' (And so, on that day, I refused to suck the breasts of these men from fear of God, but nevertheless I had hopes that they would come to faith in Jesus Christ, because they were barbarians.) And for this I continued with them, and forthwith we put to sea.

**19** And after three days we reached land, and for twenty-eight days journeyed through uninhabited country, and the food ran out and hunger overtook them; and one day the steersman began saying: 'Why is it, Christian? You say your God is great and all-powerful; then why can you not pray for us? For we may perish of hunger; it is unlikely indeed that we shall ever see another human being.' In fact, I said to them, confidently: 'Be converted by faith with all your heart to my Lord God, because nothing is impossible for him, so that today he will send food for you on your road, until you be sated, because everywhere he abounds.' And with God's help this came to pass; and behold, a herd of swine appeared on the road before our eyes, and they slew many of them, and remained there for two nights, and they were full of their meat and well restored, for many of them had fainted and would otherwise have been left half dead by the wayside. And after this they gave the utmost thanks to God, and I was esteemed in their eyes, and from that day they had food abundantly. They discovered wild honey, besides, and they offered a share to me, and one of them said: 'It is a sacrifice.' Thanks be to God, I tasted none of it.

**20** The very same night while I was sleeping Satan attacked me violently, as I will remember as long as I shall be in this body; and there fell on top of me as it were, a huge rock, and not one of my members had any force. But from whence did it come to me, ignorant in the spirit, to call upon 'Helias'? And meanwhile I saw the sun rising in the sky, and while I was crying out 'Helias, Helias' with all my might, lo, the brilliance of that sun fell upon me and immediately shook me free of all the weight; and I believe that I was aided by Christ my Lord, and that his Spirit then was crying out for me, and I hope that it will be so in the day of my affliction, just as it says in the Gospel: 'In that hour', the Lord declares, 'it is not you who speaks but the Spirit of your Father speaking in you.'

**21** And a second time, after many years, I was taken captive. On the first night I accordingly remained with my captors, but I heard a divine prophecy, saying to me: 'You shall be with them for two months. So it happened. On the sixtieth night the Lord delivered me from their hands.

**22** On the journey he provided us with food and fire and dry weather every day, until on the tenth day we came upon people. As I mentioned above, we had journeyed through an unpopulated country for twenty-eight days, and in fact the night that we came upon people we had no food.

**23** And after a few years I was again in Britain with my parents [kinsfolk], and they welcomed me as a son, and asked me, in faith, that after the great tribulations I had endured I should not go anywhere else away from them. And, of course, there, in a vision of the night, I saw a man whose name was Victoricus coming as it from Ireland with innumerable letters, and he gave me one of them, and I read the beginning of the letter: 'The Voice of the Irish', and as I was reading the beginning of the letter I seemed at that moment to hear the voice of those who were beside the forest of Foclut which is near the western sea, and they were crying as if with one voice: 'We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us.' And I was stung intensely in my heart so that I could read no more, and thus I awoke. Thanks be to God, because after so many years the Lord bestowed on them according to their cry.

**24** And another night-- God knows, I do not, whether within me or beside me-- ... most words + ... + which I heard and could not understand, except at the end of the speech it was represented thus: 'He who gave his life for you, he it is who speaks within you.' And thus I awoke, joyful.

**25** And on a second occasion I saw Him praying within me, and I was as it were, inside my own body, and I heard Him above me-- that is, above my inner self. He was praying powerfully with sighs. And in the course of this I was astonished and wondering, and I pondered who it could be who was praying within me. But at the end of the prayer it was revealed to me that it was the Spirit. And so I awoke and remembered the Apostle's words: 'Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we know not how to pray as we ought. But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for utterance.' And again: 'The Lord our advocate intercedes for us.'

**26** And then I was attacked by a goodly number of my elders, who [brought up] my sins against my arduous episcopate. That day in particular I was mightily upset, and might have fallen here and for ever; but the Lord generously spared me, a convert, and an alien, for his name's sake, and he came powerfully to my assistance in that state of being trampled down. I pray God that it shall not be held against them as a sin that I fell truly into disgrace and scandal.

**27** They brought up against me after thirty years an occurrence I had confessed before becoming a deacon. On account of the anxiety in my sorrowful mind, I laid before my close friend what I had perpetrated on a day-- nay, rather in one hour-- in my boyhood because I was not yet proof against sin. God knows-- I do not-- whether I was fifteen years old at the time, and I did not then believe in the living God, nor had I believed, since my infancy; but I remained in death and unbelief until I was severely rebuked, and in truth I was humbled every day by hunger and nakedness.

**28** On the other hand, I did not proceed to Ireland of my own accord until I was almost giving up, but through this I was corrected by the Lord, and he prepared me so that today I should be what was once far from me, in order that I should have the care of-- or rather, I should be concerned for-- the salvation of others, when at that time, still, I was only concerned for myself.

**29** Therefore, on that day when I was rebuked, as I have just mentioned, I saw in a vision of the night a document before my face, without honour, and meanwhile I heard a divine prophecy, saying to me: 'We have seen with displeasure the face of the chosen one divested of [his good] name.' And he did not say 'You have seen with displeasure', but 'We have seen with displeasure' (as if He included Himself) . He said then: 'He who touches you, touches the apple of my eye.'

**30** For that reason, I give thanks to him who strengthened me in all things, so that I should not be hindered in my setting out and also in my work which I was taught by Christ my Lord; but more, from that state of affairs I felt, within me, no little courage, and vindicated my faith before God and man.

**31** Hence, therefore, I say boldly that my conscience is clear now and hereafter. God is my witness that I have not lied in these words to you.

**32** But rather, I am grieved for my very close friend, that because of him we deserved to hear such a prophecy. The one to whom I entrusted my soul! And I found out from a goodly number of brethren, before the case was made in my defence (in which I did not take part, nor was I in Britain, nor was it pleaded by me), that in my absence he would fight in my behalf. Besides, he told me himself: 'See, the rank of bishop goes to you'-- of which I was not worthy. But how did it come to him, shortly afterwards, to disgrace me publicly, in the presence of all, good and bad, because previously, gladly and of his own free will, he pardoned me, as did the Lord, who is greater than all?

**33** I have said enough. But all the same, I ought not to conceal God's gift which he lavished on us in the land of my captivity, for then I sought him resolutely, and I found him there, and he preserved me from all evils (as I believe) through the in-dwelling of his Spirit, which works in me to this day. Again, boldly, but God knows, if this had been made known to me by man, I might, perhaps, have kept silent for the love of Christ.

**34** Thus I give untiring thanks to God who kept me faithful in the day of my temptation, so that today I may confidently offer my soul as a living sacrifice for Christ my Lord; who am I, Lord? or, rather, what is my calling? that you appeared to me in so great a divine quality, so that today among the barbarians I might constantly exalt and magnify your name in whatever place I should be, and not only in good fortune, but even in affliction? So that whatever befalls me, be it good or bad, I should accept it equally, and give thanks always to God who revealed to me that I might

trust in him, implicitly and forever, and who will encourage me so that, ignorant, and in the last days, I may dare to undertake so devout and so wonderful a work; so that I might imitate one of those whom, once, long ago, the Lord already pre-ordained to be heralds of his Gospel to witness to all peoples to the ends of the earth. So are we seeing, and so it is fulfilled; behold, we are witnesses because the Gospel has been preached as far as the places beyond which no man lives.

**35** But it is tedious to describe in detail all my labours one by one. I will tell briefly how most holy God frequently delivered me, from slavery, and from the twelve trials with which my soul was threatened, from man traps as well, and from things I am not able to put into words. I would not cause offence to readers, but I have God as witness who knew all things even before they happened, that, though I was a poor ignorant waif, still he gave me abundant warnings through divine prophecy.

**36** Whence came to me this wisdom which was not my own, I who neither knew the number of days nor had knowledge of God? Whence came the so great and so healthful gift of knowing or rather loving God, though I should lose homeland and family.

**37** And many gifts were offered to me with weeping and tears, and I offended them [the donors], and also went against the wishes of a good number of my elders; but guided by God, I neither agreed with them nor deferred to them, not by my own grace but by God who is victorious in me and withstands them all, so that I might come to the Irish people to preach the Gospel and endure insults from unbelievers; that I might hear scandal of my travels, and endure many persecutions to the extent of prison; and so that I might give up my free birthright for the advantage of others, and if I should be worthy, I am ready [to give] even my life without hesitation; and most willingly for His name. And I choose to devote it to him even unto death, if God grant it to me.

**38** I am greatly God's debtor, because he granted me so much grace, that through me many people would be reborn in God, and soon after confirmed, and that clergy would be ordained everywhere for them, the masses lately come to belief, whom the Lord drew from the ends of the earth, just as he once promised through his prophets: 'To you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Our fathers have inherited naught but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit.' And again: 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the uttermost ends of the earth.'

**39** And I wish to wait then for his promise which is never unfulfilled, just as it is promised in the Gospel: 'Many shall come from east and west and shall sit at table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.' Just as we believe that believers will come from all the world.

**40** So for that reason one should, in fact, fish well and diligently, just as the Lord foretells and teaches, saying, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,' and again through the prophets: 'Behold, I am sending forth many fishers and hunters, says the Lord,' et cetera. So it behoved us to spread our nets, that a vast multitude and throng might be caught for God, and so there might be clergy everywhere who baptized and exhorted a needy and desirous people. Just as the Lord says in the Gospel, admonishing and instructing: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the end of time.' And again he says: 'Go forth into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned.' And again: 'This

Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached throughout the whole world as a witness to all nations; and then the end of the world shall come.' And likewise the Lord foretells through the prophet: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days (sayeth the Lord) that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy.' And in Hosea he says: 'Those who are not my people I will call my people, and those not beloved I will call my beloved, and in the very place where it was said to them, You are not my people, they will be called 'Sons of the living God'.

**41** So, how is it that in Ireland, where they never had any knowledge of God but, always, until now, cherished idols and unclean things, they are lately become a people of the Lord, and are called children of God; the sons of the Irish [Scotti] and the daughters of the chieftains are to be seen as monks and virgins of Christ.

**42** And there was, besides, a most beautiful, blessed, native-born noble Irish [Scotti] woman of adult age whom I baptized; and a few days later she had reason to come to us to intimate that she had received a prophecy from a divine messenger [who] advised her that she should become a virgin of Christ and she would draw nearer to God. Thanks be to God, six days from then, opportunely and most eagerly, she took the course that all virgins of God take, not with their fathers' consent but enduring the persecutions and deceitful hindrances of their parents. Notwithstanding that, their number increases, (we do not know the number of them that are so reborn) besides the widows, and those who practise self-denial. Those who are kept in slavery suffer the most. They endure terrors and constant threats, but the Lord has given grace to many of his handmaidens, for even though they are forbidden to do so, still they resolutely follow his example.

**43** So it is that even if I should wish to separate from them in order to go to Britain, and most willingly was I prepared to go to my homeland and kinsfolk-- and not only there, but as far as Gaul to visit the brethren there, so that I might see the faces of the holy ones of my Lord, God knows how strongly I desired this-- I am bound by the Spirit, who witnessed to me that if I did so he would mark me out as guilty, and I fear to waste the labour that I began, and not I, but Christ the Lord, who commanded me to come to be with them for the rest of my life, if the Lord shall will it and shield me from every evil, so that I may not sin before him.

**44** So I hope that I did as I ought, but I do not trust myself as long as I am in this mortal body, for he is strong who strives daily to turn me away from the faith and true holiness to which I aspire until the end of my life for Christ my Lord, but the hostile flesh is always dragging one down to death, that is, to unlawful attractions. And I know in part why I did not lead a perfect life like other believers, but I confess to my Lord and do not blush in his sight, because I am not lying; from the time when I came to know him in my youth, the love of God and fear of him increased in me, and right up until now, by God's favour, I have kept the faith.

**45** What is more, let anyone laugh and taunt if he so wishes. I am not keeping silent, nor am I hiding the signs and wonders that were shown to me by the Lord many years before they happened, [he] who knew everything, even before the beginning of time.

**46** Thus, I should give thanks unceasingly to God, who frequently forgave my folly and my negligence, in more than one instance so as not to be violently angry with me, who am placed as

his helper, and I did not easily assent to what had been revealed to me, as the Spirit was urging; and the Lord took pity on me thousands upon thousands of times, because he saw within me that I was prepared, but that I was ignorant of what to do in view of my situation; because many were trying to prevent this mission. They were talking among themselves behind my back, and saying: 'Why is this fellow throwing himself into danger among enemies who know not God?' Not from malice, but having no liking for it; likewise, as I myself can testify, they perceived my rusticity. And I was not quick to recognize the grace that was then in me; I now know that I should have done so earlier.

**47** Now I have put it frankly to my brethren and co-workers, who have believed me because of what I have foretold and still foretell to strengthen and reinforce your faith. I wish only that you, too, would make greater and better efforts. This will be my pride, for 'a wise son makes a proud father'.

**48** You know, as God does, how I went about among you from my youth in the faith of truth and in sincerity of heart. As well as to the heathen among whom I live, I have shown them trust and always show them trust. God knows I did not cheat any one of them, nor consider it, for the sake of God and his Church, lest I arouse them and [bring about] persecution for them and for all of us, and lest the Lord's name be blasphemed because of me, for it is written: 'Woe to the men through whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed.'

**49** For even though I am ignorant in all things, nevertheless I attempted to safeguard some and myself also. And I gave back again to my Christian brethren and the virgins of Christ and the holy women the small unasked for gifts that they used to give me or some of their ornaments which they used to throw on the altar. And they would be offended with me because I did this. But in the hope of eternity, I safeguarded myself carefully in all things, so that they might not cheat me of my office of service on any pretext of dishonesty, and so that I should not in the smallest way provide any occasion for defamation or disparagement on the part of unbelievers.

**50** What is more, when I baptized so many thousands of people, did I hope for even half a jot from any of them? [If so] Tell me, and I will give it back to you. And when the Lord ordained clergy everywhere by my humble means, and I freely conferred office on them, if I asked any of them anywhere even for the price of one shoe, say so to my face and I will give it back.

**51** More, I spent for you so that they would receive me. And I went about among you, and everywhere for your sake, in danger, and as far as the outermost regions beyond which no one lived, and where no one had ever penetrated before, to baptize or to ordain clergy or to confirm people. Conscientiously and gladly I did all this work by God's gift for your salvation.

**52** From time to time I gave rewards to the kings, as well as making payments to their sons who travel with me; notwithstanding which, they seized me with my companions, and that day most avidly desired to kill me. But my time had not yet come. They plundered everything they found on us anyway, and fettered me in irons; and on the fourteenth day the Lord freed me from their power, and whatever they had of ours was given back to us for the sake of God on account of the indispensable friends whom we had made before.

**53** Also you know from experience how much I was paying to those who were administering justice in all the regions, which I visited often. I estimate truly that I distributed to them not less

than the price of fifteen men, in order that you should enjoy my company and I enjoy yours, always, in God. I do not regret this nor do I regard it as enough. I am paying out still and I shall pay out more. The Lord has the power to grant me that I may soon spend my own self, for your souls.

**54** Behold, I call on God as my witness upon my soul that I am not lying; nor would I write to you for it to be an occasion for flattery or selfishness, nor hoping for honour from any one of you. Sufficient is the honour which is not yet seen, but in which the heart has confidence. He who made the promise is faithful; he never lies.

**55** But I see that even here and now, I have been exalted beyond measure by the Lord, and I was not worthy that he should grant me this, while I know most certainly that poverty and failure suit me better than wealth and delight (but Christ the Lord was poor for our sakes; I certainly am wretched and unfortunate; even if I wanted wealth I have no resources, nor is it my own estimation of myself, for daily I expect to be murdered or betrayed or reduced to slavery if the occasion arises. But I fear nothing, because of the promises of Heaven; for I have cast myself into the hands of Almighty God, who reigns everywhere. As the prophet says: 'Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you.'

**56** Behold now I commend my soul to God who is most faithful and for whom I perform my mission in obscurity, but he is no respecter of persons and he chose me for this service that I might be one of the least of his ministers.

**57** For which reason I should make return for all that he returns me. But what should I say, or what should I promise to my Lord, for I, alone, can do nothing unless he himself vouchsafe it to me. But let him search my heart and [my] nature, for I crave enough for it, even too much, and I am ready for him to grant me that I drink of his chalice, as he has granted to others who love him.

**58** Therefore may it never befall me to be separated by my God from his people whom he has won in this most remote land. I pray God that he gives me perseverance, and that he will deign that I should be a faithful witness for his sake right up to the time of my passing.

**59** And if at any time I managed anything of good for the sake of my God whom I love, I beg of him that he grant it to me to shed my blood for his name with proselytes and captives, even should I be left unburied, or even were my wretched body to be torn limb from limb by dogs or savage beasts, or were it to be devoured by the birds of the air, I think, most surely, were this to have happened to me, I had saved both my soul and my body. For beyond any doubt on that day we shall rise again in the brightness of the sun, that is, in the glory of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, as children of the living God and co-heirs of Christ, made in his image; for we shall reign through him and for him and in him.

**60** For the sun we see rises each day for us at [his] command, but it will never reign, neither will its splendour last, but all who worship it will come wretchedly to punishment. We, on the other hand, shall not die, who believe in and worship the true sun, Christ, who will never die, no more shall he die who has done Christ's will, but will abide for ever just as Christ abides for ever, who reigns with God the Father Almighty and with the Holy Spirit before the beginning of time and now and for ever and ever. Amen.

**61** Behold over and over again I would briefly set out the words of my confession. I testify in truthfulness and gladness of heart before God and his holy angels that I never had any reason, except the Gospel and his promises, ever to have returned to that nation from which I had previously escaped with difficulty.

**62** But I entreat those who believe in and fear God, whoever deigns to examine or receive this document composed by the obviously unlearned sinner Patrick in Ireland, that nobody shall ever ascribe to my ignorance any trivial thing that I achieved or may have expounded that was pleasing to God, but accept and truly believe that it would have been the gift of God. And this is my confession before I die.

*APPENDIX II*

Mission Praxis Paradigm Survey and Indicator (a tool for missionaries)

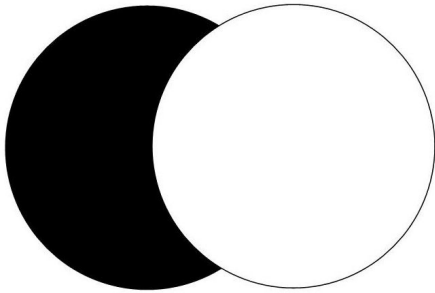
*Mission Praxis Paradigm Survey and Indicator (a tool for missionaries)*

1. The Bible is important in mission and the only unerring guide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The Bible is important but tradition and church dogma are equally useful in mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The Bible is the sole safe guide but must be interpreted using a variety of tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The Church is the community of the saved sent to the ends of the earth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
People are saved through church membership and assenting to what is taught	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Salvation is an individual matter and church membership anywhere is not requisite	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I believe that culture is important but not normative in Bible teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Its okay to adopt non-Christian rites with the goal is to lead the converts to faith.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
We must be faithful to the Bible but some syncretism is inevitable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I believe that sound, Bible centered mission emphasis needs to be rediscovered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The church is God's repository of mission wisdom and she knows the best way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
An ecumenical mission approach is good and is the way to the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The apostolic model of mission sets the standard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The church has received the apostolic mission and continues in this line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Mission must change and adapt with the cultural surroundings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Syncretism is to be avoided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Syncretism is not good but the church can bless formerly unbiblical practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Syncretism may or may not be desirable but it cannot be avoided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. One's worldview can be changed even if one does not change his cultural context.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The best worldview is that which one assents to upon joining the church.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Worldview is a byproduct of culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The gospel is often countercultural.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The gospel must be interpreted using familiar forms, even if pagan, for cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The gospel is culturally bound and must be reinterpreted in every specific culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. The church should always base its belief on the word of God.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The church must use tradition and its teaching authority to guide the erring.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The church's manifestation and beliefs are culture specific.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. All that is necessary for knowledge of salvation is found in the Bible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The Bible can lead to salvation but needs the teaching authority of the church.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
The Bible is an ocean of potentially saving matter that must be applied correctly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Salvation is through grace by faith.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Salvation comes through Christ, the sacraments, and the church.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Salvation is through grace by faith.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

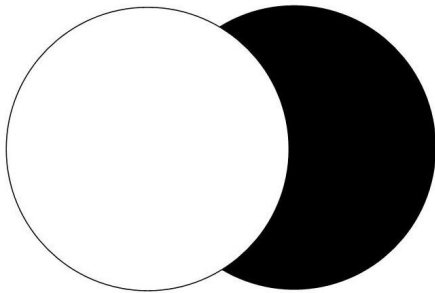
12.	Syncretism is always negative and compromises the church's standards.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	Syncretism exists but the church can turn syncretistic practices into blessings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Syncretism is sometimes desirable and never disappears completely.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13.	One must fully accept Christ to become a Christian.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	One must accept church dogma to become a Christian (including Christ).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	One may accept Christ as Messiah but still not accept His divinity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14.	Except in the most extreme circumstances Christians should be part of the church.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	Church membership is sometimes more important than understanding the Bible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Church membership is not needed; one may be a Muslim or Hindu "Christian"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15.	New converts leaving home environment temporarily is sometimes good.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	The church must change, highly influence, or control the culture if possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	The new believer should always stay in his culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16.	The Bible presents the ideal of cross-cultural mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	The Bible ideal of cross-cultural mission is good but laymen may not understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	The Bible's mission example is context specific and would change in our day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17.	The Bible is God's unique written revelation to mankind.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	The Bible is not God's only revelation; tradition is just as important.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	The Bible is potentially revelatory but not always applicable in mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18.	It is important to speak the people's language in worship if possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	Worship should be conducted in the people's language or the church's language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	The people's language should be used based on anthropological principle.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19.	Conversion to Christ is a prerequisite of church membership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	One need only assent to truth as taught through the church; he is converted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Conversion may take several forms and may not always be distinguishable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20.	The Bible should be taken literally as a true history.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	If a text does not agree with science then we must search for its hidden meaning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	The Bible is true but it should be understood in light of modern science.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21.	Every church member has a role in helping save others, especially the pastor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	The priest's / pastor's ministry is the most effective means of saving others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	I believe that both of these statements are true.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22.	One should let the Bible always overrule culture in mission work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	One should seek to include culture in cross-cultural mission work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	One should start with the culture in cross-cultural mission work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23.	The Bible is always a reliable test of what is and is not appropriate in mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	The Bible is not easy to understand therefore tradition must be considered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	The Bible is a good test, aided of course by culture and tradition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24.	End time events add urgency to mission and the salvation of the world.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	Symbolic prophecy has little to do with mission and should be avoided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	End time events are interesting and may have some value in some settings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25.	Those who have accepted should forsake all non-biblical religious customs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	The church can transform pagan customs and make them Christian customs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	All customs need to be weighed culturally and biblically.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26	There is no such thing as a Christian adhering to a pagan religion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	One can be a Christian and still practice a few things that may be questionable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Christian Muslims, Christian Buddhists and Christian Hindus are a reality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Total for the Authoritative MPP</b>			<input type="radio"/>
<b>Total for the Inclusivist MPP</b>			<input type="radio"/>
<b>Total for the Neo-Inclusivist MPP</b>			<input type="radio"/>
<b>Place a checkmark beside the image that represents your MPP with the highest score. If you had the same score on two or all three place a checkmark beside those as well.</b>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

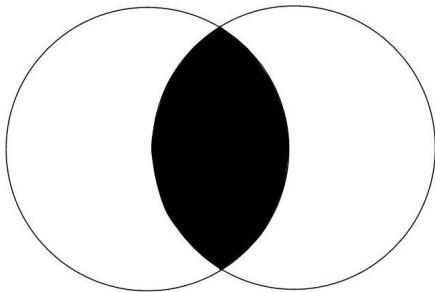
Continue to the next page



**Figure 8 the Authoritative MPP is represented by this image**



**Figure 9 the representation of the Inclusivist MPP**



**Figure 10 the representation of the Neo-Inclusivist MPP**

**The Authoritative MPP** : This MPP is biblically centered and uses the Bible as the guide, model book, and test of all mission methods. Generally the Bible is viewed literally and higher criticism is to be avoided. Extra biblical sources such as science, the social sciences, and

experience have an informative but not normative place. Apocalyptic prophecy forms an important theme in mission work. The church is viewed as the community of the saved and all the saved are called to serve.

Generally, working in the language of the people (worship and scripture translation) is seen as necessary. Scripture translation into the vernacular is important. Educational work has often played an important role in sustaining the work in difficult times and places.

The Inclusivist MPP ♣: Generally this MPP sees scripture as important but a literal view is not that important. Allegorical interpretation has always played an important role. Generally church teaching and tradition have informative and normative roles. Science also may have a normative role. Scripture in the language of the people is a later development this paradigm and is not generally stressed as it is in other paradigms. The church is the kingdom of God on earth. Apocalyptic prophecies have little vital role in the mission work of the church. Not all are called to serve in the sense of proclamation – this is a specialized work of a few.

The mission methods of this MPP have changed over time and have included; deliberate inclusion of non-Christian elements in the hope of drawing people and slowly transforming the understanding, force, and sending out of monks and clerics as missionaries. “Mass conversions” are welcomed and the test of membership is usually assenting to certain core truths. Scripture translation into the vernacular is not that important unless required.

The Neo-Inclusivist MPP ♦ : This MPP is a combination MPP containing most of the elements of the two previous. It adds a special affinity for the social sciences and willingness to experiment with untried methods. It also adds the concept that church membership is not an indication of fidelity to Christ. The idea is that one can continue to practice non-Christian religions with a new understanding of Christ and allegiance to Him. The insider movements of recent years are a unique product of this MPP.

Read the description of the MPP with the highest score on your test to see where you fall in the area of presuppositions and missionary method. If you had a combination of any of the MPPs with the same score, you would fall under the NI MPP.

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11/26/2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I declare that the thesis hereby submitted by me for the degree of Ph.D. in Missiology at the University of the Orange Free State under the title: *Cultural Sensitivity in Christian Mission to Resistant People, an Historical Perspective*, is my own independent work in its entirety and has not been previously submitted in part or in whole by me or anyone else at another university/faculty. I further cede copyright of the thesis in favour of the University of the Free State

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marc Coleman".

Marc Coleman

## **Cultural Sensitivity in Christian Mission to Resistant People, A Historical Perspective**

### *The link between mission praxis and theological presupposition*

A thesis of approximately 73,000 words that deals with subject of historical approaches to the mission of the church. The title is indicative of the often-sensitive nature of theological discussions concerning culture in missions. It is also indicative of the fact that missionaries throughout the history of Christian mission have each had to decide how to be sensitive to the culture of the evangelized.

The main thesis of this research is that in the history of Christian mission to resistant people theology predisposes to a particular set of mission principles and methodologies. Stated otherwise, there is a link between what one believes about the Bible and other Christian doctrines and how one goes about the task of doing mission. I argue that history bears out this assertion and that the link is more than as casual one.

In this study, I take a descriptive look at the factors leading up to, facilitating, and hampering a variety of mission movements in Christian history. The progress of the study follows, in a general way, the timeline of church history. The goal is to find possible trends and links between the three Mission Praxis Paradigms (MPP) and theology. For that reason, a selection of prominent mission movements in the history of the church is employed for study. I hypothesize that there are a variety of theological variables that underpin mission methodology. These are weighed for each mission movement in light of the MPP adopted by the missionaries. Questions about how much one should include pagan or non-Christian elements in mission, what one believes about eschatology, soteriology and the Bible are all examined.

This study demonstrates that the responses to these questions have manifested themselves in three broad-based approaches which I call mission praxis paradigms (MPP). These MPP's are practical approaches to cross-cultural mission that encompass almost all mission endeavors (with a few exceptions) since the beginning of the Christian Church. These three approaches; the *authoritative MPP*, the *inclusivist MPP*, and the *Neo-inclusivist MPP* hold many ideologies in common while concurrently holding many conflicting theological positions. This study demonstrates that mission approach or methodology in its broadest sense throughout history has been a function of theological orientation. It is not a critique of any one approach but rather demonstrative of the tendencies to one's approach or particular theological leanings

Among other things, the study reveals several trends in several keys areas of belief that may useful indicators of one's likely mission methodology. It ends with recommendations for more detailed study of the finding that views of inspiration and place of the Bible in Christian mission is the factor most likely to determine mission methodology.