

Chapter Three

Mission at the beginning of the 21st century

3.1. Introduction

The Christianity has become the most global of religions. The term 'Christian' in its simplest definition refers to one who believes in Jesus Christ as saviour. Many conservative Christians believe that one has to be 'born again' in order to be counted as a Christian. According to the '*Joshua Project*¹⁶, Islam is growing faster (3,354 groups are primarily Muslem, totaling nearly 1,476,000 individuals) while Christians make up 41% of the world population (of the world's 16,473 ethnic groups 6,712 are primarily Christian, totaling over 2,271,000,000 individuals), with close to 2.3 billion followers. Therefore, at current rates of changes, Muslem will overtake Christianity as the world's dominant religion later in the 21st century. However, Christianity still remains the most dominant religion in the world, and is still growing.¹⁷

• How many people are Christians?

Various information sources are in general agreement that currently the largest religion in the world is Christianity. Most countries have Christians. Therefore, we

¹⁶ The Joshua Project was launched in 1995 to facilitate strategic planning, coordinated research and cooperative church planting ([www. Joshuaproject.net](http://www.Joshuaproject.net)).

¹⁷ Christians have been in decline in some Western countries, and in the East, actually in China, but the numbers of people who are becoming new Christians daily are astronomical (Tomas 1996:10).

can say, this world population consists of Christians and non-Christians, but there are practicing Christians and nominal Christians, which implies that nominalism has become a major issue.

In many countries nominal Christians need to be evangelized themselves. Many traditionally Christian populations do not believe in Jesus as Saviour. They do not know true repentance of sin, and many Christians trust more on their good deeds to save them than on God's grace. They are called Christian, but are not truly Christian.

•How many have not heard the gospel?

According to the Joshua Project's data, there are 6,770 unreached peoples among the 16,473 peoples of the world and most of these peoples are in the 10/40 Window. These groups are not easy to access with the Good News of Christ.

The version of the Great Commission (Mt. 24:14; Mk. 16:15) exhorts preaching the gospel to the whole world. That is to say, the gospel to every person. Since the day of Pentecost, many populations and ethnic groups have lived and died without ever having an opportunity to hear of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Christians must become relevant, effective witnesses that share the gospel with all the people in this whole world. This is the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ to the all believers in Him.

While Christianity becomes a worldwide religion, the internet provides many opportunities to share the gospel with others. This new tool can be used for the great commission to be witness of Christ.

Bosch (1991), noted that our daily life has become so fast and constantly changing that we cannot use past methods to be effective today. Therefore we need a paradigm shift in our thinking towards missions and missionary methods today to become more relevant. There is a need for the church to understand this paradigm shift and implement this in their thinking, as well as their practice of mission.

Consequently, this chapter will attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is mission? What is the goal of mission?
- What does the Bible say about mission?
- Why do we need a cyber mission today?

3.2. The goal of mission.

Today the mission of the church is as important and as necessary as ever before, but the context of mission has significantly changed. The theology as well as the practical methods of mission needs rethinking. It will be attempted in this study. Firstly, what missionaries do is determined by their goal (by what they aim to achieve). The proper definition of mission, its goal and purpose and their interrelatedness will be discussed. Secondly, the agents of mission, who are to be ordained and sent out into the world as missionaries, will be looked into.

The goal of mission is an inescapable issue and one of great practical importance, for it determines missionary strategy and the choice of means and methods. Various answers have been offered throughout the course of mission history, and each of them has had important consequences for missionary practice.

Throughout the history of the church many goals for mission have been articulated: the salvation of individuals (evangelicals); church planting (Pope Pius X II); church

growth (Donald McGavran); indigenous churches (Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson); the formation of a Christian society (Gustav Warneck, A.A. Van Ruler, Social Gospel); justice and the change of societal macrostructures (World Council of Churches). Gisbertus Voetius, the Dutch theologian, belonging to the seventeenth century Second Reformation School of theologians, articulated three goals: the conversion of the nations; the planting of churches; the glorification and manifestation of divine grace (Jongeneel 1997:83; Verkuyl 1978:181).

Johan H. Bavinck adopted the same goals and stressed that they were three aspects of the same goal. He rooted conversion, church planting, and the glory of God's grace in the coming of the Kingdom:

"It must be emphasized, however, that these three purposes are not distinct and separate but they are in fact three aspects of a single purpose of God: the coming and extension of the kingdom of God (Bavinck 1960: 155)."

To determine the purpose of mission, and what is to be accomplished by it, it is imperative that the goals are absolutely clear. In the past churches and missionary organizations often pursued different goals. But the goal and purpose of mission are interrelated.

3.2.1. The glorification of God

To Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676), the highest of the three goals of mission is the glorification of God (Verkuyl 1978:21).¹⁸

¹⁸ According to Verkuyl (1978:21), "as Voetius saw it, the first goal of mission is the conversion of the heathen; the second, the planting of churches; and the highest, the glory of God."

According to Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman (1994:2), the glory and manifestation of God's grace should be recognized as our deepest missionary commitment and our highest missionary goal.

It is very important to realize that the involvement of individuals, churches and mission organizations in God's mission is a response to the manifestation of God's love. Since the start of the modern Protestant missionary movement with William Carey the founder of the recent missionary movement, the most prominent motivating factor in mission is considered to be obedience to the so-called Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20). Although the importance of Christian obedience is not to be ignored, the deepest root of missionary calling is gratitude and wonder at the manifestation of God's love (Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:1).

3.2.2. The planting of the church

Thomas Aquinas, whose ideas on the purpose of mission influenced not only Roman Catholic missionary work, but also the missionary theory of Gisbert Voetius, says in his *Summa Theologica* that the aim of mission should be the planting of the church. As Aquinas sees it, the purpose of mission work is to thoroughly root the church with all of her monarchical and hierarchical structure in the various cultures and societies, so that it serves as an instrument of salvation and good. Gisbert Voetius, probably under the influence of Thomas Aquinas, also considered church planting as one of the three great missionary objectives. In our own age the well-known Dutch missiologist, J.H. Bavinck, agrees with Gisbert Voetius. The planting of the church has always been an important goal of mission.

During the nineteenth century reaction to the one-sided individualist approach developed. It developed due to the need to build up the corporate life of churches. The two main leaders, Rufus Anderson, General Secretary of the (Congregational)

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) from 1832 to 1866, and Henry Venn, General Secretary of the (low church Anglican) Church Missionary Society (CMS) from 1841 to 1872, at the same time articulated the goal of mission as the building up of "self-governing, self-supporting and self-extending units of the universal church ". They believed that the planting of the church was the only legitimate missionary goal. Today one may disagree with Anderson and Venn, but the fact remains that their views totally dominated the Anglo-American Protestant missionary thinking for the greater part of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. The "three-self" formula also made a tremendous impact on missiologists in the Netherlands and Germany (Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1984:34-35; Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:4-26; Verkuyl 1978:181-188).

The greatest emphasis on church planting in recent years can be found among Evangelicals and specifically among proponents of the Church Growth School. In 1960 Donald McGavran established the School of World Mission and the Institute of Church Growth, with its headquarters at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. McGavran and his associates proceeded from the premise that in fulfilling our missionary calling on earth, great emphasis must be placed on the numerical growth of the church (Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1984:35).

3.2.3. The social Gospel

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century a movement arose in the United States of America as a reaction to the exclusive emphasis of some on individual conversion as a missionary goal. The reaction was both theological and practical in nature and went under the label "Social Gospel". Very aware of the social evils in the colonies, such as poverty, disease, ignorance, oppression, etc., Social Gospellers felt that all Christian missionary reserves should go into fighting these evils in order to make the world a better place, and that it is

more in line with the ideals of the Kingdom of God (Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:29-30).

The leading proponents of this movement were men like Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) with his two important books "Christianity and the social gospel" (1907) and "A theology for the social gospel" (1917); Washington Gladder and the famous preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1970), who exerted a deep influence not only by his books, but also by his sermons, preached at the New York City's Riverside Church. In 1928, the famous ecumenical figure of our time, W.A. Visser't Hooft, wrote his dissertation on "The background of the social gospel". He identified the seeds of this movement. It notes the influence of the Enlightenment, the social sciences, revivalism, Puritanism and the American pioneer spirit with its firsthand acquaintance with tackling social problems and establishing small communities. Rauschenbusch and his colleagues adopted "Christianizing the social order" as their missionary goal. Fosdick viewed world history as a "progressive manifestation of the loving purposes of God". In a dynamic, active, transforming, evolutionary (Fosdick's own words) fashion the Christian must be engaged in actualizing the kingdom of God in society. But Fosdick was not blind to the obstacles which blocked the pathway to this kingdom (Verkuyl 1978:194-196; Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1984:37). In more recent times, especially in the late sixties, the fundamental ideas of the Social Gospel were reflected in the mission theology of the WCC. It manifested itself clearly at the Uppsala Assembly of the WCC in 1968 (Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994:29).

The impact of the social Gospel on American mission has been great and continues to present times, even though American missions have now shifted to the theological base of the Social Gospel (Verkuyl 1978:197).

3.2.4. Christianization

Throughout the history of the church the Christianizing of society has frequently been stated as the goal of Western mission. Gustav Warneck (1834-1910), the well-known German missiologist, repeated this as the aim in the three volumes of his "Evangelische Missionslehre". When Jesus speaks of the need to Christianize all nations, he means that "they must be made Christians on the basis of their natural distinctiveness as peoples" (Verkuyl 1978:193).

Gustav Warneck also spoke of "*Volkschristianisierung*" (the Christianising of a people) as a missionary goal. It is not just a matter of establishing churches.

J.C. Hoekendijk has thoroughly analyzed these ideas of Warneck in his famous dissertation, "*Kerk en Volk in de Duitse Zendingswetenschap*". He claims that Warneck is operating on two levels: "On the upper level are the living memories of the Kingdom, which place mission before its eschatological mandate - the saving of souls. On the lower level history exercises its 'holy prerogative' and demands that mission not only engage in the building up of churches but also the Christianizing of peoples"(Quoted in Verkuyl 1978:193).

The most consistent thinking is that of two German pioneer missionaries Gutmann and Keysser. Gutmann worked in East Africa, and Keysser did missionary work in the German colony of New Guinea (now Papua New Guinea). Gutmann wanted to achieve this Christianization through the three "creation ordinances" - blood, soil, and age group - so that the church would be structured by tribal organization. Keysser, on the other hand, stated that the tribe is the church and discouraged individual decisions on baptism.

Other enthusiastic supporters of this approach were E. Johannsen, M. Schlink and S. Knak. At the time of World War II and thereafter, this approach came under fire

from several quarters. There are many practical and particularly theological objections to Gutmann's and Keysser's views, especially their untenable identification of "people" and "church" (quoted in Kritzing, Meiring, Saayman 1984:36-37).

3.2.5. The saving of souls

Ever since the seventeenth century many missionary agencies have viewed their task essentially as one of saving individual souls that may otherwise be lost. In varying forms this has been transmitted from one generation to the next. As far as the modern Protestant mission is concerned, conversion of individuals as the goal of mission will always be linked to the theology and practice of the Pietists.

The fathers of early Pietism, Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), directed their work largely to reach the individual. Both these men laid the accent on true piety, on confessional activity, on the importance of small gatherings of "devout Christians," on religious discussion and Bible-reading at mealtimes and on the priesthood of the individual believer (Verkuyl 1978:176).

The famous Pietist, Count Nicolaus von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), was responsible for sending out hundreds of missionaries to all corners of the earth, as far as Greenland, Labrador, Alaska, the Himalayas, Egypt, Abyssinia, West India and South Africa. When sending out the first two Moravian missionaries (Herrnhuter missionaries), Dober and Nitschmann, Von Zinzendorf spoke these words to them: "Go then in Jesus' name and see if among the Moors [Muslims] souls can be found who will allow themselves to be led to the Saviour". Such words were typically related to Von Zinzendorf and his associates. *Einzelbekehrungen*, conversion of

individuals were their main aim (Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1984:33; Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:26-27; Verkuyl 1978:176 -178).

The English missionary pioneer, William Carey (1761-1834), who protested against the import of West Indian sugar, which had been cultivated by slaves, and Henry Martyn (1781-1812), who was a missionary for the Christian Missionary Society of the Anglican Church and a pioneer evangelist among the Muslims, held similar views. They put strong emphasis on the theme of the individual saving of souls (Bosch 1991:281; Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1984:33; Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:28; Verkuyl 1978:178-179).

As a final example, the missionaries and missionary organizations, like the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM), which started in the United States of America in 1886, emphasized the salvation of individuals. Their aims were formulated as follows:

As an evangelical and ecumenical gathering of disciples and workers, we invite all who believe in Christ to unite in the communal task of bringing God's Word of salvation to a humanity living amid spiritual and moral chaos. Our purpose is none other than the evangelization of the whole of mankind in this generation (quoted in Verkuyl 1978:180).

In 1886 this movement provoked many American and European students to offer their lives in the service of mission in Africa and Asia. The SVM did not send missionaries out over all six continents, but motivated people, especially students, to do missionary work and enlightened them on the subject. Traces of its influence are still clearly visible in the churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Verkuyl 1978:179-180).

3.3. The subject of mission: Who should do mission work?

In Matthew 28:19-20 the commission of the Lord Jesus is very clear: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

But who should do it today? Throughout the ages opinions have differed on the "who" of mission. The who of mission was understood in various ways. The following questions need to be addressed:

- Who are to be missionaries?
- Whose mission is it?
- Where does mission come from?
- Who are to be ordained and sent out into the world?

3.3.1. Mission as *Missio Dei*

One of the most inspiring discoveries/rediscovers of our times is that mission is not primarily the activity of human beings but mission is God's mission. Mission has its origin in God. God is a missionary God (Bosch 1980:239).

The mission was interpreted in many ways. Sometimes it had a soteriological focus on saving individuals from eternal damnation. Others understood mission, primarily in cultural terms, as introducing persons to the blessings and privileges of the Christian West. Often it was perceived in ecclesiastical categories and as the expansion of the church. Still, others understood mission as an involvement in a historical process by which the world would be transformed into the kingdom of God (Bosch 1991: 389).

Recovery of the understanding that mission is primarily a divine initiative, began slowly in Europe in the 1930's. In 1932, Karl Barth¹⁹ was one of the first theologians to write of mission as the activity, not of men, but of God himself.

The term *missio Dei* (Latin: "Mission of God") dates back to 1932 when Karl Barth (1886-1968), the Swiss theologian, used it in a land-mark paper he delivered at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in Germany, entitled "Theology and Mission." Karl Barth develops the theory of mission as the activity of God. According to Karl Barth, the understanding of mission should start with the doctrine of God. God is the real owner of mission and its original sender (Francis Anekwe Oborji 2006: 134-135).

Missio Dei was discussed extensively at many following conferences. Karl Barth's influence on missionary thinking reached a peak at the Protestant missionary conference at Willingen in 1952. According to Bosch (1991: 390), the idea of the *missio Dei* was first faced at the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952.

After the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council, the Protestant churches adopted *missio Dei* theology as a common vision of mission²⁰. The *missio Dei* has been used to advance all kinds of missiological agendas.

¹⁹ According to Küng (1988:273), Karl Barth (1886-1968) has been called "the chief initiator of a post-modern paradigm in theology." Karl Barth rejected the liberal agenda in which mission was understood as a civilizing human activity of witness and service.

²⁰ At that time, a similar shift from a church centered to a God centered theology was taking place among Roman Catholics as well (Thomas 1996:102).

Mission was to be understood in terms of God's *Triune* nature. In other words, the doctrine of the *Trinity* became the theological foundation of mission²¹. God the Father sent his Son into the world, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit sends the church into the world. This new theology of mission, *missio Dei*, replaced the former church-centric focus.

Missio Dei is essentially a movement from God to the world. The church is the movement of God toward the world. The church is created as an instrument of God's mission. The church exists because of the *missio Dei*, and not the *missio Dei* exists because of the church. In other words, before the church came into existence mission already were.

Andrew Kirk wrote:

“Mission was no longer thought of as the church's activity overseas or in another culture. The mission frontier is not primarily a geographical one, but one of belief, conviction and commitment. Thus, the Mexico City Conference of the World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (1963) described it as follows: The missionary frontier runs around the world. It is the line which separates belief from unbelief, the unseen frontier which cuts across all other frontiers and presents the universal church with its primary missionary challenge (Kirk 1999: 24).”

²¹ However, according to Nussbaum (2005:96), when mission is recognized as God's mission and we see the Triune God as both the source and owner, it meant the following statement: "First, mission is bigger than the church, that is, God may work outside the church too. The church cannot be arrogant about its mission or itself. Second, the church is derived from mission, and not the other way around. Mission cannot be incidental to the life of the church. And the last, mission cannot be reduced to conversions and church membership. God has bigger, wider things in mind."

3.3.2. Mission as *Missio Ecclesiae*

In 1961, the World Council of Churches (WCC), at its Third Assembly in New Delhi, India, authorized a study of "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation". It grew out of a concern to define the patterns of life that would best serve the missionary task of the church (Norman: 1996:90).

"As the Father sent me, so I send you" defines the very being of the Church as a mission (John 20:21).

The book of Acts relates another version of this commission:

"When the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will receive power, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)."

In this sense everything that the church is and does can be and should be part of mission. Mission is the reason for the existence of the church. It is widely accepted that today, theologically and practically speaking, church and mission can never be separated; that the one cannot exist without the other. The church is a human community that does not exist for itself:

"It is the church of God for that place, and that is because the church does not exist for itself but for God and for the world that Jesus came to save (Newbigin 1994:53)."

The church can never conveniently delegate its mission to others. The groups or individuals engaged in practical missionary work will always have to remember that

they work on behalf of, and with the full authority of the entire church of Jesus Christ. They are also not the only ones involved in this work, but merely a part of the multitude of faithful ones, each of whom has been given a missionary mandate from the Lord (quoted in Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1984:2).

The church is God's agent for his mission. Traditionally the church was seen to be divided between preaching ordained ministers, and the silent receptive laity. But each church member plays an indispensable part in the ministry of the church. Therefore the church members as a whole, not only the minister, are the agency for God's mission (Kritzinger, Meiring, Saayman 1994: 44-47).

3.4. Mission in the Bible

3.4.1. The mission in the Old Testament

The Old Testament does not contain missions; it is itself "mission" in the world (Peters 1972:129). However, mission is a central theme in the Bible, not only in the New Testament but also in the Old Testament. The theme of mission is the unifying force of all sixty-six books in the Bible and it is very clear in God's revelation and his promise to all nations. The mission is the will of God in accordance with His word.

However, some people are still surprised to hear a sermon on mission based on a text from the Old Testament, because of they think that the Old Testament tells us nothing about mission, and because of mission as widely being viewed as a task of the Christian church. In other words, some people think that the focus of the Old Testament is mainly on Israel rather than on world mission.

Verkuyl (1978) says correctly, "the Old Testament is an indispensable and irreplaceable base for the church's missionary task among the nations and people of this world." He emphasizes four motifs in the Old Testament which forms the basis for New Testament mission: the universal motif, the motif of rescue and saving, the missionary motif, and the antagonistic motif.

- **The uniqueness and universality of Yahweh, God**

In the first statement in Genesis God is seen as the sovereign creator of the universe and man being the ultimate focus of his love.

According to the Old Testament texts, the faith of Israel made remarkable affirmations about God. There are specific affirmations among them that God the creator is the one and only God and besides him there is no other in the world (Deuteronomy 4:35, 39) and that the Lord is God over the whole earth and everything in heaven and earth belong to God (Psalms 24, 96; 1 Chronicles 29:11) (Pretorius et al 1987:12; Senior & Stuhlmüller 1983:36).

In Genesis chapters 1 to 11, the human beings rebelled against God three times, and each time God in his grace gave them a way out, not giving up on the people, dealing with fallen humanity, and with the problems and challenges of the world of the nations. But, each crisis was also followed by a promise of God (Kaiser 2000:16-17):

- the first crisis: the first sin
- the second crisis: the flood
- the third crisis: the tower of Babel

The God of the Old Testament is a sending or missionary God. God sends Moses (Exodus 3:13), angels (Exodus 23:20), prophets (2 Samuel 12:1), commandments (Psalms 147:15) and he sends his word (Psalms 107:20).

- **Israel's election and world salvation: rescue and saving**

God had chosen Israel according to his purpose for the world, not just for Israel. The God, who had chosen Israel, has a purpose, a goal: to service and bless all nations of the world. Through Israel God opened a way to the rest of the world. Therefore, Israel must be a sign to the other nations that God is the creator and there is no other God in the world (Verkuyl 1978: 94).

According to Willis (1979:33), "God chose the Israelites, not because he liked them better, but in order that they might bring the lost to knowledge of God. God elects and in this election enters into the missionary enterprise. This understanding takes one back to the premise that God is the author and originator of missions."

Israel's mission was to be something, not to go somewhere. In the Old Testament, God's plan was that through the Israelites, all nations of the world would be blessed. According to Isaiah 43:10, Israel as the servant had a clear missionary role among the nations. Israel was to be God's missionary to the world (Kaiser 2000:20). Israel even now has the responsibility to live as the God's people among the other nations like as missionary (Verkuyl 1978: 94).

In the New Testament, Paul defines the Genesis declaration as 'the gospel in advance' (Galatians 3:8). Therefore, the mission and gospel both begin in Genesis.

The story of Abraham is the foundation of biblical mission, in as much as it presents the mission of God. God calls Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldeans and to go to Canaan. “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you (Gen. 15:7).” It sounds indeed as a story of a missionary.

Three promises of blessing are given by God (Gen. 12:2-3). First, God will make Abraham into a great nation; second, God will personally bless Abraham; third, God will give Abraham a great name. The purpose of these blessings is that Abraham be a blessing to other. The rich blessing of Abraham was not only meant for his own glory, but also as a blessing to others. Everything Abraham was given was a gift to be shared. This gift would be only by grace, not by works. God’s election to Abraham concerns the whole world (Verkuyl 1978: 92).

God’s promise of blessing (Gen. 12:1-3) is good news to other nations in Old Testament. It is good to show that Peter and Paul saw it very clearly (Rom. 4:13; Acts 3:25-26).

- **The book of Jonah: God’s love for the gentiles**

The book of Jonah is so significant for understanding the biblical basis of mission because it is concern with the Gentile mission (Verkuyl 1978:96). Early in the twentieth century, many scholars favoured viewing the book of Jonah as a book of missionary activity (Kaiser 2000:67). God spares and rescues not only the people of Israel, but also Gentiles. God loved the whole world. Therefore, Israel must be a sign to the other nations that Yahweh is both Creator and Liberator.

- **Antagonistic motif**

Many periods of biblical history began with some type of antagonism. The whole Bible, particularly the Old Testament, is filled with God's wars against those powers and forces, which oppose his plans for his creation.

The Bible says that Yahweh is the God of the whole world. There is but one way; it is to follow the one true God. All other ways are false religions and gods. Therefore, God battles against those false gods which leads His people astray, the Baals and Ashtaroth. God rejects magic and astrology which separate God and his creation. God will finally overcome every false god. This is a significant theme for missionary participation (Verkuyl 1978:95).

3.4.2. The New Testament message about mission

- **The Gospel of Matthew**

The Gospel of Matthew reflects a distinct and important sub-paradigm of the early church's experience and interpretation of mission. Matthew's model of mission has rightly been characterized as "mission of disciple - making" (Bosch), "the mission that makes disciples" (Legrand) or "the Matthean didactic paradigm" (Arias). (Nissen 1999:29).

Any description of mission in the Gospel of Matthew must begin with the so-called "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:16-20. It is commonly assumed that this text has offered the most powerful motivation for mission (Nissen 1999:21).

According to John P. Meier, many scholars today agree that Matthew 28:16-20 is considered to be the most important mission text, that the entire Gospel points to these final verses and that all the threads woven into the fabric of Matthew, from chapter 1 onward, draw together here (Bosch 1991:57).

The way the "Great Commission" has traditionally been utilized, in providing a biblical basis for mission, has to be challenged or at least modified (Bosch 1991:57), because the text is often taken out of its context and read as an autonomous decree which speaks directly to our own situation. Where this happens, the "Great Commission" is easily degraded to a mere slogan, or used as a pretext for what we have in advance decided, perhaps unconsciously, it should mean (Schreiter 1982: 431).

According to Bosch (1991:57), "one thing contemporary scholars agreed upon, is that Matthew 28:18-26 has to be interpreted against the background of Matthew's gospel as a whole, and unless we keep this in mind, we shall fail to understand it".

● **The Gospel of Mark**

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). This verse has offered the most powerful motivation for mission. This mission command seems to have all the important elements for mission: Its content is summarized as the good news. It addresses the whole creation and its focus is on preaching as an instrument of mission (Nissen 1999:37).

Through the historical context of this verse it is difficult to determine the setting and the occasion of the manifestations of the risen Lord. It is possible that Mark relates one of the last appearances of Christ, as the word "afterward" (16:14) could imply. The summary report of Mark, however, makes it difficult to determine the exact time.

One fact is evident: the commission was given by the risen Lord to His disciples, sometime during the forty-day period preceding His ascension to the right hand of God (Peters 1974:190).

According to the Mark, the outline of the "Great Commission" is as follows:

The method of missions - preaching.

The scope of missions - all creation.

The message of missions - the good news.

The method of missions according to Mark is the oral preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ. Mark adds an emphasis upon the scope of missions, by instructing us that such preaching is to be done throughout all creation (Peters 1974:190).

• **The Gospel of Luke**

As Bosch notes (1991:57), one thing contemporary scholars agreed upon, is that the "Great Commission" of Matthew has to be interpreted against the background of Matthew's Gospel as a whole. The "Great Commission" can only be understood from Matthew's entire Gospel. The same is true of Luke's Gospel. From its first verse this Gospel moves toward the climax at the end. The gospel of Luke 24:46-49 is Luke's entire understanding of the Christian mission.

Jesus said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am

going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Lk. 24:44-49).

In this passage six important aspects of mission are underlined: (a) The fulfillment of scriptural promises: the disciples are reminded that the life and death of Jesus must be seen in the light of the Scriptures. (b) The basis of mission: it only becomes possible after the death and resurrection of the Messiah of Israel. (c) The content of mission: its central thrust is the message of repentance and forgiveness. (d) The purpose of mission: it is to start in Jerusalem but is intended for all nations. (e) The disciples are called to be witnesses: it is to be executed by witnesses. (f) Mission will be accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. v.49). These elements constitute the character of Luke's mission theology (Bosch 1991:91).

In this passage it should be noticed - in the same way as the sermon at the synagogue of Nazareth in Lk. 4:16-30 - that the re-reading of the Scriptures was to be the source of mission. This was already the case with the Emmaus story (Lk. 24:13-35). The appearance of Jesus to the disciples on the way to Emmaus is actually a session on hermeneutics, opening the Scriptures, which in turn opened their eyes and gave them a new message to share. In the same way, the passage of the "Great Commission" records that Jesus opened the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures (Nissen 1999:50).

● **The Gospel of John**

The relation of the John's Gospel to mission remains a disputed subject among New Testament scholars. Presently some New Testament scholars have tended to disagree on the mission theme in John's gospel. They have claimed that the John's Gospel is not a mission document. In their interpretation the main focus is on ecclesiology not on mission. This disagreement has begun mainly from the

discussion of one particular text, John 20:31: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (Nissen 1996:77).

However, the purpose statement of John 20:30-31 appears to be aimed at unbelievers who need to make a decision about the identity of Jesus. This Scripture is significant for the understanding of the missionary emphasis of John's Gospel²²(Larkin & Williams 1998:207).

The ministry of Jesus in John's Gospel is characterized as a mission to the end of the world, and John's Gospel reflects a deep interest in the disciple's call to world mission (John 4:35-38; 13:20; 17:18; Nissen 1996:77).

Mission is usually defined as going out or sending to nonbelievers. But, the understanding of mission in John's Gospel is something different. The missionary concept of John's Gospel cannot be limited to it alone. That is to say, John's concept of mission is both sending and gathering²³.

● Mission in Paul

Any understanding of Paul's mission has to deal with a number of questions. One of these questions is the sources. The principle source for Paul's mission is his own

²² A more detailed missionary understanding of John's Gospel can be found in the studies of scholars such as Verkuyl (1978), Peters (1972), Nissen (1996).

²³ In his description of mission in John's Gospel, Verkuyl (1978:111) remarks that John's concept of mission is both sending and gathering. The father sends the Son who in turn sends his disciples forth to gather one flock from all peoples and to bring the scattered children of God's family together again (Jn. 10:16; 12:32; 17:1-26; 20:21-22).

correspondence. This study shall focus almost exclusively on his seven undisputed letters²⁴.

The missionary dimension of Paul's theology has not always been recognized. In the past, many scholars have described Paul's theology as a dogmatic system. Only recently have an increasing number of scholars begun to recognize that Paul and his letters are first and foremost to be understood as apostolic missionary documents. It is today widely acknowledged that Paul was the first Christian theologian precisely because he was the first Christian missionary (Bosch 1991:123-124; Nissen 1996; 101-102).

During the first decades of the early Christian movement there were, generally speaking, three main types of mission:

- 1) The wandering preachers who moved from place to place in Palestine before and after Easter.
- 2) The Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who were working among Gentiles, first from Jerusalem and then from Antioch.
- 3) Judaizing Christian missionaries who went to already existing Christian churches in order to "correct" what they regarded as a false interpretation of the Gospel (Nissen 1996:111-112; Bosch 1991:129). Paul followed the first

²⁴ In his description of Paul's mission, Bosch(1991:123-124) states that although Acts contains much material that is unquestionably based on reliable tradition, it remains a secondary source on Paul. And the following seven letters are usually regarded as primary sources of Paul's mission: Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon.

two types of mission mentioned above in his missionary program.

3.5. A comprehensive definition of mission

Johannes Hoekendijk was one of the first theologians to introduce three rubrics to speak of the mission of the church - *koinonia*, *diakonia*, and *kerygma* (Jongeneel 1997: 307-308).

The various dimensions of this comprehensive approach were expressed in terms of the church's task of *kerygma* (proclamation or witness), *diakonia* (ministry or service), *koinonia* (fellowship or communion).

Since Hoekendijk's time, many missiologists adopted this threefold description of the church's comprehensive missionary obligation. In recent years most churches and mission agencies have adopted it (Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994: 36-39).

- **The *kerygma* dimension**

Mission is the *kerygma* (Proclamation) of the Word. The Greek word *kerygma* can best be translated as proclamation. The *kerygma* dimension includes various forms of the ministry of the Word in mission: preaching, witnessing, providing, theological education, Bible translation, literature, etc (Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994:36).

The congregations proclaimed the good news to those who had never heard that "God, the Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Lord of history, Savior and Liberator" (Bosch 1991:412).²⁵

- **The *diakonia* dimension**

The Greek word *diakonia* can be translated as service or ministry (Kritzinger, Meiring, Saayman 1994:37). God's goal with his mission is his kingdom. The kingdom of God does not only address the spiritual and moral needs of a person, but also his/her physical, social, cultural and political needs. This is seen in Jesus²⁶, who not only came to proclaim, but also to serve (*diakonia*) (Verkuyl 1978:211).

Jesus had compassion on the sick, the widows and the poor. The church's responsibility is to look after orphans and widows in their distress.²⁷ Therefore, the religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is to serve the people in distress.

Diakonia have several forms. Education is the oldest form of *diakonia* in the modern history of missions. Many mission agencies and organizations have completed their

²⁵The purpose of the church is to proclaim the Word of God, spreading the good news and calling people throughout the world. The church must be the witness of God's Word to the world. Therefore, the proclamation is the focus of ministry, and preaching is most important even of worship (Snyder 2001:69).

²⁶ The Bible says "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures and the paralyzed, and he healed them." (Mt. 4:23-24). Jesus sent his disciples out to both preach and heal (Mt. 10).

²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (Jm. 1:27).

mission through the education form of *diakonia*. In communist countries people are not allowed to enter as missionaries or mission agencies, but they welcome the enterprise of education to their nation.

And justice, in the Bible says, “Our God defends the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them the hand of the wicked.” (Ps. 82: 3-4). Yahweh alone is God (Deut. 6:4) who defends the rights of his people and justice to them. Justice ranked as one of the great *diakonia* in the modern missions. Today, worldwide *diakonia* agencies have become much more sensitive to the need to promote justice in the community..

- **The *koinonia* dimension**

Kerygma and *diakonia* are not the only ways to proclaim the good news about God's coming kingdom. The *koinonia* (fellowship or communion) is also a very important way of spreading the good news about God's coming kingdom. Jesus did not only proclaim the gospel to people and serve them, but also built up an incalculably deep fellowship with them. Jesus searched out and found the individual, and built up contact with the multitudes. Jesus participated with people in their worries, their disappointments, their joys, and their suffering (Verkuyl 1978:221).

Mission has to do with *koinonia*,²⁸ with the planting of churches and empowering the faithful, helping them to grow in faith. The church should reach out to one another, enjoy one another, and speak with one voice when they proclaim God's love.

²⁸ For example, church partnership, discipleship, church building project ministries and building crèches.

- **The *leitourgia* dimension**

A fourth dimension, that of *leitourgia*, needs to be considered.

The Greek word *leitourgia*²⁹ can be translated as service, ministry, worship, offering and/or sacrifice. The *Liturgical* dimension of mission therefore refers to the fact that we honour and worship God by our involvement in Mission.³⁰ In doing Mission we offer ourselves as living sacrifices to Him.³¹

Liturgical service and *diaconal* service can be distinguished (but must not be separated). Whereas diaconal service is the essential expression of the sacrificial compassion and solidarity of Christians with suffering or oppressed human beings, liturgical service is the expression of the Christian desire to praise and worship God for who he is" (Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:36).

3.6. A South Korean perspective on mission

²⁹ The Greek word *leitourgia* originally meant a public or state duty. In the Old Testament, it is particularly applied to the services in the temple at Jerusalem. In the New Testament it often has the meaning of priestly services (Lk. 1:23; Phil. 2:17; Heb. 8:6). In ecclesiastical usage, the word is employed (1) in a general sense with reference to any of the prescribed services and offices of the church's worship (2) in a specific sense with reference to the formularies used at the celebration of the Holy Communion. The eucharistic office is commonly referred to as the liturgy (Harrison, EF, Bromiley, GW, & Henry, CF 1999: 325).

³⁰ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24).

³¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship (Rom. 12:1)

3.6.1. A short mission history

In the fall of 1884, Dr Horace Alien, a medical missionary, and his family arrived in Korea as the first Protestant representatives. While the banquet celebrating for the new post office building was held in Chang Duk Palace in Korea on December 4, 1884, one of the princes, Young Ik Min, a nephew of the Queen, was wounded. Dr Alien was summoned to care for him for 3 months, until the prince was out of danger. Alien had the confidence and friendship of the King and Queen of Korea. Soon after the prince's recovery, Alien was appointed official court physician. On February 25, 1885, the new royal hospital, Kwang Hei Won, formally opened under Dr Alien's direction (Kim 1997:50).

The next missionaries to arrive were Rev Horace G Underwood, a Presbyterian, and Rev Henry G Appenzeller, a Methodist. They reached Korea on April 5, 1885. After Underwood purchased a piece of property in Cong Dong in Seoul, an orphanage work for boys was begun with the help of Mrs Alien. On May 3, 1885, Dr Scranton arrived, Dr Horen on June 24, 1885, and Miss Annie Ellen, in 1886.

After the opening of mission work, many missionaries of several denominations began steadily arriving in Korea. On account of the increasing numbers of missions working in such a small country, they had to co-operate with each other in order to avoid unfortunate duplication of efforts and competition. At first, the Presbyterian groups in Korea were organized as the Presbyterian Council. Clark (1971:111-112) says the purpose of the council was stated as being, "The uniform organization in Korea of one native church holding the Reformed faith and Presbyterian form of government."

In 1890, the Korean missionaries invited Dr John Nevius, who worked in China, to teach for two weeks in order to formulate mission policy (Clark 1973:42).

In 1891, a year after Nevius' visit, the Korean mission established the Presbyterian Northern Mission Rules and Bylaws, influenced by Nevius' principles but reducing them to six sections: (a) General, (b) Native agents, (c) Education, (d) Theological institutions, (e) Literature, (f) Organization, and (g) Examination. At the First meeting in 1893, the Council for Mission in Korea adopted the ten Statements as mission policy. The Rules and Statement, influenced by the principles of Nevius, are reduced in this study to four: self-principle, biblical emphasis, educational and medical work (Clark 1973:42).

3.6.2. South Korean missionary movement

Since 1990 the Korea Research Institute for Missions (KRIM) has conducted biennial research projects on the missionary movement in South Korea.

- **South Korean missionaries**

According to "Operation World" statistics, 8.206 Korean missionaries were at work outside of South Korea at the end of 2000. This total makes South Korea the second largest missionary sending country in the world, ranking only after the United States in its numbers of overseas missionaries (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001: 387).

This number is conservative for it includes only missionaries belonging to mission agencies, and not independent missionaries sent directly by a local church. Nor does it include workers who committed themselves to missionary service for less than two years, or those who have given up South Korean citizenship for the sake of their work.

The missionary movement in South Korea, reported the existence of 93 overseas missionaries in 1979. After that report, there were 1,178 identified South Korean missionaries in 1989, more than a twelve fold increase in that decade. For the next generation of KRIM research, surveys showed a growth from 1,645 (1990) to 8,206 (2000), almost a fivefold increase. The growth rate therefore slowed during the 1990s, but it still represents one of the fastest growing national missionary movements in the world.

At the time of the 1997 Korean economic crisis that occurred over the shortage of foreign currency, concern was expressed about the possible negative impact on the missionary movement. The KRIM's recent research however, shows that the economic problems have not slowed growth (Ruth Tucker 1983: 323-324). In fact, every two-year period throughout the decade showed a strong increase.

At present, there are approximately 1000 new missionaries being sent out each year from Korea. This number more than compensates for the missionaries leaving the field because of retirement or attrition.

Married missionaries outnumbered singles in the missionary force by a ratio of almost 7 to 1. The percentage of single missionaries fell from 20.2 percent in 1994 to 12.7 percent in 2000. The decreasing percentage of single missionaries can be traced to the gradual development of denominational mission agencies, whose members are largely seminary graduates and married, and also to the preference of large interdenominational agencies for married members over singles.

Married missionaries have a lower attrition rate than singles, which suggests that the recent increase in the ratio of married workers is to be welcomed (Moon 1997: 135). In some fields, however, single missionaries can work more effectively. Given the typical cultural experience of Koreans, whose society is one of the most homogeneous in the world, it would seem wise to encourage young, single missionaries to gain inter-cultural exposure and missionary experience as soon as

possible in their lives. Many Korean missionaries spend their twenties and early thirties on their own university education, military service, theological education, and pre-field missionary training. This unusual long period of preparation in their home country is disadvantageous in terms of inter-cultural adjustment, learning and creativity, because these qualities are better acquired when one is younger.

The level of ministry experience among Korean overseas missionaries has risen in recent years. In 1994, less than one-third of the 3,272 missionaries serving overseas had as much as two years' field experience. By 2000 this proportion had risen to 61 percent.

In 2000 most of the 8,206 missionaries were focusing on church planting (37 percent) or discipleship training (27 percent). The remainders were divided among educational ministries (10 percent), theological education (7 percent), itinerant evangelism (6 percent), Bible translation or medical work (5 percent each) and social work (3 percent).

- **South Korean mission agencies**

The number of mission agencies in South Korea has grown steadily from 21 in 1979 to 74 in 1990, 127 in 1998, 136 in 2000, and 154 in 2004. Of the 154 organizations, 108 are vending agencies, 19 are support organizations, that do not themselves send missionaries, 13 are training centres, 7 are mission associations that facilitate cooperation and partnership among mission agencies, and 6 are research institutes. Altogether 126 of the agencies are interdenominational, 28 are denominational. Although the total number of missionaries continues to rise dramatically, the growth in the number of mission agencies has slowed.

The number of mission agencies has grown over the years. In 1990 only four agencies had over 100 members; by 2000 there were twenty-four such

organizations. The recent economic crisis (1997) seems not to have affected this trend.

3.6.3. How was mission seen by the South Korean churches, and how did they define mission?

Jesus commanded His disciples: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

South Korean Christians preach the gospel, and as people are converted, they establish a new church. The church, established by new Christians, preaches the gospel to all people to save the lost. When the converted are added every day and every Sunday, the church gradually grows. South Korean Christians think that mission is the most important task of believers and the churches also emphasize mission as the best way to accomplish the will of God.

With the comprehensive definition of mission the missionary activities in South Korea will be evaluated.

- **Kerygma**

The most important dimension in South Korean mission is *kerygma* or proclamation of the Word. South Korean Christians believe the history of Israel in the Old Testament, the historical Jesus and His resurrection and miracles. South Korean pastors emphasize not only believing the contents of the Bible, but being able to see them occur again, if they have faith. The message without Jesus and His

kingdom is not a sermon. The biblical and evangelical messages help to make the South Korean churches grow rapidly. The ministry of kerygma took numerous forms in South Korean missions: A part from meeting in churches the follows was done.

Street mission

Since the beginning of South Korean missions Christians used this method of going out into the street and market place, preaching the gospel and distributing tracts. Many people, who received the Gospel and tracts, believed in Jesus Christ. Jesus preached in public ,in synagogues, and on the plains.

Door to door mission

This method (Door to Door Mission) is to visit non-Christian houses to preach the gospel, and talk to the family or to a person. Many people visited by the missionary appreciate it and come to the church. Sometimes their whole family believes in Jesus Christ. The local churches grow through this method.

Military mission

Six hundred thousand young men in South Korea serve in the military: army, navy, and air force. The South Korean military has a chaplain corps organised by order of the president, Syungman Rhee, on February 7, 1951. In 1955, 329 chaplains served in military evangelism. At present a greater number are preaching the gospel to South Korean soldiers. After Christian soldiers are discharged from military service they become members of their local churches. Clark (1971:155) says of

military evangelism: "This work (military evangelism), if effectively done, could have a tremendous influence on the civilian population, as the men go back into civilian life, after their time in the army." This is a strong factor in South Korean church growth.

School and hospital mission

Pastors and lay missionaries work everywhere. While students are at school, Christian teachers not only teach knowledge but also evangelize the students and they are saved in the name of Jesus. Students proclaim the gospel their completion of their studies. Medical doctors do not only treat the patients but also preach the gospel at hospital. This is a very important factor contributing to the rapid church growth in South Korea.

- **Diakonia**

The ministry of *diakonia* takes different forms. South Korean missionaries work in every field: as hospital as hospitals missionaries, prison missionaries, police missionaries, school missionaries. South Korean Christians have a good opportunity to reach whole nations.

South Korean missionaries not only proclaim the Word of God but also practice their faith on the mission fields. They are involved in *diakonia*: education, job creation, sports, charity and AIDS/HIV patients.

Education

Education ranks as the oldest form of *diakonia* in the modern history of missions. Early missionaries in South Korea emphasized this *diakonia* mission. Missionaries started early with education. *Nevius'* principles also emphasize education in South Korean mission. The purpose of the educational work is not only to teach but also to serve and to save the lost in South Korea. Therefore, the missionaries began to establish schools such as the Baejae boys' school and the Eiha girls' school.

The 12th of *Nevius'* principles describes the school: "The great mission of the Christian church is not only to teach mechanics and civil engineering or foreign languages or science, but also to Christianize them and then leave them to develop their own form of civilization" (Clark, 1973:37)."

The growth of South Korean schools helped to change South Korea into something new and modern. South Korean Christian schools produced many leaders in the church, society, economical and political fields.

Medical work

South Korean missions started through medical work. Horance Allen came to Korea as a medical doctor and he soon became the official royal doctor. In his footsteps, many of others followed. The purpose of medical missions was not only to heal, but also to witness the gospel. The Tenth Statement of the Mission Council reads: "Patients from the country who have undergone a season of treatment ought to be followed up by visitation in their native villages, because their experience of compassionate dealing is likely to open a wide door to the evangelist" (Clark 1971:114).

The Severance Hospital opened in September 1904. The hospital was the centre of Western medical work and also a centre for training South Korean Christian doctors.

There are, recently, 23 Christian general hospitals and many Christian private hospitals in Seoul alone. Those hospitals are the signs of God's love.

Justice

Christianity in South Korea did not neglect the responsibility of working for justice. Strong Christian leadership was found in the independence movement of 1919 under the rule of foreign countries such as Japan. Christian leaders were always on the front of social and political justice such as the anti-Communist movement, the anti-Japan movement and the anti-military government movement. As a result, South Korean people became more open to Christianity (Van Gelder 2007:176).

• Koinonia

Mission is also about *koinonia*, the responsibility of planting churches and empowering the congregation to grow in their spiritual lives: Three examples are discussed.

The Friday small group system

South Korean churches have had Friday worship services in small groups for a long time. The pastor divides the church into smaller parishes, and the small parishes are divided into smaller groups, in units of 5-10 church members in the same area. Each small group has a Friday worship service in one of the group member's house. The pastor of the church appoints the leaders of the small groups from members in

the same area, and the leaders appointed by the pastor lead their small groups. This small group movement has affected South Korean church growth greatly. There are several merits to this small group system:

- a) They can easily study the Bible in the group with the group leader,
- b) They can build a strong fellowship with each other in the same area,
- c) They can try to evangelize their neighbours in the same area. Fellowship and evangelism are very effective in small groups (Kim 1997: 71-72).

As the group leader leads the study of the Bible, this system trains lay people to become great leaders in the church of the future. This is a very important factor contributing to rapid church growth in South Korea.

Sessions

All South Korean churches have training sessions twice a year. This training session is a time for the church people to unite. During the training sessions they praise God together. It is a time to learn to understand each other joyfully. They also share their pain and their joys, and they share their common life with one another. As a result of this, the churches grow in fellowship.

Regular seasonal visitation

During spring and fall South Korean pastors visit each church member's home in their region. When the pastor visits the home, he shares the comfort of Christ,

exhorts them, and prays for their family and their enterprises. All Christian families await their pastor's visit with prepared food. When he visits their home, they receive him and his companions joyfully. These visits are regularly done twice a year. As the pastor gets to know the family and their problems through visiting them, he knows how to apply the good message to their needs. The Christians are also strengthened in their faith by these visits. Pastors and members build a good fellowship with one another (Kim 1997: 69).

Ecumenical outreach

Ecumenical co-operation is necessary for the missionary enterprise of the world; because missionary work is the ecumenical calling of the whole church in the world. The missionary work is not a competition between churches. The mission is God's mission (*missio Dei*), that is, God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world. The point of the missionary work is the good news of God's love. Therefore, neither a secularized church, nor a separatist church can faithfully articulate the God's mission (*missio Dei*).

The early South Korean church actively promoted ecumenical co-operation, such as the translation of the Bible into South Korean, mission conferences, the production of a common hymn book and textbooks for Sunday school, the division of mission territory, Bible conferences, prayer meetings, the mass evangelization movement and the national independence movement.

In contemporary South Korean Protestantism, there have been two polarised groups since the 1960s: the KNCC (Korean National Christian Council), and the NAE (National Association of Evangelicals) groups. Recently these two groups have attempted to co-operate in assisting North Korea, as well as prepare for the

unification of the two Koreas. Strictly speaking, these two groups tend to neglect earnest dialogue with each other.

3.7. Conclusion

To conclude the mission at the beginning of the 21st century, the most important attribute of the mission is *missio Dei* : the mission is God's mission. Mission was interpreted in many ways. However, according to Bosch (1991), God is a missionary God and mission has its origin in God. And finally, God also calls people as missionaries to share his love with the world.

Furthermore, the Bible makes it clear that world mission is the theme of whole Bible. South Korean churches, therefore, think that world mission is the most important task of Christians and the churches also emphasize mission as the best way to accomplish the will of God. That is to say, world mission is our responsibility.

The present generation lives in the new information age as a result of rapid internet developments. It opens up a venue for Cyber missions in other countries. The following chapters will examine how the new information age impact on world mission.