

**Abrahamic Covenant.** God's initial call to Abraham to leave his family and his country in order to follow wherever the Lord would lead him and the promises God made to Abraham constitute the core of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1–3). Throughout the story of Abraham these promises are reiterated or expanded (Gen. 12:7; 13:14–17; 15:1–21; 17:1–27; 22:15–18), and Abraham demonstrates his commitment by his obedience, culminating in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1–18). The same promises are repeated, in whole or in part, to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 21:12, 13, 18; 25:1–6; 28:3–4, 12–15), and the covenant then becomes a central part of the rest of the Bible.

God's call of Abraham parallels his creation of humankind in his own image (Gen. 1:26–28). The first two chapters of Genesis depict a harmony between God and humanity, between man and woman, and between humanity and the rest of creation. That harmony was severed when the original pair chose the path of autonomy from God (Gen. 3:1–19), but God invited Abraham to surrender to a new path that he would mark out for him (Gen. 12:1).

The Abrahamic covenant has a key role within God's plan to get the gospel to all the world. First, God's dealings with Abraham have the seed of the gospel within it. As with his promise of salvation to all who receive the Son by faith (John 1:12), the promise to Abraham was unconditional. Abraham opened himself to God's grace, reorienting his life to God's new work on his behalf. In that act he became both an example for all future generations of believers and the channel through which God mediated his promise of reconciliation to all the world (cf. Gen. 12:3 with Rom. 4 and Gal. 3).

Second, the land that God promised to Abraham and his descendants became the central point from which the gospel would spread to the rest of the world (Acts 1:8). God created the physical world and its people with their physical bodies, and he began his plan of reconciliation with a real place.

Third, when God promised to give Abraham countless descendants, he established him as the human source of Jesus Christ, the Savior of all humanity (Matt. 1:1). Also Israel, the nation that came from Abraham, became the first of the nations that God purposed to reach with the gospel (Matt. 28:19–20; Rom. 1:16).

Fourth, God's promise to make Abraham's name great becomes an evidence of the restored relationship between God and humanity. When we try to gain a name for ourselves it results in alienation from God (Gen. 11:1–9), but when God establishes our identity for us, it results in a new life that is much better than any we could have imagined for ourselves (Matt. 19:39; Rev. 2:17).

Fifth, and finally, God promised Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3). This promise moves the focus of God's plan from an individual to the entire world. God's heart was for the world, but he began with choosing one person.

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**Bibliography.** B. W. Anderson, *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 353–66; F. Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church*; W. J. Dumbrell, *Reformed Theological Review* 41 (1982): 42–50; R. De Ridder, *Discipling the Nations*; A. Glasser, *Kingdom and Mission*; C. L. Rogers, *BibSac* 127 (1970): 241–56; J. H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*; J. M. L. Young, *CT* 13 (1968): 162–63, 165.

**Babel.** Genesis 11:1–9 is a sharp polemic against the pretensions of the collective human self-sufficiency in rebellion against God. Its missionary and missiological relevance can be seen from noting its place in the history of God's redemptive work and revelation.

This is a representative episode of opposition to the purpose of the Lord following the judgment of the flood. The nations descended from Noah (Gen. 10) were implicitly required to disperse over the earth to fulfill the creation mandate (Gen. 1:28), reiterated in the covenant of preservation (Gen. 8:15–9:17). This was with a view to the redemptive purpose encapsulated in the prophecy of Noah (Gen. 9:25–27), to be fulfilled by the coming of Christ. But the line of Nimrod ("Let us rebel"), the descendant of Ham, founds Babel (Babylon[ia]) (Gen. 10:8–10), which meant "Gate of God" in its Babylonian form (but, mockingly, "confusion" in Hebrew).

The self-aggrandizing aim and motive of "making a name" for themselves and resisting dispersion was not only disobedience; it also implied a spurning of the promise given to Noah that the true intent of Eden would be restored. Artificial sacred mountains (ziggurats) in the Babel area, according to the later versions of Babylonian myths, aimed at idolizing humanity were the very antithesis of the goal of the city of God. Babel therefore epitomized the universal resistance of fallen humanity to God. If unthwarted it threatened to produce the demonic counterpart of the kingdom or rule of God. As by the eating of the tree of knowledge people became, in an ironic sense, like God (Gen. 3:22), so now, with equal irony, humans are potentially omnipotent, and (implicitly) evilly so (v. 6). Therefore the Lord comes in judgment, but also in grace, to confuse and disperse: he prevents any preempting triumph of self-sufficient, self-determining human society, and so averts the necessity of destroying humankind.

This common-grace restraint of sin and its effects preserves humankind for the redemption to come (v. 9).

## Bible

The immediately following focus on Shem (Gen. 11:10), associated with blessing (9:26–27), and then on Terah, the father of Abraham and his kin (11:27), is not accidental: through Abraham all peoples will be blessed (12:3).

The reversal of both the confusion-scattering of Babel and its sinful human assertion is Pentecost. There the special redemptive grace, applying the work of the risen Christ, is symbolically and representatively poured out on all the nations, through the Jews and proselytes present. They are gathered, not scattered now, and all hear what God has done in Christ in the language of their own region; they repent and are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. This prefigures the “purifying the lips of the peoples” and the “gathering” home of God’s people (Zeph. 3:9, 20), of which the missionary task is the instrument.

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**Bibliography.** J. Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church*; H. Blocher, *In the Beginning*; J. Davies, *JTS*, new series 5 (1952): 228–31; M. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*; R. DeRidder, *Discipling the Nations*; D. Senior and C. Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundation for Mission*; G. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*.

**Bible.** The ultimate task of all forms of Christian missions is to tell of the Judeo-Christian God (Yahweh-Jehovah) and to report the salvation made available by his grace through the life and mission of Jesus Christ. This includes the proclamation of the call to repentance, faith for the forgiveness of sin, and life in fellowship with him. Christ’s representatives also provide guidance for believers who seek to live worthy of and pleasing to him. All this information comes, not through human search or invention, but from God himself. The word “revelation,” from the verb “to reveal” or “make known,” names the doctrine that deals with God’s showing or disclosing himself, his works, expectations, and provisions.

Theologians speak of both “general” and “special” revelation. The former refers to that knowledge of God available to all people, in all places, at all times. The latter is the knowledge of God available to only some people, in some times, and in some places.

GENERAL REVELATION consists of that which can be known about God in creation, nature, and the affairs of humans as a whole. Psalm 19:1–4 speaks eloquently of the evidence of God in nature. Romans 1:20–25 asserts that the created order demonstrates the fact of God’s existence, power, and goodness. Humans, however, refused to pay heed to this evidence and did not honor him as God; they worshiped that which was created rather than the Creator. Consequently, “God gave them up to degrading passions” (1:26) and almost unspeakable degrading

acts. Paul, before Athenian officials, says that God made all nations from a single ancestor; gives life, breath, and all things; allots the time and boundaries of human habitation “so that they should seek God; . . . he is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27). Indeed, observation of humanity itself, people created in the IMAGE OF GOD, should be a persuasive argument for the existence and power of God. Hebrews 11:6 affirms that to please God one must accept his existence and knowability; this, by implication, is available through general revelation. Those who fail to acknowledge this message are, says Paul, without excuse (Rom. 1:26).

*Special Revelation* consists first of all in God’s work through the nation Israel, her history and prophets. Micah calls to remembrance events of the nation’s past “that you may know the saving acts of the LORD” (6:5). It should, however, be noted that God’s special revelation to and work through Israel had a missionary purpose. It is through her that “all the nations of the world shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3); as a “priestly kingdom” (Exod. 19:6) she is to mediate between God and others. In Exodus 34:10 God says, “I will do marvels, . . . and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD.” Isaiah affirms that God’s servant will be “a light to the nations” (49:6; cf. Acts 13:46–47). The supreme act of God’s special revelation came in Jesus Christ through whom the Word “became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14). In Jesus we become aware of the person, nature, and character of God, see him at work, learn that God loved the world so much that he gave his Son that believers might have life (John 3:16). In Christ we hear his invitation “come to me” (Matt. 11:28). God, in Jesus, shows himself as the holy and just judge of sin, the loving God, the dying-rising Savior, the King whose kingdom will never end and who one day will reign supreme over all. God’s revelation in Israel and in Jesus also involves the work of God’s close human associates, specially called, Spirit-filled persons, designated as “prophets” in the Old Testament and as “apostles” in the New. These were sent, commissioned, and authorized to speak for him. Their task was to report the facts of God’s revelation and also to explain and show how to apply God’s message in the affairs of daily life.

The doctrine of revelation must also include discussion of the Bible. The word “Bible” means “books”; it is a book composed of a collection of books. Together these comprise a religious book. Although it contains information on a number of topics and issues, its primary purpose, like that of many religious books, is to relate facts about God, the universe, and especially human beings in it, and their relationships. Christians believe

that this is the only true religious book. All others speak of nonexistent deities and provide incorrect and even dangerous information.

The Bible is, above all, the record of the various forms of special revelation just described. Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles wrote down virtually all we know of God's revealing work. This was not by human instigation. From Exodus 17:14 on we are told of God's command to "write." Because it is the usual source of information about God, this record is also revelation itself; it is the word of God. As the word and Spirit work together, God's revelation of himself in the past is his contemporary self-disclosure and message. It is just because of its inclusion within God's revelation that missionaries have given much time and effort to make the Bible available in the languages of the peoples with whom they work.

There are a number of terms used to describe some important facts about the origin, nature, and character of the Bible. "Inspiration" or the phrase "inspired by God" occurs in 2 Timothy 3:16. Literally it means "God-breathed," hence, it came out of God. Second Peter 1:21 describes the communication and process of recording Scripture even more explicitly by stating that "holy men" were "moved," literally "borne" or "carried" along by the Holy Spirit. "Inspiration," then, affirms that Scripture originated with God, it was given to specially chosen individuals, and God, through his Spirit, remained active in the writing process.

"Canon," meaning literally "measuring rod," refers to an authoritative standard against which other things are measured. When referring to the Bible, canon designates those individual documents or books that are rightfully a part of Scripture, written authority. Protestant Christians traditionally acknowledge a total of sixty-six books—thirty-nine in the Old Testament, twenty-seven in the New. Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Anglican Christians also include additional books, the Apocrypha or Deutero-canonical books. These writings seem to have come largely from the Intertestamental period (c. 400 B.C.—A.D. 70) and were included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, but apparently were not in the Hebrew Bible used in Palestine and Hebrew-speaking synagogues. The exact number of apocryphal books acknowledged varies among Christian groups who include them in their canon.

It is much easier to relate what the church did with regard to the canon than the basis upon which it acted. The Old Testament was taken over from Judaism. The three divisions of the Hebrew canon (Law, Prophets, and the Writings [in which division Psalms always stood first]) is implied in the words of Jesus in Luke 24:44. Early Hebrew-speaking Christians seemed to

have used the shorter canon while those who read their Old Testament in Greek used the longer. Early Christian writers refer to three divisions of books which were put forward for inclusion in the New Testament: those acknowledged by all, those rejected by all, and those which were disputed. There seems to have been no question about twenty-two New Testament books. Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude, and possibly Revelation were among the books of the present New Testament canon about which questions seem to have been asked by one or another group; the noncanonical books of Barnabas, Hermas, Didache, Gospel of the Hebrews, and the Revelation of Peter were regarded highly, if not actually regarded as canonical, by some.

Evidence for the basis of canonicity is inconclusive. Traditionally much emphasis has been put upon the assumed author of a book. The word of an authentic spokesman for God, prophet or apostle, or someone closely associated with such a person (Baruch in the Old Testament, Mark and Luke in the New) is assumed to have been regarded as inspired whether it was issued orally or in writing. Additional criteria have been set forth on the basis of later examinations of what the early church did rather than its own statement of them. Evangelical Christians assume, primarily by faith, that the same God who inspired Scripture remained as superintendent to assure the reliability of the recognition of the canon.

An important controversy centers upon the role of the church in the canonical process. It asks whether the church *authorized*, gave authority to the New Testament canon, or *recognized* the authority that is inherent within these writings because of their divine inspiration. The answer to this question must come from historical research. The practical implication is whether the church sits in judgment upon the Scriptures or the Scriptures upon the church.

The issue of canon is particularly important for missions, not only because of the claim that Scripture is the word of God, but because several groups advocate that additional material must be added to it. Islam, for example, makes this claim for the QUR'AN and Mormonism for the Book of Mormon. Christians insist that in showing himself personally in human form and by actually providing for the greatest need of humans in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, special revelation reached its climax and conclusion; nothing more can be added.

Two additional words often used in discussions of the Bible are "infallible" and "inerrant." The former designates the teachings of the Bible as absolutely authoritative and true. Inerrant means "without error," but those who use the

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term often disagree on whether they mean without error of any kind or in accomplishing God's purpose (see INERRANCY).

One final comment must be made regarding the Bible. Of almost equal importance with what one affirms about its nature is the question of how it is to be interpreted. Christendom, including its missionary endeavors, has all too often denied in practice the authority claims for Scripture by interpreting it in ways which fail to seek to grasp what the original writers (divine and human) intended and what the original readers understood. This must be a guide as one seeks to apply Scripture to the different geographical, cultural, and temporal settings of the contemporary world. Those concerned with HERMENEUTICS seek those principles involved in the art and science of making meaningful and relevant in one time and place that which was originally communicated in another time and place. This definition of hermeneutics is also a brief description of another term much used by missiologists, CONTEXTUALIZATION.

Modern missionaries, following the apostle Paul, may properly begin with general revelation and then move to special revelation. It is through these that God has made available the message, the only legitimate message, about himself, the universe, and their relationship which is at the heart of the missionary endeavor.

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**Biblical Theology of Mission.** The only rule of faith and practice that God has given is the Bible. It has the force of law. Because mission embraces "the totality of the task he sent his church to do in the world" (Bosch, 1978), we must select a theme that is prominent in both Testaments.

That theme is the KINGDOM OF GOD. It dominated the ministry of Jesus and provides linkage to all "the many and various ways" by which God had earlier spoken to his people by the prophets (Heb. 1:1). "Missiology is more and more coming to see the Kingdom of God as the hub around which all of mission work revolves; one can almost speak of a consensus developing on this point" (Verkuyl, 1978). In our day evangelicals are finding that the biblical base for mission is far more complex than previous generations envisioned. Gone is the single focus of an overwhelming concern for the spiritual condition of "the HEATHEN." Nor can credibility be gained by supplementing this concern with appeals to the GREAT COMMISSION (e.g., Matt. 28:18-20; etc.), or

by prooftexts supporting such related themes as the sending character of God, the compassionate compulsion of the Spirit, the example of the apostolic church, and the relation between missionary obedience and the second coming of Christ. These themes are important, but one cannot build a comprehensive biblical theology of mission on them. The kingdom or "rule" of God must be the dominant motif since by it God touches every aspect of the human condition: past, present, and future (see KINGDOM OF GOD).

When we explore the relationship of the kingdom of God to world mission, we begin with the reminder that God's kingship is both universal and covenantal. When God created the heavens and the earth by his Word and created the first human couple in his own image and likeness, it was inevitable that he would exercise a loving and preserving control over his creation and particularly over the human race. This can be described as his universal kingship. Both Old and New Testaments teach this universal kingship, but in the Old Testament we also find God's kingly rule identified with Israel, a people with whom he established a covenant relationship.

**The Old Testament Contribution** (see also OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY OF MISSION). In the opening chapters of the Old Testament we find the first reference to mission as defined above. God said to the first man and woman: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:15, 18-25; Ps. 8:5, 6). This command is frequently termed "the CULTURAL MANDATE." By it God called Adam and Eve to accept responsibility for this world as his vice-regents, to serve and control it under his direction and for his glory. Its details pertained to their social existence, and mark the beginning of a stream of obligation—a mandate for family and community, culture and civilization—that widens and deepens as it courses throughout Scripture. We are not surprised to find that in the messianic age that Christ will later inaugurate, these many obligations will be made even more explicit as part of his missionary mandate that the church proclaim and demonstrate "the good news of the Kingdom" to the nations (Matt. 24:14). And such has proved to be the case. We might regard the cultural mandate as the prelude to the "Great Commission."

At the outset the expectation was that because God is sovereign, he will be obeyed. But this was not to be. Early on God imposed a moral test on Adam and Eve (the "trees"—2:16, 17). In granting them freedom of choice, God was running a great risk. Would they freely choose to remain under God's control or would they seek an existence separate from God? Sadly, they chose the latter and their fall (3:1-7) brought them under the dominance of "the tempter" and forged linkage with his hostile spirit-power and open oppo-

sition to the rule of God (*see also* FALL OF HUMAN-KIND). More was involved. Although they continued to carry out the cultural mandate, their obedience was now shaped by selfish impulses arising from their abdication of responsibility for the world and their surrender to the one who had now gained control of the world (“the god of this world”—John 12:21 and 2 Cor. 4:4; *see also* SATAN). Subsequent chapters (Gen. 4–11) record the effects of the Fall, ranging from patricidal murder to worldwide violence; from God’s judgment of all antediluvians to the tragedy that came to the one family that was delivered (Noah’s); and from human arrogance attempting to establish a universal kingdom with its defiant tower to further judgment, the linguistic confusion and scattering of the people (BABEL).

Since the cultural mandate was no longer being carried out under God’s direction, God then began via DIVINE ELECTION and covenant to unfold a redemptive purpose that would deal with the problem of human rebellion and alienation from his fellowship. He called a man named Abram out of Ur within the complex of Babel, and began to train him to live by faith that through his seed (Israel), “all peoples on earth” would “be blessed” (Gen. 12:1–3; *see also* ABRAHAMIC COVENANT). His gracious desire was via Israel to bring fallen people “by repentance and faith” to break with Satan’s control (1 John 5:19; Acts 26:18, etc.) as co-laborers with their Messiah, to regain control of the world and those within it who would respond to his love.

But Old Testament history records repeated failure on Israel’s part. Actually, over the years only a remnant within Israel believed and obeyed God. At the same time, however, their prophets predicted that God would ultimately realize the covenant goal he had set for a believing remnant in the nation: “to restore the tribes of Jacob” and to become “a light for the gentiles” so that his “salvation” might be taken “to the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49:5, 6). The key to this total restoration will be “the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel”—strangely, the One “who was despised and abhorred by the nation” (49:7). Despite this, Israel went ever deeper into spiritual infidelity, open rebellion, and prolonged captivity, with only infrequent periods when through national repentance the blessing of God became partly evident in the life and worship of his people. The tragedy is that in the end the various contending parties within Judaism, though often at loggerheads with one another, united to participate in the final tragedy of standing against the One who came as the self-confessed “Son of Man” of Daniel, the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah, and the “Smitten Shepherd-King” of Zechariah.

**Old Testament Axioms of Mission.** Five major axioms in the Old Testament are inherent in the

New Testament unfolding of the kingdom of God in relation to the church’s mission to the nations. They can be traced within this tragic history of Israel’s experience with God.

1. God is sovereign in his kingship. His rule over individuals and nations is always righteous and just. He is the moral Governor of the universe (Ps. 22:27, 28; Dan. 4:34, 35; *see also* SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD).
2. God seeks the personal commitment of his people. God’s HOLINESS demands righteousness on the part of all Israelites who would be in covenantal relationship with him (Isa. 55:6, 7).
3. God’s people are to constitute a “serving” community among the nations by example and through personal outreach. They are to oppose “by word and deed” all that demeans people (Mic. 6:8).
4. God’s purpose through his people is relentlessly opposed by the inveteracy of human evil and the implacable hostility of Satan and his hosts (Job 1, 2; 2 Chron. 36:15, 16).
5. God’s purpose for Israel and the nations always moves beyond present matters, and is invariably directed toward his future and ultimate triumph in history (Isa. 2:2–4; Zech. 14).

**Specific Old Testament Contributions.** Within the record of Israel’s long history the Old Testament touches on themes that are relevant to mission outreach today: the issue of slavery and political liberation (Exodus and Ezra); the relation of God’s people to secular power and secular events (Genesis and the Prophets); the mystery of suffering and redemption (Genesis, Exodus, and the Servant Songs of Isaiah); the lifestyle of God’s people (Leviticus); the perils of religious pluralism (Hosea); the issue of racism and the disease of anti-Semitism (Esther); the basic problems encountered in serving God (Haggai and Zechariah); religious encounter and the non-negotiability of truth (Jeremiah); the pursuit of personal and national spiritual renewal (Nehemiah and Malachi); the role of the believing remnant within Israel (Amos and Isaiah); the possibility of becoming useless to God through ethnocentrism (Jonah); the function of wisdom literature as a bridge to the nations that know not God (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes); and the missiological implications of Israel as a diasporal people.

Although the Old Testament is replete with insightful material related to issues inherent in mission, on the one crucial issue it is silent. In the Old Testament God has not revealed “the mystery hidden for ages and generations” whereby Gentiles through the gospel would be-

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come fellow heirs with the people of God. Biblically informed Jewish people know that their future Golden Age will not take place without a massive ingathering of the nations to the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But how this would come about remained a mystery until Jesus Christ inaugurated the messianic age (Eph. 3:3–9).

**The New Testament Contribution** (see also NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY OF MISSION). The unity of the Bible is nowhere more clearly seen than in the way in which the Old Testament kingdom axioms mentioned above were amplified and increased in the New Testament. With the advent of Jesus Christ these axioms are directly related to world mission.

First, God's sovereignty focuses on Christ's lordship. "We preach Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5). This is the heart of the good news of the kingdom (Rom. 10:9, 10). Through the cross he conquered all his foes and obtained salvation for his people. His present rule over the redeemed adumbrates his coming rule when "every knee" bows to him and "every tongue" confesses his lordship (Phil. 2:6–11). The worship of other gods is utterly abhorrent to him.

Second, Christ's lordship demands personal commitment. The New Testament stresses the necessity of faith, the new birth, the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, and its outward expression in love and kingdom service. Only "new creatures in Christ" shall enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Those who possess his lordship but whose lives do not reflect his values and perspectives are challenged to examine themselves to determine whether they are truly his (2 Cor. 13:5).

Third, the community of the King is the Body of Christ. Kingdom people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are custodians of the kingdom and share oneness in the church. Their common life is expressed through corporate WORSHIP, mutual sharing, united confession, and outgoing service. They live by PRAYER and the CONFESSION of sin. Although the CHURCH as Christ's body is of divine creation, its visible, structured presence is a flawed mixture of God's grace, human fallenness, and demonic penetration. Its only glory is the presence of Christ in its midst, realized by faith.

Fourth, the church is called to mission. Only after Christ had completed his redemptive work did he issue the call to world mission: to proclaim and demonstrate "by word and deed" the "good news of the kingdom of God." Its details strikingly endorse but significantly supplement the Old Testament injunction to "do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with God" (Mic. 6:8). After he sent the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, they consciously began to sense that they possessed a universal faith for all nations and began to go beyond the bounds of Israel to Gentile peoples to proclaim this gospel. Mission's

central and irreplaceable task is persuading people to become Christ's disciples and gathering them into local congregations (see also MISSIONARY TASK).

Fifth, obedience to mission involves SUFFERING. The New Testament is replete with the record of conflict and suffering precipitated by the advent and proclamation of gospel of the kingdom. Jesus himself experienced the world's rejection and the devil's fury, and learned obedience through what he suffered (Heb. 5:8). In much the same way the church, claiming the victory of Christ over the powers (Col. 2:15), will experience the sifting of Satan (Luke 22:31) and fiery trials (1 Peter 1:6–8) that it too might be perfected, the better to perform its mission. This process will continue and even intensify as the age draws to an end.

Sixth, the future remains bright with hope. God's redemptive purpose will be fulfilled (Acts 1:8). What he initiated will be consummated. Through the missionary obedience of his disciples God will call out a completed people from the nations. Then he will "judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (cf. Acts 17:30, 31 with Matt. 25:31, 32). The climax of Christ's redemptive purpose will take place at his second coming "when all things are subjected to God. Then the Son will also be subjected to God who put all things under him that God may be everything to everyone" (1 Cor. 15:28; see also PAROUSIA).

**Israel Confronts Her Messiah.** In the Old Testament God frequently sent prophets to Israel to remind the people of their covenantal relationship to him and the service he expected of them (Jer. 7:25). And yet, God's sending of Jesus was unique. The fallen condition of humanity was so acute and the need for redemption so great that only the INCARNATION of God the Son and the ATONEMENT of the cross could avail to provide for the redemption of God's people. Previous "sendings" set the stage for this final "sending" of the Messiah to Israel. This event marks the great hinge of salvation history: the end of "the old" and the beginning of "the new."

When Jesus came to Israel he almost immediately began to question the traditional piety of the Pharisees. He also turned to the outcasts of society and set before them a quality of life dominated by the love of God. In this connection Bosch states: "It is remarkable to note how these people to whom Jesus turned are referred to in the Gospels. They are called the poor, the blind, the lame, the lepers, the hungry, sinners, those who weep, the sick, the little ones, the widows, the captives, the persecuted, the downtrodden, the least, the last, those who are weary and heavily burdened, the lost sheep" (1978). In other words he embodied the kingdom of God as a

countercultural presence in society and offended the Pharisees who could only sneer and scornfully comment: “This mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them” (John 7:49). They did not sense the significance of his redemptive purpose despite their study of the Scriptures (John 5:39). The Sadducees also opposed him because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Mark 12:24).

This redemptive purpose began with John the Baptist, the Messiah’s herald (“Elijah has come!”; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 17:12) and Jesus’ incarnation, baptism, and divine attestation by God as to his true identity (Matt. 1:23; 3:7). Then followed his confrontation and triumph over satanic temptation. With the execution of John, their joint ministry of renewal came to an end. From that point onward Jesus began to confront the Jewish people as their Messiah (Luke 4:16–30), gathered a community of disciples around himself (9:23), and inaugurated the kingdom of God in its initial hiddenness. He explained: “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the Kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it” (16:16).

Jesus’ miracles should not be simply regarded as humanitarian acts of compassion. Actually, they were messianic “signs” which Isaiah had predicted (chs. 35, 61) would precede the decisive act of God in redeeming his people. They pointed to the reality of the kingdom of God as “already” in the midst of Israel by virtue of who he was and what he did. On one occasion he said, “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you” (Luke 11:20). At first the crowds were drawn by the expectations he kindled and by his messianic signs. When he fed the multitudes they wanted to make him their king (John 6:15). But when it became apparent that his kingdom demanded moral transformation, the crowds melted and opposition grew.

After a brief ministry of three years devoted to preaching the kingdom by using parables loaded with mission insights, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and liberating the demonized, Jesus was seized by the religious establishment, subjected to an unjust trial, condemned to death for blasphemy, and then turned over to the Roman authorities to be crucified. He died as a Redeemer “taking away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) and rose from the dead the third day as Victor over sin and death, as the Old Testament had predicted (Luke 24:44–49). In his post-resurrection ministry Christ stressed four realities: (1) his bodily resurrection (Acts 1:3); (2) himself as the key to understanding the Old Testament (Luke 24:25–27, 32); (3) his missionary mandate (lit. “when you go”—of course, you will go) “make disciples of all nations,” incorporating

converts into local congregations via baptism; and training them in discipleship, as he had trained them (Matt. 28:18–20); and (4) his order to remain in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, without whose power their missionary task would prove impossible to achieve (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8). He then ascended into heaven. This act was the final witness to his divine Sonship (Acts 1:9–11).

***Mission Begins: Proclaiming the Kingdom.*** The Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost transformed mission from preoccupation with a particular people (the Jews, Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24) to all peoples (Acts 2:17, 21, 39). But it took time for the early disciples to sense the full implications of Jesus’ messianic Jewish movement being transformed into a universal faith—the beginning of a new era under the NEW COVENANT. At first, believers in Jesus were largely regarded as a messianic sect within Judaism. Their evangelistic method was deeply rooted in the Old Testament (13:14–43). But when Gentiles began to come to faith, the apostles did not feel that they should be transformed into Jews by circumcision and Law observance, according to the older pattern of Jewish proselytism. This produced a crisis that was partially resolved at a special council of “apostles and leaders” (ch. 15). This also influenced their evangelistic approach to non-Jewish people (17:16–34; 26:18). This provoked a growing consciousness, particularly among Jewish believers, that a “parting of the way” was taking place within Jewry between rabbinic Jews and those Jews who upon believing in Jesus were increasingly finding spiritual oneness with the growing number of Gentile believers.

This massive shift precipitated much theological debate. Fortunately, God’s gift to the early church was his provision of a “task” theologian, through the conversion of the Apostle Paul (Acts 9; 22; 26, esp. 9:15). From that time onward Paul’s missionary activities and the problem-solving letters they provoked greatly enlarged the movement’s awareness of the complexity of the task of worldwide mission (*see also* PAUL AND MISSION). Notable is his letter to the vigorous, largely Gentile church in Rome that he sought to transform into a missionary base for operations in Spain, and throughout the western Mediterranean world. He began with an appalling portrayal of the abounding sinfulness of all people, whether Jews or Gentiles (1:18–3:20). He followed this with a comprehensive presentation of the abounding grace of God to all sinners through “the righteousness of God, the Lord Jesus Christ” (3:21–5:21). Justification is by grace through faith. But Paul could not stop. He had to delineate the amazing grace of God to all who had believed. Victorious living for Christians is gloriously possible through the Cross and the Holy Spirit. These resources are such that al-

## Creation

though sin is always possible, it is not necessary (6:1–8:39)! Then, Paul reviewed the tragic record of Israel's national experience. The nation was never intended by God to be an end in itself. Rather, Israel was chosen for worldwide ministry, but through its failure had to be set aside—neither totally nor permanently—for Israel shall yet enter its Golden Age through repentance and faith in her Messiah at his second coming (9:1–11:36). The final sections of this letter focused on practical matters related to Paul's concern that the church at Rome be transformed into a missionary-sending community eager to participate in mission outreach, particularly in the evangelization of Spain (12–16).

**The Kingdom of God: A Sign of God's Tomorrow.** The New Testament deals with many important mission matters such as insight into the validity of mobile mission teams as well as fixed church structures; the essentiality, diversity, and exercise of GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT; the issue of the POWERS in relation to spiritual conflict; the phenomena of ethnic religion and spiritual conversion; the eternal separation between the saved and the lost (see HELL); and the end of the age: the ultimate triumph of God.

But what should concern us particularly is to see the full significance of making the kingdom of God the dominant hub about which all mission activities are related. Ours is an age in which people all over the world are losing all sense of hope touching the future. But the reality of the kingdom means that God has a glorious future for Israel and all the nations. There is going to be God's tomorrow. And every Christian is called to be a "sign" of God's tomorrow in the world of today.

It follows then that the Christian community is to be countercultural, not captured by the status quo, by the privileged, the exploiters, the powerful. Its members march to the beat of a different drum, for they seek to embody all of the elements of the kingdom of God in their lives. Like Christ, their concern is the poor, the blind, the disadvantaged, the despised, the captives, the persecuted, the imprisoned, the downtrodden, the bearers of heavy burdens, indeed, all those unaware of God's love. They proclaim Jesus Christ as Liberator, Savior, Friend, and the One who grants forgiveness, newness of life, unspeakable joy, and hope. Their God is the One who makes "all things new." Their yearning for his "new heavens and new earth" constrains them to love and serve others on Christ's behalf. Their concept of the gospel is not confined to proclamation, for it involves both word and deed. Their struggle is to make sure that the good news of Jesus is not denied to any human. This is what mission is all about!

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**Creation.** The fact that biblical revelation begins with the creation account demonstrates the foundational importance of the creation doctrine to all other biblical doctrines, including redemption. The divine design and majestic glory of the created order witness to the character, sovereignty, and lordship of the Creator (Ps. 19:1–6), which are critical issues in the outworking and understanding of his mission purpose (*MISSIO DEI*). Humankind, as male and female, uniquely created in the image of the Creator, is seen to be the apex of creation and focus of this purpose. To humankind is given the right to rule over and subdue the earth and its creatures and to tend and take care of their natural environment, responsibilities for which they are still accountable (Gen. 1:26–30; 2:15; Ps. 8:3–8).

The FALL OF HUMANKIND through the temptation of another created being (Satan) radically impacted all of creation and defined the mission of God for human history. Redemption of elect humanity and the restoration of the Creator's glory in them constitute the ultimate divine purposes, as decreed before the creation itself (Eph. 1:4–14; Rev. 13:8). An age-long conflict with Satan, the rebellious archenemy of his sovereign Creator, is the context for *missio Dei*. In his passionate efforts to steal glory from the Creator, including God's exclusive right to be worshiped, and to usurp God's place of authority over the created order, the enemy seeks to seduce humankind to worship other beings and objects in the created order. Such idolatry and the moral and spiritual perversions which accompany it, are the ultimate manifestation of humanity's depravity and need for the redemption and regeneration offered in the gospel (Rom. 1:18–32; 3:9–31).

The redemptive purposes of God include not only humankind but also the created order. Cursed as a result of the fall (Gen. 3:17–18), yet still an object of his care and concern (Jon. 4:11), creation is described as groaning and eagerly expecting the final redemption of humankind. The curse will be removed "at the renewal of all things" and creation itself will fulfill its divine purpose (Rom. 8:18–25; Matt. 19:28). Ultimately, the present created order will be cleansed, providing the perfect eternal abode for the redeemed to live in the presence of their Creator and redeemer forever (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:10–13; Rev. 21:1).

An understanding of the biblical doctrines of creation, man and woman, and *missio Dei* is es-



sential to the communication and reception of the gospel of redemption. However, the historical development of distinctive human cultures and worldviews has demonstrated the rejection of revealed truth about God, including the revelation in creation itself (Rom. 1:18–25). The result is evident in a plethora of grossly inaccurate cosmogonies, from fanciful myths about capricious deities to atheistic dialectical materialism.

In some cultural contexts, a good starting point of contact for the gospel is the doctrine of creation. Paul's address to the pagan philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:24–31) is a classic biblical case. Contemporary missionaries working among animistic tribal groups have demonstrated the effectiveness of starting with the creation account in building a foundation for the gospel. The monistic pantheism of the Hindu-Buddhistic worldview and the pantheistic naturalism and world consciousness of the Chinese worldview, especially Taoism, demand a careful explanation and understanding of the nature and purpose of creation and humanity's role and relationship to it and to a personal Creator and Redeemer.

In the latter half of the twentieth century certain exponents of liberation theology sought to integrate creation and mission around an ecological and political agenda leading to a radical redefinition of the church's mission. Rooted in the premise that creation presupposes salvation, the church's task is to seek the liberation of the earth from the oppressive policies of Western industrialization and the liberation of the poor from political oppression and economic deprivation. Creation and salvation have been merged into a struggle for political justice, economic equality, and ecological responsibility.

A comprehensive, biblically informed mission theology will include a clearly defined doctrine of creation, including a doctrine of stewardship of the earth and its resources. But mission is not ultimately informed by or subservient to the creation doctrine. Mission flows from a biblical understanding of the Creator's purposes for his creation and proclaims his sovereign lordship over his creation. The biblical mandate is to preach the good news to all creation (Mark 16:15), resulting in a body of regenerated human beings who are newborn creations in Jesus Christ (Heb. 12:23; 2 Cor. 5:17) and who live in the expectation of a new creation to the glory of the Creator (Rev. 21:1–4).

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**Bibliography.** W. A. Dyrness, *Let the Earth Rejoice! A Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission*; J. J. Kritzing, *Missionalia* 19:1 (April 1991): 4–19; Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis*; P. M. Steyne, *In Step With the God of the Nations: A Biblical Theology of Missions*; D. C. van Zyl, *Missionalia* 19:3 (November 1991): 203–14.

**The Cultural Mandate.** The expression “cultural mandate” refers to God's command to Adam and Eve to “rule over” creation (Gen. 1:28), meaning to share with God in the management of all that he had made. This mandate was issued before the Fall occurred (Gen. 3), and obviously it pre-dates the missionary mandate (the GREAT COMMISSION; Matt. 28:18–20). The cultural mandate remains in force and its implications for Christian mission are important.

The cultural mandate has several parts. The first is the command to “be fruitful, increase in number, and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). This is the basic command to build community with the building blocks of marriage and family (Gen. 2:24). Here lies the foundation of human society.

The second part has to do with the naming of the animals (Gen. 2:19–20), where Adam's mental and aesthetic gifts along with his decision-making capacity were called into action. Implied in the command to name the animals is humankind's responsibility to study the universe, unlock its secrets, use judiciously its potential, and glorify God for the beauty and variety of creation.

The third part of the cultural mandate appears in Genesis 2:15, where Adam and Eve are placed in a bountiful garden and told to “work it and take care of it.” Properly tended, the garden would provide amply for their physical needs and those of their descendants. Implied in this command is our responsibility for the natural environment, the air, soil, water, plants, and minerals, which must be diligently cared for and never exploited or misused.

Fourth, the cultural mandate includes the elements of reflection and celebration. This is implied by the fact that when he had finished creating, God evaluated what he had made, declared it to be “good” (Gen. 1:31), and set aside a day to celebrate and enjoy the fruit of his work (Gen. 2:1). So important to God was this element of rest, reflection, and celebration that he explicitly set aside one day in seven in the Ten Commandments given to Israel (Exod. 20:8).

THE FALL OF HUMANKIND occurred (Gen. 3), and since that time members of the human race individually and collectively have transgressed the cultural mandate in every imaginable way. Yet its basic precepts remain intact, and the consequences of disregarding them are visible everywhere. To a bewildered and suffering world Christian mission points back to Genesis, to our first parents' rebellion and to the transgression of God's original mandate, to explain the source of the evils that now plague humanity.

There is still more to the cultural mandate so far as mission is concerned. Serious reflection on the cultural mandate enlarges the Christian message so that it addresses everything that God made, sin corrupted, and Christ makes new. It propels Christian activity into every area of

## Divine Initiative

human life and every corner of the world to combat evil and falsehood and promote mercy, righteousness, and truth.

The cultural mandate calls for an approach to education that begins with the presupposition that the world belongs to God and he has mandated how humans should relate to one another and treat his whole creation. Reflection on the cultural mandate leads Christians to see that their responsibilities before God are not limited to activities in the institutional church, nor to personal and private spirituality. They include all the arenas of life, the social, economic, political and scientific. In each of these arenas they honor God as they promote truth and mercy and apply scriptural principles to the affairs of life.

Tension has sometimes developed between those who stress the cultural mandate with its broad implications for Christian involvement and those who stress the missionary mandate (Matt. 28:18–20) that emphasizes preaching, making disciples, and establishing churches. The following clarifications and distinctions need to be made.

First, in a fallen world, people need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ more than they need anything else. Therefore the missionary mandate takes precedence over the cultural mandate. But this does not mean that the missionary mandate replaces or swallows up the cultural mandate. Christians are obliged to obey both mandates, though in the order of missionary activity the proclamation of the gospel to the unsaved is primary.

Second, the witness of Christian lives in which Christ is honored as Lord over all affairs is highly important for the advance of the gospel. Likewise, deeds of mercy to the suffering and needy bear eloquent testimony to God's mercy in Christ. But our best works are flawed by imperfections and can never substitute for the word-proclamation of the gospel of God's grace in Christ. The Christian life may give "flesh" to the word, but the Word is always necessary because it points beyond human imperfections to the perfect Savior Jesus Christ.

Third, churches as institutions ought to focus on the task of proclaiming the gospel and discipling believers. Church members, acting in conjunction with the broader Christian community, should be taught and encouraged to apply the teachings of the gospel to social, cultural, and political issues. Even when the Christian community as a whole is derelict in its cultural obligations, it is unwise and inappropriate for organized churches to plunge into matters that are not their primary responsibility, because the specific task of churches is defined by the missionary mandate rather than the cultural mandate.

Christian day schools and colleges play a vital role in educating succeeding generations of children and youth to enter life with a conscious recognition of their calling to be salt and light in all spheres of life (Matt. 5:12–16). Christian education's primary responsibility lies in the area of the cultural mandate. Nevertheless, Christian education takes place in the New Testament age which is dominated by the missionary mandate. For that reason, Christian teachers should impress upon students the missionary claims of the gospel and the urgency of world evangelization.

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**Bibliography.** J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*; J. Bolt, *Christian and Reformed Today*; D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*; N. Carr, *The Origins and Purpose of Life: Genesis 1–11*; D. J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating the Gospel Cross-Culturally*.

**Divine Initiative.** The Scriptures present God as the one ultimate and Supreme Being in the universe. Before anything else existed, God eternally "was." It was within the depths of his Being that the idea of what would exist arose and when it pleased him those ideas took concrete external shape at the word of his command. God created the supernatural world and the physical world in which the human race would be placed. This is the import of Genesis 1:1, which says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" and all of this speaks to the question of God's initiative. If God had not taken the initiative there would have been no reality external to himself. He conceived, developed, and executed the plan that gave reality to what we now experience as our universe and our place in it.

The initiative of God did not end when he had accomplished the initial creation of all things. By a continuous act of his power God sustains everything in existence. Created, contingent being has no power to keep itself in existence; were it not for the sustaining word and will of God, all that is would lapse back into its primal nonexistence and be no more. In addition to this God has retained his right to intervene creatively in his universe for the governance and good of his creation. He does this by sometimes working through the orderly structures he has established and sometimes by contravening them for a higher good (see MIRACLES). After all, the orderly structures (the so-called natural laws) are all part of a larger moral order and subserve those higher purposes. So God's intervention in his own universe is not a violation of independently functioning laws but rather a rearranging of those orderly structures to serve a higher end. The Deists of the eighteenth century down to and including the liberal theologians of our own day deny that God (if there is a personal God) would do this sort of thing. They assert that after the

world was established, God left it to work out its own purposes, especially the purposes of human beings, who now have the ultimate initiative. Scripture does not teach this. It allows that human beings do exercise initiative and may genuinely act as responsible beings, but it is all within the matrix of God's overall sustenance and management (providence). We may exercise initiative, but not ultimately.

Scripture is replete with examples of God's taking the initiative. God made the world; God said "Let the land produce vegetation" (Gen. 1:11) and it obeyed him. God created the human pair and established his relationship with them, setting limits upon them. God judged them when they failed. The overwhelming number of times God's initiative is spoken of in Scripture has caused some modern theologians actually to *define* God as a "God who acts" (as opposed to the pagan gods who could do nothing) and the Bible as the "Book of the Acts of God" (G. Ernest Wright; R. H. Fuller).

From a missiological point of view, the concept of the divine initiative most directly relates to God's self-disclosure with a view to bringing fallen humans into a redemptive relation with himself. God has called his people to share this good news of redemption with every living soul. God took the initiative in seeking out the lost progenitors of our race and all of their descendants. He established a plan of salvation that we may enter into, he commissions people to proclaim this message, he works on the hearts of the unredeemed to awaken a sense of need, and he regenerates those who believe. The apostle Paul worked out an entire philosophy of history based on this conception of God, as he explained to the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17. God made the world and everything in it (17:24); he needs nothing, "because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else" (17:25); he made all nations from one person "and determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (17:26); and he "did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (17:27). Paul sees the redemptive purposes of God at work everywhere and himself as an AMBASSADOR OF GOD calling everyone, everywhere to repentance and conscious faith in Jesus Christ. He also sees it as the task of the church to share in this ministry and proclaim the saving message of the gospel to those who are lost (see MISSIONARY TASK).

Those who proclaim the gospel may be sure that God has gone before them. He who made and sustains this universe and who initiated the plan of salvation for lost humanity did not suddenly stop working and leave it all up to human efforts. He certainly includes those efforts, but, thankfully, they are within the context of his own

creative involvement and activity. In the end, it is not "he who plants nor he who waters [who] is anything, but only God who made it grow" (1 Cor. 3:7). We are fellow-workers with God (1 Cor. 3:9).

God has gone before us in at least four ways and those who go out to labor in God's field may be certain that God has been there first—and is still there at work (1 Cor. 3:9; Matt. 9:38). First, God has preceded us by making a knowledge of himself available to everyone (Pss. 19:1–4; 22:27, 28; 48:10; John 1:1–5, 9; Rom. 1:18, 19, 28). Second, God has revealed significant aspects of his nature through GENERAL REVELATION, such as his righteousness (Rom. 1:32), his kindness (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17), his power (Ps. 29:3–10; Rom. 1:20), his majesty and glory (Ps. 8:1–4; 19:1), and his truth (Rom. 1:21, 25). Third, God has written his moral requirements into the human heart and no matter how badly they may be distorted by sin, they are still there and may be appealed to. C. S. Lewis called these "the Tao" in *The Abolition of Man* and finds the basis for all natural forms of religion in them. These moral requirements include the need to worship (Acts 17:22, 23), the need to seek God (Acts 17:27), fundamental moral principles (Matt. 5:47; Rom. 2:13–16), and a sense of impending judgment upon wrongdoing (Rom. 1:21–25, 32). Finally, God's *will* to save is also made known, although, rather obviously, the *facts of salvation* are not. They may only be known through special revelation (Acts 17:27; Rom. 2:5–11; Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 3:3; 5:4, 8, 9).

The command to proclaim the gospel is a universal one (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8) and we may confidently build upon what we know God has been doing before our arrival. Sometimes it is just a general work that God has been doing and we must labor hard in the face of ridicule and rejection, as Paul did in Athens (Acts 17:32, 33). Sometimes God has been preparing the ground very specifically and our call may be to a specific area (Macedonia, Acts 16:10) or a specific individual (Cornelius, Acts 19:19–22). Either way the divine initiative precedes ours and assures us that our labors will not be in vain.

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**Bibliography.** A. D. Clarke and B. W. Winter, eds., *One God, One Lord*; B. Demarest, *General Revelation*; C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*; L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*; B. G. Nicholls, ed., *The Unique Christ in Our Pluralist World*; G. E. Wright and R. H. Fuller, *The Book of the Acts of God*.

**Fall of Humankind, The.** The biblical teaching concerning the fall of humankind is found in Genesis 3; Romans 5:12–19; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22; and 1 Timothy 2:12–13. Genesis 1 and 2 record the conditions of the "golden age" when humans, created in the image of God with

## Fall of Humankind, The

mandates for dominion over and stewardship of creation (Gen. 1:26–28), were given only one limitation. “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Gen 2:16–17). God sets the prohibition in the context of his limitless provision and gives no rationale other than a declaration of the consequences: death.

The narrative of temptation and sin (Gen. 3:1–6) introduces Satan as the “crafty” tempter, the serpent. He leads Eve to doubt God’s goodness and truthfulness, to allow her appetites to transgress God’s law limits, and to act on her desires in willful rebellion against God. She further compounds her sin by persuading her husband to sin (1 Tim. 2:12–13).

The immediate consequences of sin were entry of sin and guilt into the formerly perfect world. The couple experiences guilt, when their eyes are opened, they know shame, and they hide from the presence of God (Gen. 3:7–11). Immediately they “die” spiritually and in old age they will die physically. In fact, the whole creation becomes subject to frustration and decay (Rom. 8:20–22). As a result, a mitigated but real curse falls on Adam and Eve and all humankind. There is multiplied pain in child bearing and a constant tension in Eve’s relation to her husband. She will desire to master him, but his role will be to have the leadership in the home (Gen. 3:16). The man will only by much toil wrest a living from the soil, a task of doubtful meaningfulness, since his end is physical death, in which he returns to the same soil from which he was taken.

The greatest consequence, however, is the introduction of original sin into human history (Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:21–22). Each succeeding generation will be born spiritually dead, lacking original right standing with God, charged with the guilt of the first human’s sin, with a sin nature driving them toward a life of sin, and with only one prospect for eternity: eternal condemnation (Gen. 4:1–8, 19; 6:2, 5; Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:9).

The account of the fall of humankind does offer a glimmer of hope, however. The “seed of the woman” would be final victor in the continuing spiritual battle with the serpent’s seed. Addressing the serpent God declares the offspring of the woman will “crush his head” (Gen. 3:15). The rest of biblical revelation reveals that Jesus Christ is that offspring and in his death and resurrection he won the victory everyone who believes may claim as his or her own.

ANIMISM, as well as a number of the world’s great religions, have myths of origin that include an account of the fall of humankind. These accounts to a greater or lesser extent agree in detail with the Genesis account. The student of comparative religion may posit “nostalgia for the be-

ginning of things” as a “permanent part of man’s collective memory.” He or she will conclude that humans in many cultures “once positing it as a golden age” will then have to “explain the accident that produced the present situation” in which there is both physical and moral evil (Ries, 1987, 267). Since Genesis 1–3 presents itself not as a religiously generated myth but as a historical account of beginnings, it is better to explain all the similarities between Genesis and religious mythology as evidence of humankind’s common historical memory, which under the influence of the fall yields a variety of versions of what actually happened. The early chapters of Genesis then provide the missionaries with both opportunity and challenges as they approach other cultures and religions with the gospel. The opportunity is “bridge building” to the culture by dealing in the area of origins from Genesis 1–3. The challenge is to effectively correct the religionist’s views on these matters so that clearer understanding of the truth of biblical revelation results.

Among animists many narratives of the fall may be found. These often stress the closeness of God and humanity in the “golden age,” a theme congruent with that of Genesis. The “accident,” which introduces death into the world, though sometimes a sin, in many instances is not. What brings the fall may be disturbing the gods with the noise of grinding millet (the Dogon of Mali) or an accident like falling asleep (Aranda of Australia). It may be a matter of an original archetypal message of immortality being changed in transmission or not passed on by the messenger (Ashanti of Ghana). It may occur because of human frailty. A Maasai myth tells of a package that humans are given by God and forbidden to open. However, their curiosity drives them to open it. In all these instances, biblical revelation’s moral and salvation history framework for the fall must be a necessary corrective.

Hinduism knows no definite occasion on which the fall of humankind occurred, only a gradual decline in the second of four ages of humankind’s history. The imputation of guilt from the first human to all succeeding generations is similar in principle to the concept of *samsara* and karma, though the difference is very important. In Scripture, it is only the guilt of Adam’s sin, not effects of the sinfulness of each succeeding generation, which is imputed to the individual. Neither Buddhism nor Chinese traditional thought contains myths of the fall of humankind. Islam’s Koran follows Genesis 1–3 fairly closely. It does provide an explanation for why Satan (*Iblis*) fell: his refusal to bow to Adam. While the guilt for the fall is imputed to the devil, humans only experience the sanctions and consequences.

Original sin is minimized to the level of weakness, the habitual.

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**Bibliography.** M. Eliade, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*; J. Ries, *ER*, 5:256–67; G. G. Van Groningen, *EDBT*, pp. 240–41.

**God.** The relationship between the Christian doctrine of God and mission is best explored within the context of salvation history. By tracing that path we see that mission is in fact God's gracious, loving response to the problem of human SIN. Every cardinal attribute of God is brought to bear on the problem of sin (*see also* DIVINE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD).

We begin with an attempt to assess the range or scope of God's salvific desire. Using only the New Testament, we would have no difficulty concluding that God's desire is universal (1 Tim. 2:1–6). He has acted to reconcile the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19) and has gathered a people for himself from among the Gentiles, that is, from all nations (Acts 15:14). Most of the Old Testament, however, seems to be the history of God's dealings with but one special people, Israel. Nevertheless, God's desire to save all people of all nations can be argued from several Old Testament perspectives (*see also* OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY OF MISSION).

First, it should be noted that God's involvement in human affairs has not been limited to any one part of the race. This unlimited scope of God's interaction with humankind is evident in several aspects of CREATION. Scripture clearly portrays God as the Creator and Sustainer of the world and in particular the human race (Gen. 1:1–2:19; 14:19; Isa. 40:28). The intent of the command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28; 9:1) is obviously universal as were the results of obedience. Thus, the repeated affirmation of his ownership of creation is justified (1 Sam. 2:1–10; Ps. 24:1; Ps. 50). All peoples are his. All depend upon his custodial activity, that which sustains existence as we know it (Ps. 104:14).

The unlimited scope of God's dealings with humanity can also be seen in his sweeping and universal judgment of sin. The effects of Adam and Eve's fall were not limited to one people or ethnic group. As humankind began to spread out across the face of the earth, the effects of sin were carried with them and intensified (Gen. 3:1–7; 4:1–12; 6:5–8). At each stage of this devolution, God's response in judgment matched the range of sin's pandemic spread. In Genesis 3:14–19 judgment was meted out to each participant: the serpent, Eve, and Adam. Similarly, the flood brought divine wrath to bear on all sinners (Gen. 6:5–6). God's response is no less inclusive when sin once again engulfs humankind, as reported in Genesis 10–11.

But God's promises and implementation of restoration are also universal. In concert with each wave of judgment, God keeps hope alive with the promise of reconciliation. After the fall, in the midst of God's condemnation of the initial sin, there is a promise of the Seed, a descendent of the woman who would "crush the head of the serpent." Many have referred to Genesis 3:15 as the first statement (protevangelium) of God's ultimate answer to sin, anticipating Christ's redemptive work on the cross. After the flood, God reestablishes his relationship to humans by entering into a covenant with the whole of humanity (Gen. 9:9–17). That the covenant with Noah has universal implications can be seen from the inclusive language (*every* living creature, all generations). After the affair at Babel, God calls out Abraham and promises that through him *all* nations will be blessed.

Thus, we see that the pattern established by God's general intercourse with humanity also applies to his judgment of sin. God's concern for reconciliation extends to every people (Pss. 67:4; 82:8; 96:10; Isa. 2:4; Joel 3:12; Mic. 4:3).

God not only desires salvation universally, he has taken concrete, practical steps to accomplish that. From the Old Testament perspective this is reflected primarily in the election of Israel (*see also* DIVINE ELECTION). God enters a covenant with one person and his descendants. However, these developments alter nothing with respect to God's universal salvific will. In fact, the election of Israel is best viewed as a continuation of God's interaction with all nations. Each of the promises given in response to the first two stages of sin's spread, although universal in scope, do anticipate narrower foci of implementation (Gen. 3:15, the seed; Gen. 9:26, the blessing of Shem).

The *locus classicus* for the concept of election is Deuteronomy 7:6–8 (*see also* 9:4–6; 10:14ff.; 14:2). Here we see that in being chosen Israel is called a holy people and treasured possession. This description gives us significant insight into the nature of the election.

No human standard was applied and used as the basis for election. We see that Israel is not chosen on the basis of special social characteristics or cultic and moral integrity. In fact, we are told that they were the least among the nations. We know that they were just as vulnerable to the effects of sin as other peoples. So it is wholly because of God's love and grace that Israel is afforded such a privileged position. And yet, they were also not the only people to be favored by God. The nations remain in the purview of election. Deuteronomy 7:8 links election to the promise given to Abraham and with that to the universal scope of God's redemptive purpose.

The purpose of election also rests squarely within the context of God's universal design. The intended result was for Israel to be a blessing

## God

and a light for the nations (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; Gal. 3:8). Election does not only imply privilege, but also responsibility. The history of Israel is an extension of God's dealings with the nations to which Israel is to be light (Exod. 19:5-6).

Thus, it comes as no surprise that others were allowed to participate in the benefits of that privilege (Gen. 14:19, Melchizedech; Gen. 16:13, Hagar [Egyptian]; Exod. 12:38, 'mixed multitude'; Deut. 31:12 'foreigner'). In fact, there is so much material of this sort that many have inferred that Israel clearly understood the universal salvific implications of its election.

As we continue to follow the course of salvation history, we recognize that the developments described in the New Testament are largely the result of God having completed his plan of redemption. With the coming of Christ, we have the concretization of salvation, a new covenant, and a new people. Christ fulfills the promise made by God, initiates a new covenant, calls into existence a new people of God, and inaugurates the Christian mission (activation of witness).

In Galatians 4:4 we are told that when the "fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem those who were under the law." The idea here is not that time has simply run its course, but that an appointed time or the fulfillment of the promise had arrived. God himself initiates the final stage in redemption history by sending his Son into the world.

The context for our understanding of these events is the one already established by the Old Testament, namely, that of the Abrahamic promise, the covenants, and the anticipated blessing of all nations (*see also* ABRAHAMIC COVENANT). This is exactly the approach taken by Paul in Galatians 3. In Galatians 3:1-5 he raises the fundamental question of just how they received the gift of redemption (which is now a concrete reality). Their own experience provided an obvious answer. They received the gift of the Spirit as a result of their obedient response to the message of faith. In Galatians 3:6-9 Paul supplements this line of argument by appealing to Scripture (Gen. 15:6), showing that it was Abraham's willingness to have faith in God's plan and not some level of religious performance, which led to God declaring him righteous. That leads to the conclusion that the true children of Abraham are those (any, including the Gentiles) who have faith (Gen. 17:7; Rom. 9:6ff.).

The promise made to Abraham is referred to here as the gospel (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). So it is faith, not ethnicity or keeping the law (3:10ff.), which leads to redemption. The law did not change the conditions of the promise (Gal. 3:15), it only revealed sin as sin. The object of faith is Christ, God's plan, as accomplished by Christ (Gal. 3:10-14), which is precisely what the promise envisioned. This fact is established by

highlighting the singular of the word "seed." The promise was not intended to include all the descendants of Abraham, but *the* descendant, Christ (Gal. 3:16) and all those who are in him (Gal. 3:26-29). As in the Old Testament, the scope of the promise is universal (Gal. 3:8).

The Book of Acts picks up the theme of unrestricted mission. In 1:8 we see Jesus diverting attention from the question of time and placing it on the disciples' responsibilities. These included worldwide outreach. Consider the similarities to the GREAT COMMISSION passages.

But not only has God kept his promise by sending the Son, he also enables the new people of God to fulfill their responsibility by sending the Spirit. Even a cursory reading of the Book of Acts impresses one with the prominence and importance of the HOLY SPIRIT. And here we see how the work of the Spirit relates to that of the other members of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit generates the missionary spirit. The drive toward spontaneous expansion comes only after Pentecost. The missionary spirit is first and foremost the spirit of sacrifice. The early Christians were willing to put their very lives on the line (Acts 15:26), give up everything familiar, family, homes (Acts 13:3), rather than retain the best for themselves, as is often the case today.

The missionary spirit is also a spirit of courage. Consider the way in which the apostles faced imprisonment, beatings, and a host of other dangers. The challenges were, of course, not just physical. They were willing to challenge existing paradigms and power structures (Acts 4:31; 21:3). Are we any less in need of courage?

The missionary spirit is the spirit of love. First Timothy 1:5 teaches that the sum of all teaching is love—unconditional love for all.

The Holy Spirit guides the missionary outreach of the early church. This was done in several ways. First, the Holy Spirit is presented as the initiator of missionary outreach (Acts 13:1ff.). Second, the Spirit inspires the proclamation of the gospel (Acts 10). Third, the Spirit guides the course of missions (Acts 16:9-10).

The Holy Spirit achieves the results. In John 16:8 Jesus teaches that it is the Spirit who opens the eyes of the world to its own sinfulness. There is no natural awareness of guilt. Consider the sermons given in Acts. They reflect a dependence on the Spirit in that (1) they call for a decision (Acts 2:28), (2) they promise forgiveness (Acts 2:28), and (3) they warn about the coming judgment.

Having followed the implementation of God's plan of salvation, we conclude that it is God himself who has been and is engaged in missions. Several decades ago Georg Vicedom popularized the term *MISSIO DEI* in a book with that title published in 1961. In it he suggested that he was

using the phrase in order to underscore the fact that mission is above all God's work, that is, God is the active subject of mission. In that case mission is actually an extension of God's salvific desire and activity. Vicedom goes on to challenge his readers by suggesting that if our assumption that God desires mission because he is himself involved in mission is correct, then the church can be God's instrument and tool only if it allows itself to be used by him (p. 13). This may well be a needed reminder at the beginning of the twenty-first century. God, and not human agencies, is in charge of the mission of the church.

EDWARD ROMMEN

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**Human Condition in World Religions.** Common to most religions is the notion that human beings—and, in many cases, the cosmos at large—suffer from some kind of undesirable condition. Violence, murders, and wars; natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods; the inability of people to get along with each other; illness and death; a sense of anxiety and alienation—all of these indicate that something is seriously amiss in our world. A sense of longing for the transcendent suggests a reality beyond the world of ordinary experience, and religions characteristically hold that our ultimate well-being is linked to this transcendent realm.

However, in spite of these common themes the various religions offer quite different diagnoses of the human predicament. Monotheistic religions generally regard the problem in terms of an unsatisfactory relationship between God the Creator and his creatures. Central to Christianity, for example, is the idea of SIN as deliberate rejection of God and his righteous ways. The biblical view of sin must be understood with reference to a holy and righteous God to whom human beings are morally accountable. Sin includes not only individual acts that transgress God's righteous standard but also a condition or state of rebellion against God, resulting in alienation from God. The original sin of Adam and Eve resulted in a condition of sinfulness that has been passed on to all humanity (see also FALL OF HUMANKIND). The suffering and evils we experi-

ence are all due ultimately to sin and its tragic consequences.

JUDAISM, rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, has focused extensively on the PROBLEM OF EVIL and suffering. Although it acknowledges the heart of the problem as human moral failure in committing sins against God, Judaism generally does not share Christianity's belief in original sin and total depravity. Rather, a more optimistic view of human nature stresses original virtue and the capacity, with God's gracious help, of working toward progressive moral development.

ISLAM holds that human beings have erred by straying from the right path of obedience to Allah. But sin in Islam is more a weakness or deficiency in human character rather than the radical corruption of human nature. People are subject to temptation from Iblis (the devil), but it is within their power to resist and remain faithful to Allah. The suffering and trials we encounter in this life are regarded not only as punishment for individual sins but also as Allah's way of testing the sincerity and faithfulness of his followers.

Quite different views of the human predicament are found in religious traditions originating in the Indian subcontinent. Here the problem is *samsara*, the wearisome and repetitive cycle of rebirths through which one transmigrates in accordance with *karma*. Birth leads inevitably to death. Death in turn inevitably results in rebirth in another body, and it is the impersonal cosmic law of *karma* that determines the conditions of each existence. HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, and JAINISM, although differing in certain key respects, all accept the framework of *samsara* and *karma*, and thus the religious goal came to be identified with liberation from *samsara* by rendering ineffective the principle of *karma*.

In spite of this common framework, however, various traditions within Hinduism and Buddhism give different views on the nature of the problem. Often the root problem is identified with ignorance (*avidya*), or holding false views about reality resulting in *samsara*. But even here various differences emerge. In Advaita Vedanta Hinduism *samsara* arises from and is rooted in false views about the nature of Brahman and the relation of the self to Brahman; in Theravada Buddhism, by contrast, it is the false belief in an enduring, substantial self (*atman*) which, when combined with desire and craving, results in suffering and rebirth. Buddhism identifies the human predicament with the claim that all existence is characterized by pervasive suffering, dissatisfaction, and impermanence.

In Chinese religious traditions, or at least non-Buddhist traditions, the human predicament is not understood in terms of the cycle of rebirths so much as failure to attain the proper balance and harmony within the social nexus,

## Idolatry

which in turn is patterned after the cosmic harmony of Heaven and the Tao. Proper alignment and harmony—within the person, the familial and social contexts, the realm of ancestors and spirits, nature, and the cosmos at large—result in human flourishing. Disharmony on any level can result in the suffering and problems encountered in ordinary life. TAOISM in particular emphasizes balance and proper alignment with the Tao, the Way or eternal principle immanent within the cosmos. Problems in society are due to the imposition of artificial constraints that prohibit the free expression of life in accordance with the Tao. CONFUCIANISM, by contrast, has been concerned with cultivating proper relationships and order within society based on virtue and moral character. With Mencius, and later Chu Hsi, Confucianism has emphasized the inherent goodness of human nature; evil results from corrupt external influences. On a popular folk level, the reality of the spirit world and the importance of proper alignment with spiritual powers is indicated by widespread practices of divination, ancestral rites, and recognition of a vast array of deities, spirits, and demons that can influence life in this world for good or ill.

Animistic traditions and primal religions, which do not make a sharp distinction between the world of ordinary experience and a transcendent spiritual world, attribute problems in everyday life such as illness, death, natural disasters, wars, and infertility to various spiritual powers believed to be capable of impacting affairs in this life. Thus, great care is taken to maintain proper rituals through which the many ancestors, demons, spirits, and gods who hold such power can be appeased.

The recognition that something is profoundly wrong with the way things are can be a point of contact between the Christian gospel and followers of other traditions. Augustine captured this sense of alienation well in his statement at the beginning of the *Confessions*: “You [God] have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless and will find no rest until they rest in you.”

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**Idolatry.** Idolatry is a major concern in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament alone there are twelve different words relating to idols or idolaters. In the New Testament, idol (*eidōlon*—or one of its cognates) is used almost thirty times. Under the old covenant, idolatry was strictly forbidden (Exod. 20: 4–5; Lev. 26:1; Deut. 5:8–9) and in the new, believers are warned

to avoid any participation with the practices associated with idol worship (1 Cor. 8:7–12; 10:7; 1 John 5:21).

According to some historians, idolatry had its origin in the ancient kingdom of Babylon. This would seem logical in that it is the area of one of the oldest civilizations in recorded history. However, idolatry is instinctive in the heart of fallen people (Rom. 1:21–23) and could probably be assumed to have existed long before recorded civilization. There were at least two major forms of idolatry in the ancient Near East which influenced Israel: the worship of false gods through images and ceremony; and the false worship of the true God by means of images and pagan-influenced ceremony.

The basic concept behind idolatry is assigning divine attributes to some power other than the true God. Images are used as representations of the force or personality being worshiped and often reflect the divine attribute most coveted by the worshiper. For this reason, in paganism, multiple gods are represented because it is inconceivable that one being could possess all of the forces and mysteries witnessed by humans.

Israel, like all of fallen humanity, fell into idolatry because they sought a god with whom they could identify. The true God of Israel was invisible, mysterious, transcendent, and required behavior consistent with his own nature. Idols could be seen, designed to meet human expectations, and manipulated. They were morally weak like the humans who served them. Thus, the natural instinct was to gravitate toward that which was more consistent with human ideas and standards. The divine self-revelation given to Israel was so far beyond human design and concepts that Israel was easily seduced by the pagan ideas and religions which surrounded them.

Likewise, New Testament believers, most of whom had come from pagan lifestyles before their conversion, would be prone to return to the comforts of the familiar and humanly conceived. New Testament writers often warned of the dangers of the surrounding new religious systems which practiced idolatry in many forms. Paul implied that idolatry was more than just having an image before which to bow. In Ephesians 5:5, he stated that a covetous man is an idolater. Covetousness is the improper desire of some material object or place of power. In this sense, materialism can be identified as idolatry. Many Christians who would scoff at the idea of bowing before a statue or image are none the less prone to covet material goods. It is not uncommon to hear of Christians who have replaced dedication to God with the pursuit of money, career, entertainment, or other things of only temporal value.

For missionaries, idolatry can come in two forms. On the one hand, they will confront cultures (especially Hindu and Buddhist cultures)



which openly participate in idol worship through images and ceremonies. Learning to communicate the invisible, transcendent, omnipotent, and sovereign God to those who are conditioned to relate to hundreds of deities is a significant challenge. It must be remembered that these missionaries do not have the luxury of the Old Testament prophets who lived in theocratic Israel. They cannot march into these foreign lands and chop down idols. They must convey the true and living God in a manner consistent with the New Testament commission.

The other form of idolatry may come from within their own hearts. Missionaries often sacrifice material goods, family, comforts, and human securities. In this sacrificial lifestyle, the temptation to become covetous or to substitute God's work for more humanistic ideals of living is a serious enticement. Looking to medical doctors, savings accounts, or human advice in place of looking to God is idolatry. It needs to be remembered that God may use any of these human tools to bless and encourage his servants but they are no substitute for God himself.

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**Image of God.** “Imaging God” means showing God's attributes in actions and attitudes, words and works. God designed humans to fellowship with him, obey him, administer for him, and imitate him, including procreating more images, naming, prophesying, and influencing for righteousness. Thus work of all types, “secular” and “sacred,” images God, especially when energized with the Spirit's loving power that brings all things into submission to Christ (Ps. 8:4–6; Col. 1:15–20).

God created humans as his images or “royal representatives” to glorify him. “Image” implies an audience, so imaging God was in itself a missionary endeavor. God assigned his royal priestly representatives to spread out and subdue the earth, including all the wilderness outside the Garden and the rebellious creature who would tempt the new couple to sin (Rom. 16:19–20).

God instituted the family as imaging procreation and organization, relating creatively and ruling beneficently. From the very beginning God designed individuals and families to glorify him as ambassadors, royal priests and prophets, “missionaries.” The only thing that changed through time under Israel and then via the GREAT COMMISSION was the specificity of the message God's people were to take to the world. The core message has always been “follow the true God like we do, and let us show you the way.”

**Image as a Missionary Polemic against IDOLATRY.** This missionary message directly conflicted with the message of the images of other nations. Images from wood, clay, and metal conveyed the message, “worship our gods.” The creation account displays the superiority of persons as God's living images over Baal's lifeless images. Worshiping God with manufactured idols was futile (Exod. 20:4–5). The polemical intent of Genesis 1:26–28 may be paraphrased: People make images of Baal. Can you show me an image Baal has made of himself? God made humans as images of himself, so far superior to images of Baal as God himself is superior to Baal! Individually and corporately, in words and works, we show what God is like. This is our responsibility. Don't reduce your beautiful complexity to a statue! How can an idol ever replace you: living, breathing, walking, talking, authoritative representatives of our God?!

The polemic continues in Genesis 5:1–3, when God's image procreates in its own image—what image of Baal can do that? And in Genesis 9:6 the Lord states his justice in a manner the surrounding nations could easily understand: “If you attack the image, you attack God.” When asked to summarize righteousness, Christ essentially asserts the converse, “If you love the image, you love God” (Matt. 22:37–40; 1 John 4:20–21).

The biblical basis of civil government rests on the foundation that we each represent God to one another. Every person continuously images God in basic minimal ways: God's breath blows through our being; God's life flows in our blood; God's light shines in our eyes. Every person must be treated with dignity as valuable to God. From the preborn to the terminally ill, from the profoundly handicapped to the profoundly rebellious, every person images God and may not be violated with impunity (James 3:9; *see also* PERSON, PERSONHOOD).

The prophets expand this polemic, insisting that individually and corporately Israel is God's image, welded together by God's strength, held upright by his power, decorated by his glory, enlivened by his Spirit-breath. When the nations bow before their images seeking guidance and power, their images remain silent. But when the nations listen to believers (God's living images), through those royal representatives God guides the nations and promises to bless their obedience to his Word with the protection and provision, fecundity and fertility their gods fail to provide them (Isa. 40:18–31; 41:7–10; 41:22–42:1; 57:13–16; Jer. 16:18; Hab. 2:17–19).

Israel images God as children image their parents (e.g., Exod. 4:22; Deut. 32:5–6, 15–20). Israel glorifies God as a missionary to the nations in the same way a good servant accurately represents (glorifies) his or her master (Isa. 44:21–26; 49:3–6). On the other hand, when Israelites

## Israel's Role

worship the images of the nations' gods, they become like those images. The prophets describe an Israel which had become like the idols she worshiped: deaf, dumb, and unclean. Eventually God will cleanse Israel of the idols, removing hearts of stone, and breathing his Spirit into them: a re-creation of Adam, a renewal of God's image (Ezek. 36:25–27; cf. Ps. 115).

**Transformed into the Image.** Today the church images God corporately and individually, as God's Spirit transforms believers into Christ's image. Moses implied that a person fully images God by keeping God's Law (e.g., Deut. 13:17; 14:2). In the New Testament, Christ "is the true image" (2 Cor. 4:4), in part because he perfectly kept the Law. We all are created "as God's image," for the purpose of representing God by fulfilling the Law of Christ.

Because the Spirit writes the Law in our hearts, we have the opportunity to represent God in a more complete way than could persons prior to the NEW COVENANT (Eph. 4:23–24; 2 Cor. 4:1–6). Believers become God's images more fully by Christ's righteousness judicially applied to us and by the Spirit's empowering us to live out Christ's righteousness. In this way we display God's glory shining through our holy love (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 3:10).

Being conformed to the image of Christ is inherently evangelistic and missionary (Phil. 1:27–2:16). As we act more every day like a child of our Father, a brother of our Lord, our family resemblance works itself out in all relationships, all activities, undergirding and enabling our witness.

**Children Image Parents.** Imitating God, Adam and Eve procreated a son in their own likeness, as their image (Gen. 5:1–3; Luke 3:38). Children represent their parents by being like them in many ways: physical appearance, values, and will. Believers carry on this responsibility by speaking and acting on God's behalf, sharing his goals and values, mirroring his mighty abilities (Isa. 43:6–7). Our goal is to represent our loving Father perfectly (Matt. 5:45, 48). Our Lord repeatedly said that to look at him was to look at his Father; to honor him was to honor his Father (John 5:19–27; 14:9). Hebrews emphasizes the parent-child relationship as central to the concept of image: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb. 1:2–5; 2:6–13). In loving actions we honor our Father; in unrighteous actions we dishonor him by grotesque caricature (1 John 4:12, 20). Persons who behave in an anti-Christ manner may be labeled "children of your father the devil" (John 8:44).

**Corporate Representation.** We image God by functioning together as men and women (Gen. 1:27–28; 1 Cor. 11:7). Every individual represents God at some level, but corporately we image more fully and clearly. A single man and woman

working in godly cooperation with one another more fully represent God than either working alone. The two married and parenting godly offspring represent God even more fully. A gathering of godly individuals and families into God's Family, Christ's Body and Bride, shows a watching universe even more fully and clearly what God is like (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 3:6, 9–11; 5:1ff.; Rev. 22:17).

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**Israel's Role.** "Israel" in the Old Testament refers to the patriarch Jacob (Gen. 32:28), to the nation God founded at the exodus from Egypt (Hos. 11:1; Amos 3:1), or to the northern kingdom that split off from Judah after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 12). Here the "role of Israel" will refer to how God's call of the descendants of Jacob to be a holy nation contributed to God's plan for world evangelization.

The Old Testament teaches that God is the Lord of all the earth, not of only one nation. He created all things (Gen. 1; Isa. 40:28) and sustains his world daily (Ps. 104:10–30; cf. Heb. 1:3). As the owner of the earth, the Lord distributed it to all the nations, but he set aside Israel as his own portion (Deut. 32:8–9). This did not mean that Israel was more worthy than any other nation; God's sovereign choice of Israel was based on his promise to Abraham and the patriarchs (Deut. 7:6–8).

How does God's choice of Israel relate to his desire to bring salvation to the world (see Isa. 2:2–4; 19:18–25; 25:6–8; 55:1–7)? When the Lord established the covenant at Sinai, he selected Israel to be his "treasured possession . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:3–6). The covenant with Moses linked with the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT in that the Lord was ready to establish a nation in the land he promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:13–21). The Lord began his work of reconciling the nations by choosing one nation who would be his people, and he would be their God (Exod. 6:7).

Many have debated whether Israel's responsibility to the nations was to be accomplished pas-

sively by obedience to the terms of the covenant or actively by spreading the truth of God throughout the world. The designation “kingdom of priests” might seem to imply a more active role, but even Israel’s priestly role may be viewed as primarily her obedient service (Exod. 19:5) to the Lord. The nations would see God’s acts of justice and mercy in his people and recognize him as the Lord of all the earth (see Deut. 4:5–8; Ps. 98). The prophets stressed Israel’s failure to obey the Lord and its consequences for his reputation among the nations. When the Lord drove Israel out of the land, his holy name was profaned among the nations where Israel had gone (Ezek. 36:22). His name will be vindicated when he fulfills his promise to gather all Israel back to the land and give them a “new heart” (Ezek. 36:22–32).

Israel’s role in God’s plan was not entirely passive, however. First, resident aliens were granted the right to become a part of the covenant community (Exod. 12:48–49). Even those who did not choose to identify with Israel’s religion were still to be treated justly and fairly (Exod. 22:21). Ruth, despite her Moabite background (cf. Deut. 23:3), was incorporated into the people of God (Ruth 4:11–12).

Second, individuals within the nation might find themselves in situations where, like the Israelite slave of Naaman’s wife, they could direct others to the source of salvation (2 Kings 5:1–4, 15–19). Some, like the prophet Jonah, were even called to deliver God’s message directly on foreign soil (Jonah 1:1–2; cf. 1 Kings 17:8–24).

Third, the prophet Isaiah pointed to the ministry of the “Servant of the Lord” or the Messiah, who would fulfill all that Israel failed to be (42:1–7; 49:1–9; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12). The Servant was not only to bring Israel back to the Lord and atone for sin through his own death (Isa. 53:6); he was also to be a “light to the nations,” taking the salvation of the Lord “to the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49:6).

The Lord called Israel to be his holy people, representing his name among all the nations of the earth. They failed in that role, but God’s plans were not thwarted. His written Word, the Scriptures, came to the world through Israel (see Rom. 3:1–2), and also the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, had his physical origins through that nation (Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38).

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**Jonah.** The Book of Jonah makes its point through interaction and dialogue between the prophet and the Lord rather than through direct statements of prophecy or theology. It concerns

more than simply a prophet who ran from God’s call or the miraculous mass repentance of the city of Nineveh. Certainly it is greater in scope than the miracle of the big fish that swallowed Jonah, even though that incident sometimes attracts more attention from those who study it than even the main theme of the book.

Jonah ran from God’s call, something that was meant to make the reader wonder why he would do it. The answer surprises modern readers: It was because Jonah was afraid that the Ninevites would take the message of judgment seriously and repent (4:1–2). To the original readers, though, Jonah’s line of reasoning may not have seemed strange.

Assyria was the major imperial power of Jonah’s day (approximately the first half of the eighth century B.C.), and it was feared throughout the ancient world. For nearly a century, the Assyrian kings had been sending troops into the northern areas of Syria–Palestine and demanding that the local populations submit to Assyrian sovereignty and pay a heavy tribute. Refusal to do so often resulted in the destruction of cities and even nations, with many cruel acts of terror and havoc that devastated the populations. Knowing this, it does not seem so strange that Jonah at first tried to escape the call of God to preach repentance to such a cruel people. The intensity of Jonah’s feelings becomes clear later when he overtly expressed his anger at God for having mercy on the dreaded enemy, even to the point that he asked the Lord to take his life (4:3).

The irony of Jonah’s bitterness, though, stands out even stronger when the reader considers that the Ninevites were not the only object of the Lord’s mercy. God had previously spared Jonah from the belly of the great fish, and Jonah concluded his prayer of thanksgiving with the words, “Salvation comes from the LORD” (2:9). Jonah could be grateful for his own salvation, but he could not accept that God would grant salvation to his bitterest enemy.

The Lord then tried to show Jonah the incongruities of his viewpoint through the lesson of the vine (4:6–11). Jonah cared about the vine because of how it involved him personally, so wouldn’t it be reasonable for God to be concerned in a personal way about a great city with many innocent people and animals in it (4:11)?

We do not learn Jonah’s opinion about God’s rhetorical question, but our responses to that same question will indicate something about our attitude toward God’s plan to bring his salvation to the ends of the earth. First, are we self-centered in our faith? Are we concerned only about ministry that will have some relationship and benefit to us personally? Will it reach the racial or ethnic group that we identify with? Will it improve our life? Will it avoid our having to express love for a group that we would rather hate?

## Judgment

Second, an underlying question is even more pressing: To what extent have we opened our lives to the grace, compassion, and love of God ourselves if we are unwilling to love those who can do nothing for us in return or who have offended us deeply? Ultimately, the Book of Jonah and Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:23–35) are hauntingly similar.

The human heart is unlike the heart of God. That is the message of the Book of Jonah. Jonah recognized that the Lord is "a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (4:2). But Jonah could not express that same love himself. He knew the gospel and had experienced it for himself, but his heart remained closed to his enemies. He was the reluctant missionary who preached and saw results (chaps. 1 and 3), but only because God's Word is effective to accomplish its purpose (Isa. 55:11).

The reader also notices Jonah's blindness to God's grace in his own life. In his grace, God has chosen to work through human instruments to carry out his plan for proclaiming the gospel throughout the world. Jonah should have been grateful that God chose to involve him, but he could see no further than the limits of his own provincial outlook.

The example of Jonah calls us to expand our thinking about missions. If Jonah could be effective even in his closed-heartedness, how much more effective he could have been if he had been more open to God's work of love? To the extent that we see ourselves in the proud and bigoted Jonah, we can begin to appreciate more the miracle that God has been gracious to us. Also we can begin to pray that God will change our hearts so that we will have his heart for the world rather than our own.

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**Judgment.** Even in the postmodern relativistic West, where judgment is repugnant, the chilling details of ethnic cleansing or child abuse haunt us with the questions, "When will the wicked be judged? Will justice ever be established?"

**Sin and Justice.** Created for God, humanity proclaimed its autonomy. This rebellion against God is the root of human evil and injustice to others (Rom. 1:20–32; 8:7). History is the narrative of human deceit, treachery, and persecution. Perhaps our actions are not so obviously wicked, but are hidden behind false smiles and vain civility. Or maybe we were like those who were unwilling to defend Jesus publicly when the crowd

called for his crucifixion. Sins of commission as well as omission have just as deadly repercussions in society. So history prompts the constant refrain, "Where is the God of justice?" (Mal. 2:17).

God made us accountable to himself, the Moral Judge of the cosmos (Rom. 2:15–16). We know wrongs must be righted. Even without considering restitution, we have a sense of what is necessary to begin righting a wrong. The offender should be forced to suffer this wrong in order to recognize the full depth of this injury. That is the purpose of retributive punishment as expressed in the Old Testament law of retaliation: those who injure their neighbor, whatever they have done must be done to them: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth (Lev. 24:19–20).

**The Final Judgment.** Scripture's ultimate answer for evil is that God, the holy Judge of all the earth, will call every human to account for his or her life on the Day of Judgment (Pss. 5:4–6; 31:18; Matt. 12:36; Rom. 2:6–11; 1 Peter 4:5). This life has grave moral significance! Nothing can be hidden from God, not even our secret thoughts (Rom. 2:16). Every deed will be declared, from idle words to the failure to help the hungry (Matt. 16:27; 25:31–46; Rev. 22:12). We all face a future judgment of either exoneration or condemnation, receiving a welcome to heaven or the sentence of HELL.

But all have sinned (Rom. 3:23; *see also* DEPRAVITY OF HUMANKIND). So God's judgment will fall on all, except those saved by Jesus' work. For Christ, the final Judge, has already suffered the judgment for those who have "faith in Christ's blood" (John 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21). And what God has already forgiven, he will not recall (Jer. 31:34; Isa. 43:25). So those in Christ will stand without accusation (Rom. 8:33–34; Eph. 5:27). It is precisely the gospel's offer of RECONCILIATION with God that occasions missions.

**God's Judgment of Those He Loves.** Scripture also teaches that God uses contemporary circumstances to test our hearts, discipline us, and direct us toward his righteous ways (Deut. 8:1–5; 1 Cor. 11:29–32; Heb. 12:5–17; Rev. 3:17–19). God will not let his people continue in SIN without judgment. So failures and persecutions should be catalysts for self-reflection and spiritual growth into Christ's image (2 Thess. 1:3–5; Col. 3:10). God's present judgment is not simply directed toward individuals (Rev. 2:5; 3:15–21). Believers need to attend to God's chastisement of every Christian institution, even the missions movement, so that we learn to embody Christ's humility (2 Cor. 6:2–11; 1 Cor. 4:9–16).

**The Christian's Judgment of Others.** The proclamation of God in Jesus Christ necessarily carries judgment against sinners. Furthermore,

correction is essential to forming a church where the fellowship of believers self-consciously build up each other into Christ's body (Eph. 4:16). When preaching is easily turned aside, believers are obliged to help other believers recognize their sinfulness (Matt. 18:15–17; Gal. 5:26–6:2). When Jesus cautions, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged," he is not precluding preaching or reproof (Matt. 7:1–4). However correction must be in his name, so that even the admonisher remains subject to his Lord. Believers must never attempt to impose God's final judgment, but to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:19–21). For God alone is the holy Judge.

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**Kingdom of God. Terminology.** No explicit use of the precise phrase "kingdom of God" occurs in the Old Testament, but if one looks at the Old Testament prophets through the teaching of Jesus and the totality of New Testament faith, one finds it is predicted as a future reality (the messianic age) in the ongoing redemptive purpose of God. In contrast, the New Testament uses this term or its equivalent (kingdom of heaven) more than a hundred times. This was the dominant theme in the ministry of Jesus and his use of the term seems to have oscillated between the primary concept of the rule or reign of God and the secondary sense of the realm over which he will exercise this rule (Luke 17:21 and Mark 14:25). Jesus on no occasion intimated that the kingdom actually existed prior to the beginning of his ministry (Luke 16:16). God's kingship is not unlike his providential care of his total creation: "Dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations" (Ps. 22:28). But his kingship is also eschatological: "In the time of those kings" (i.e., at a certain juncture in history) "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed . . . it will itself endure forever" (Dan. 2:44).

**Old Testament History and Eschatology.** God's kingship is identified with Israel, a people with whom he established a covenantal relationship that also involved a redemptive purpose: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you [Jacob] and your offspring" (Gen. 28:14). Israel is to be "a light to the nations" within the sequence of history, extending the knowledge of God's salvation "to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). In order that God might accomplish this he promised a NEW COVENANT that guaranteed Israel an imperishable communal existence (Jer. 31:31–37) and a messianic hope that would

make possible the realization of her redemptive mission (33:14–22; Isa. 42:1–9). Israel's obedience in history will be related to the establishment of an eschatological order beyond history—"the age to come"—in which God's kingly rule will be fully manifested (Hab. 2:14) and in which his new order will bring perfection to all creation.

**Messianic Hope.** This involves three separate and specific strands of prophetic expectation, and all three are related to God's redemptive purpose for the nations. First, a distinctly earthly kingdom shall arise within history through a "Messiah"—a physical descendant of David who will bring renewal to Israel and to all the world (Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1–12:7). Second, this kingdom will also come as an abrupt intrusion into history, not unlike an apocalyptic visitation accompanied with cosmic upheaval. The key personage is likewise a "Messiah" and is described as "one like a Son of Man" possessing "authority, glory, and sovereign power." His kingdom "will never be destroyed." He will be worshiped by "all peoples, nations, and men of every language," and will bestow on "the saints of the Most High" this "everlasting kingdom" to be theirs "forever and forever" (Dan. 7:13, 14, 18, 22). The third strand focuses on a Servant of the Lord, neither openly messianic nor evidently supernatural, but one who is an innocent, willing person who vicariously suffers without protest and dies in order to make his people righteous. The Old Testament does not conflate these strands of prophetic revelation, hence an aura of incompleteness characterizes the Old Testament and inevitably arouses anticipation of more to follow (Luke 2:25, 38). But it must never be forgotten that in essence God will visit his people, and his kingdom will not be the result of historical forces, such as human achievement.

**New Testament: The Gospels.** The ministry of Jesus in the New Testament began in the context of John the Baptist's renewal movement in Israel. Expectations were aroused by his announcement of the coming of the kingdom and of One who would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt. 3:1–12). Then Jesus came forward and publicly identified with Israel through submitting to John's baptism. During this act of obedience he was both approved by his Father and anointed for ministry by the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:9–11). Almost immediately thereafter the Holy Spirit "sent him out into the desert" to confront and demonstrate his superiority over the devil (1:12, 13). In the months that followed his ministry was virtually identical with that of John; both spoke of the coming kingdom. The Baptist's imprisonment brought this renewal ministry to an abrupt end. From that time on Jesus went to Galilee and preached: "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent

## Kingdom of God

and believe the good news” (Mark 1:14). By this he was announcing the glorious fact that the kingdom of God was now accessible to all those who would submit themselves to his rule. And since Jesus immediately thereafter began to call people to discipleship and his service (“I will make you fishers of men”), it follows that involvement in the kingdom of God (living under his rule) includes public proclamation and evangelism (Mark 1:16–20).

When Jesus returned to Galilee “news about him spread throughout the whole countryside” (Luke 4:14). His earlier renewal ministry in Judea had opened synagogues to him. “Everyone praised him” (v. 15). But when he began to identify himself with the Servant role prophesied by Isaiah and intimated that the gospel of the kingdom was also for non-Israelites, he encountered violent opposition (vv. 16–30). From this time on, whereas the “common people heard him gladly,” the religious leaders became increasingly hostile, a hostility that culminated in his being turned over to the Romans for crucifixion.

The good news of the kingdom that Jesus preached and expounded is admittedly complex, since it represented movement toward the fulfillment of the Old Testament redemptive purpose in “the present age” as well as a radical reinterpretation of that hope with reference to “the age to come.” In the present age, despite their rebellion against God, sinful human beings through repentance to God and surrender to Jesus’ rule, can experience the new birth and enjoy a foretaste of the liberating kingdom. This included the forgiveness of sin, peace and acceptance with God, vital linkage with the Holy Spirit, valid insight into the Word of God, and joyous anticipation of “the powers of the coming age” (1 Cor. 2:12–15; Rom. 5:1, 2; 8:1–5, 35–39; Heb. 6:4, 5).

Even so, it is significant that Jesus never defined explicitly the term “kingdom of God.” When he spoke of the kingdom as having “drawn near,” he was affirming that it was an earthly rule in the world and its ongoing history. But when he stated that the kingdom is dynamically moving through human history and sweeping over people violently, he seemed to imply that it is something more than God’s personal reign over individuals (Matt. 12:28; 11:12). He appeared to be referring to a new world, a new state of affairs, a new community that finds concrete expression in the world, even though it is both transcendent and spiritual. It is also political in that its full realization puts it on a collision course with all human rule and authority.

This note of spiritual conflict must not be regarded lightly. Satan is determined to thwart the progress of the kingdom. Jesus calmly asserts, however, that divine authority and rule have been given him by the Father (Luke 10:32; Matt.

11:27; 28:18). Furthermore, he will exercise this rule until Satan, sin, and death are brought to a complete end (Mark 9:1; 13:26; 14:62 with Luke 11:20–22).

The mystery of Jesus’ person and the spiritual nature of his kingdom were so new and revolutionary that he could only disclose these realities gradually. To most Jews the kingdom of God would come as a stone that would shatter all godless nations (Dan. 2:44). But Jesus did not preach judgment and separation; these were eschatological realities. He came as a sower scattering the “good news of the kingdom” and looking for receptive people. He spoke in parables. These tantalized his hearers and compelled them to come to a full stop, then reflect and ask questions. The more his disciples began to discern who he was, the more they began to understand his teaching. Conversely, the more people resisted him, the more his teaching reduced itself in their minds to “hard sayings” devoid of significance (John 6:60). All they heard were stories, riddles, and paradoxes (Mark 4:11, 12).

The parables speak of the nature, growth, and value of the kingdom, largely under the theme of mission. There are the “growth” parables in which the parable of the sower is so central that Jesus pointed out that failure to understand this parable would render a person unable to understand any parable (Mark 4:13). Then follows a parable of the growth process in the hearts of those who respond to the message of the kingdom (4:26–30). This process eludes understanding and external control. When spiritual maturity begins to manifest itself the parable of the wheat and the weeds brings to the fore a “second sowing” (Matt. 13:36–43) so important that the Lord himself is the only “Sower.” This follows because “the field is the world” and the distribution of his servants in it is a responsibility he grants to no other. This implies a deliberate surrender of oneself to him, a willingness to be sent into the locale and ministry that he has appointed.

The kingdom is like a buried treasure and its acquisition merits any cost or sacrifice (Matt. 13:44–46). Its form is hidden, representing the hiddenness of God, working in the hearts of his people scattered throughout the world. Although insignificant in its beginnings (a mustard seed or bit of leaven), on the day of history’s consummation it will be like a great tree or a bowl of dough fully leavened. The kingdom represents Jesus’ present invasion of Satan’s kingdom to release people from bondage (Luke 11:14–22). He desires that they enjoy in part a foretaste of the age to come, as they enter into the life he imparts to them (John 3:3). This includes the forgiveness of their sins (Mark 2:5) and the gift of God’s righteousness (Matt. 5:20). The only acceptable response that a person can make is to put oneself

deliberately under Christ's rule by repentance, faith, and submission.

Jesus also intimated that the kingdom would be consummated in power and glory, and instructed his disciples to pray for that Day when the will of God would be carried out on earth even as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). Because the kingdom had already truly come, Jesus' disciples should manifest the "signs" that confirmed its presence. This is as urgent as the final apocalyptic display of power that will compel "every knee" to bow and "every tongue" to confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:10, 11).

Although the kingdom is wholly of God, he is pleased to share "the keys of the kingdom" with his people that under his direction their preaching of its "good news" might be determinative of those who participate in his eschatological harvest (Matt. 16:19). Because the kingdom tends through its proclamation to draw into its midst both the good and the bad, the eschatological judgment will separate the wicked from the righteous (the parable of the net; Matt. 13:47-52). On this basis the Lord distinguished the church from the kingdom (Matt. 16:18).

At the Last Supper when Jesus instituted the Eucharist, he gave his disciples a cup he identified as "my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24), thereby establishing linkage between that supper, the new covenant, and the coming kingdom. In this fashion he established the necessity of his death "as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). It was his death that made the coming apocalyptic kingdom dependent upon what would take place in history. "God did not abandon history; the eschatological kingdom invaded history in Jesus' life-death-resurrection and continues to work in history through the people of the kingdom" (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10; Ladd).

**Acts.** The resurrection of Jesus gave to his disciples—the believing remnant in Israel—a new sense of their oneness as they received further instruction in the kingdom and awaited its coming (Acts 1:3, 6). Peter's Pentecost sermon reinterpreted the Old Testament hope by speaking of Jesus' exaltation, confirming him as "Lord and Messiah" (2:30-36). In the Book of Acts the "signs" of the kingdom are everywhere present: Jesus by his Spirit is in the midst of his people, the gospel is proclaimed, signs and wonders accompany the witness, evil spirits are exorcised, conversions are frequent, and much suffering is experienced as a result of efforts to do God's will in a world that rebels against him (Matt. 5:10).

**Pauline Epistles.** Paul builds on Peter's reinterpretation of Jesus' messianic reign and describes it as a present relationship (Col. 1:13) and a spiritual experience (Rom. 14:17), as well as an eschatological inheritance (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:5). Jesus "must reign until he has put all

his enemies under his feet" and destroy death, "the last enemy" (1 Cor. 15:25, 26). The end will only come "when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power" (v. 24). His ultimate goal is that "God may be all in all" (v. 28).

**Revelation.** The final revelation of God concerning his kingdom is of its eschatological consummation with the devil finally consigned to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). Just prior to this we find reference to the second coming of Christ with its rapid sequence of his total triumph over all his foes, his binding of Satan, the resurrection of his saints, his millennial reign, and the final consummation of human history (19:11-20:15). Rather than detail the elements of this controversial section, the Spirit presses on to the portrayal of God's ultimate goal: the age to come with its new heaven and new earth, and his redeemed people from all the families, tribes, languages, and peoples at long last seeing his face (21:1-4; 22:1-5).

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**Missio Dei.** Latin for "the sending of God," in the sense of "being sent," a phrase used in Protestant missiological discussion especially since the 1950s, often in the English form "the mission of God." Originally it was used (from Augustine on) in Western discussion of the Trinity for the "sent-ness of God (the Son)" by the Father (John 3:17; 5:30; 11:42; 17:18). Georg F. Vicedom popularized the concept for missiology at the CWME meeting in MEXICO CITY in 1963, publishing a book by this title: *The Mission of God: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*.

Ecumenicals claim a comprehensive definition of *missio Dei*: everything God does for the communication of salvation and, in a narrower sense, everything the church itself is sent to do. Historically, most evangelicals focused on the more immediate purpose of the Triune God in the sending of the Son: the task of world evangelization, the planting of the church among non-Christians, and the nurture of such churches. More recently, many have acknowledged the holistic nature of the task, though few give it an eschatological reference (see HOLISTIC MISSION).

The difference between the two approaches hinges on how the primary and fundamental human problem is defined—whether as a broken relationship with a transcendent God, or as suffering, oppression, and broken human relationships. Views of how the KINGDOM OF GOD is to be

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fulfilled now or eschatologically, how wide the scope of human salvation will prove to be, and basic assumptions about the authority and interpretation of Scripture are also critical (see BIBLE and HERMENEUTICS).

*Missio Dei* was first used in a missionary sense by the German missiologist Karl Hartenstein in 1934. He was motivated by Karl Barth's emphasis on the *actio Dei* ("the action of God"), over against the human-centered focus of liberal theology at that time; he was also inspired by Barth's 1928 lecture on mission, which related it to the Trinity. Hartenstein used the term again in his "Theological Reflection" on the IMC's WILLINGEN CONFERENCE (1952), published in the German report. Though the documents of the meeting itself grounded mission in the Trinity, it did not use the term *missio Dei*. Nevertheless, in its new, trinitarian-mission(ary) sense the phrase has been widely used since Georg F. Vicedom's book.

*Missio Dei* came to encapsulate an important change in IMC and WCC thinking, from the TAMBARAM CONFERENCE (1938) emphasis on the mission of the church to the Willingen stress on the mission of God. The latter meeting quite properly recognized that the true source of the church's missionary task lay "in the Triune God Himself."

The roots of the later, social gospel usage of the term lay in two things: first of all, Willingen's "A Statement on the Missionary Calling of the Church," which exhibited a common theological mistake. It properly defined the church's missionary obligation as "beseeching all men to be reconciled to God," and its concluding section rightly stressed God's sovereign rule even in the "war and tumult" of history, the growth of human knowledge, and in political and social movements. However, it failed to distinguish this preserving, common-grace exercise of God's power from his reconciling, special, redemptive-grace exercise in the history of salvation. Nor did it state the relationship either between preserving and redemptive grace, or between this present age and the age to come (see HOPE).

The second and not unrelated factor was the presence of the Dutch missiologist, JOHANNES C. HOEKENDIJK. Hoekendijk was zealous to have the true arena of God's saving action be recognized as the world of human affairs and the human condition, instead of the church. The mission of God (what he sent Christ into the world to do) was to establish SHALOM—"peace, integrity, community, harmony and justice"—or humanization in this world. In other words, the goal was the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. He insisted on redefining the church as a function of the "apostolate," that is, the church as an instrument, of God's action in this world, a means in his hands, by which he will establish *shalom*.

This was the basic concept with which the phrase *missio Dei* came to be identified in WCC circles.

At the world conference of the World Student Christian Federation in Strasbourg (1960), Hoekendijk urged that Christians identify with "man in the modern world," that the church become "open, mobile groups" (Bassham) to join the *missio Dei* and push for the realization of *shalom*.

These ideas dominated subsequent WCC reports: *Witness in Six Continents* (Mexico City, 1963), *World Conference on Church and Society* (Geneva, 1966), and especially the Studies in Evangelism report, *The Church for Others* (1967). These included the radical assertion of the thought-pattern expressed in "God-world-church." The latter formula meant that the church should act in partnership with the sending God, not by world evangelization and church planting, but by directly promoting political and economic human good. Since *shalom* is the goal of God's action in the world, and "the world sets the agenda," the church must therefore forsake its existing "heretical structures" and join in God's action. Traditional Christian missions were therefore merely "transitory forms of obedience to the *missio Dei*," and no longer appropriate.

The climax of the impact of Hoekendijk's version of God's mission was to be seen at the Uppsala Assembly, in 1968, which fiercely resisted the admission of words on the need to evangelize the non-Christian world.

Christians certainly ought to join with others in the common grace promotion of social justice, though not as the church, and not exclusively as Christians, but with others (Clowney). Evangelicals have been remiss in not acting strongly or broadly enough for social justice in this century. But the WCC adopted an almost purely socio-political concept of the *missio Dei*. It did so on the basis of broad, modern theological assumptions: universal salvation, through the "cosmic Christ"; the church's election being only for the purpose of serving what God was already doing in the world; the ideas of process theology, Tillich's "new being," and Bultmann's demythologizing of the New Testament. Taken together, these meant that the WCC could not affirm that indeed history must come to an end, with Christ's coming, in order to realize the kingdom/*shalom* in its fullness. It lacked (and still lacks) commitment to other vital teachings of the historic Christian faith: the transcendence of God (his distinctness from creation); the reality of an objective, substitutionary atonement to deal with the fundamental human problem, sin, and its forgiveness; and the necessity of proclaiming Christ as the only one to whom one must turn for true *shalom* in this world and the world to come.



In WCC circles today some are questioning the very usefulness of the term *missio Dei*, and are seeking a “new link” between mission and church (Hoedemaker). Evangelicals, on the other hand, have struggled so far to match the theological depth and sophistication of the WCC. They need to show that the church is called not merely to expansion, not to become a mere “collection of converts” (Hoedemaker). It is “sent” for a faithful ministry of witness summoning the disobedient to turn to God, looking for success only to the Spirit of God. It must do this from the context of its life, where God is truly worshiped, the faithful built up, and compassion demonstrated. This whole is the true *missio Dei*, and foreshadows the true *shalom* to be realized in full at the Lord’s return.

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**The Missionary Task.** Defining the missionary task of the church is central to missionary reflection. But it is more than that. It is also a crucial responsibility of the church, for a church unsure or misdirected about its mission can hardly achieve it. And yet rarely in church history has there been agreement on what the missionary task of the church is.

Following the early expansion of the Western church, the Middle Ages saw centuries of introversion that all but eliminated missionary activity, including later, among the reformers. Then came the Moravians, followed by what has been called the GREAT CENTURY OF MISSION. Nineteenth-century Protestants in Europe and North America gained a new missionary vision and were, for the most part, united in what the missionary task was—specifically, they grounded it in the commission Christ gave the first great missionary, Paul as “Mission to the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:17, 18). The twentieth century was, if anything, an even greater century for missions, but from the start the unity of vision began to disintegrate. As the conviction weakened that people without Christ were lost, the definition of mission began to change. “Missions” became “mission,” meaning purpose, and the old passion for classical evangelistic missions was swallowed up

by the other good things a church must do. Consequently, from Europe and mainline churches in North America the stream of missionaries began to dry up, until by the end of the century it was a mere trickle.

Upon the gradual withdrawal of traditional missionaries nondenominational agencies and newer denominations (like the Assemblies of God and the Christian and Missionary Alliance) took up the slack for what may be history’s greatest surge of evangelism, following World War II. How did these forces of the last half of the twentieth century define the task? As the initial evangelistic thrust into new territories was successful, the focus of missionaries typically shifted to serving the new churches in pastoral, educational, and other helping roles until the de facto definition of “missions” became, “sending people away from the home church to serve God in some capacity elsewhere, especially cross-culturally.” Thus the popular understanding of “missions” moved gradually in the same direction as the earlier drift, defining missions as “all the good things a church does,” as DONALD MCGAVRAN so aptly put it, but with this spin: all the good things a church does *away from home*.

An even broader definition of “missions” and “missionary” began to emerge. In the effort to get all disciples fully involved in witness, it was said that “everyone is either a missionary or a mission field.” All disciples are sent as missionaries to their own world. Does it make any difference to define the missionary task one way or another? Is it helpful to distinguish clearly among the tasks of the church? Is it necessary? History would seem to teach that it does indeed make a great deal of difference. In fact, failure to focus clearly on the New Testament understanding of missions seems to have always marked the beginning of the end of missionary enterprise.

The original, basic missionary task of the church was to send certain evangelistically gifted members to places where Christ is not known to win people to faith and establish churches. That this is a biblical definition can be demonstrated in two ways: (1) the meaning of the term used for “missionary” and (2) the example of those who heard Christ’s final instructions.

**Apostles.** The term “apostle” (literally “one who is sent”) was used in several different ways in the New Testament (see APOSTLES). It was used in the historic root meaning of any messenger (John 13:16; Phil. 2:25). But another nuance was emerging in New Testament times, meaning “one sent as an authoritative representative of the sender.” In this meaning it is used supremely of Jesus, sent for our redemption (Heb. 3:1). When Christ finished his apostleship he passed that role on to others, called variously “the disciples” (though the ones highlighted were among hundreds of other disciples), “the twelve” (though

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there were more than twelve, with Matthias, Paul, and Jesus' brother, James, added to the select group), and "the Apostles," those sent with divine authority to establish Christ's church. Thus the term referred to a unique office, the founders of the church. But the term was used of others, too, people like Barnabas (often included in the apostolate), Timothy and Silas, Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) and, indeed, the whole missionary team (1 Thess. 2:6). In this use, "apostle" refers not to an *office* (the "twelve" founders), but to a *role*, the role of pioneering. Paul describes this role clearly when he describes his ambition to proclaim Christ where he has not yet been named (Rom. 15:20; Haldane, Hodge, Murray, and Calvin all clearly identify this apostolic role). "All who seemed to be called by Christ or the Spirit to do missionary work would be thought worthy of the title . . ." (Plummer, 84). Lightfoot wrote the seminal exposition of this meaning of "apostle" in his extensive footnote on Galatians 1:27. We call these pioneer church-starting evangelists, "missionaries," from the Latin translation of the Greek *apostolos*. They are sent by the home church to win people to faith and establish churches where there are none.

This apostolic role continued after the original apostles died. Eusebius, writing of the time from A.D. 100–150 speaks of "numberless apostles" or "Preaching Evangelists" who were living then. He described them:

They performed the office of Evangelists to those who had not yet heard the faith, whilst, with a noble ambition to proclaim Christ, they also delivered to them the books of the Holy Gospels. After laying the foundation of the faith in foreign parts as the particular object of their mission, and after appointing others as shepherds of the flocks, and committing to these the care of those that had been recently introduced, they went again to other regions and nations, with the grace and cooperation of God. (Schaff, 68)

Thus, from the beginning, there was a missionary function distinct from other roles in the church. It was distinct from the witnessing responsibility all Christians have, even distinct from that of evangelistically gifted Christians winning non-Christians who live nearby. These, rather, are *sent* ones, sent to those out of reach of present gospel witness. And their role is distinct also from what other "sent ones" do. These are "missionaries" who pastor the young church and who assist it in various other ways, but they do not have the apostolic function of winning to faith and starting churches. Failure to distinguish this task from other tasks may have the appearance of elevating their significance but in historic perspective it only serves to blur and diminish the

original missionary task of the church. A full team is needed to reach the unreached, of course—those at home who send and colleagues on the field who reinforce the apostolic thrust in supportive ministries. But the original missionary task of the church is fulfilled through pioneer apostolic church starting evangelists. The first evidence for this is the way the term "apostle" was used in the New Testament and in the years immediately following. But there is other, even stronger evidence.

***The Acts of the Apostles.*** One function of the Book of Acts is to demonstrate clearly what the missionary task of the church is. Christ gave what we call the GREAT COMMISSION on at least three occasions, probably on four, and perhaps on five. This, along with the demonstration of his own resurrection, was the only theme to which he returned in his several encounters with the disciples in the six weeks before he ascended. Clearly this "sending" was uppermost in his mind. What did he intend that those sent should do? Acts gives the answer of how those who received the commission understood it. Evangelism begins with incarnating the transforming gospel as we see from the first commissioning on the night of the resurrection: "As the Father sent me, so send I you" (John 20:21). If there were any doubt as to the implications of this command, John himself gives a commentary in his first letter: "As he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). But demonstrating the love of God (1 John 4:7–17) does not exhaust the evangelistic assignment. In fact, to live a good life without telling how we do it is bad news, not good news. So the second element in the commission is proclamation and witness, explaining what one has experienced personally: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel . . ." (Mark 16:15). This gospel ". . . shall be proclaimed to all nations . . . and you are witnesses . . ." (Luke 24:47, 48), and "You shall be witnesses to me . . . to the uttermost parts of the world" (Acts 1:8). But on these four occasions Jesus says nothing about winning to faith and establishing churches. Only once does he do that: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . ." (Matt. 28:19). He even goes beyond evangelism to the final fruit of evangelism: ". . . teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you . . ." (v. 20). Here the pastoral and teaching role is included! How tragic if obedient children gathered in his family were not the end result of the missionary task.

In this way, four of the great commissions don't even extend to winning people to faith—just incarnation, proclamation, and witness. The first step of evangelism, to be sure, but hardly the whole of it. And the fifth great commission goes far beyond the initial task of evangelism, encompassing all the church was meant to be.

Thus, Christ is clear enough on the initial stage and the final stage, but how do we find out what he intends for the in between? That is where the example of the churches' obedience to that commission comes in: *The Acts of the Apostles*. The early history of the church was given, in part, to demonstrate what Christ intended. And the picture emerges clearly and quickly: a select few were sent out from home churches to places where Christ was not known to win people to faith and gather them into local congregations. And that is the missionary task of the church. Paul and his missionary band first of all lived authentic lives, demonstrating the power of the gospel. In that context they immediately and constantly talked about it, explaining the gospel, urging their hearers to accept it. Thus they won people to faith and organized churches. Soon the responsibility for pastoring and teaching was turned over to others and, once the missionary task in that place was completed, the missionary band pressed on to regions beyond.

We derive our definition of the missionary task, then, from the New Testament term used to define the role, and from the New Testament example of those who fulfilled that role: the missionary task is to go, sent as representatives of the home church, to places where Christ is not known, winning people to faith and establishing congregations of those new believers.

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**Old Testament Prophets.** The message and ministry of the Old Testament prophets focused primarily on Israel. At the same time, the commitment to communicating Yahweh's message to his people reflects an awareness of God's involvement in the history of other nations. Whether focusing on the various dimensions of life within the elect community or on the course of events in surrounding states, these spokespersons grounded their words in the person of Yahweh. This attention to the singularity of Yahweh must, therefore, be the starting point for any discussion of the mission of the people of God in the prophetic material.

**The Uniqueness of God.** The prophets repeatedly denounce the waywardness of Israel's penchant for seeking after other gods. The narrative of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18) might be the most impressive account of the continuous attack on IDOLATRY and SYNCRETISM, but the pro-

phetic books are replete with passages underscoring that Yahweh alone is God and contrasting the reality of his person to the idols' lack of substance.

Isaiah, for instance, describes Yahweh as the sovereign Creator: he is not like the idols crafted by human hands (40:12–31; 44:6–20; 45:14–46:9), which can neither know nor bring to effect the things that are to come (41:22–23; 43:12–13; 44:7–8; 45:11, 21; 46:10; 48:3–5). Jeremiah and Ezekiel decry the presence of images in the sanctuary of Jerusalem and the pernicious presence of idolatry throughout Israel's history (Jer. 2, 10; Ezek. 8, 16, 23). Hosea powerfully presents the profound covenant love of Yahweh for his people through the parallel experiences of his own marriage (Hos. 1–3, 11) and angrily reproaches the Northern Kingdom for worshiping at the high places (4:10–5:7).

The social sciences and philosophical ETHICS can illuminate in part this diligence in highlighting the uniqueness of Yahweh (Carroll, 1992, 49–91, 122–34). Humans create and order their social worlds and cultures, and these contexts to a large extent determine self-understanding and perspectives on personal and communal life. RELIGION can play a significant role in this social construction of reality by providing answers to the ultimate questions of existence, detailing rules for life and welfare, and legitimizing (or challenging) social structures and practices through divine revelations, symbols, and rituals. In other words, a society's makeup, mores, and activities are impacted by its concept of God. The prophetic struggle to clarify the nature of the person of Yahweh and defend his demands, as well as their censure of inappropriate worship, is ultimately therefore a battle over Israel's self-definition and its vision of mission among the nations.

**The Demand of Justice.** The emphasis within the prophets on the person of God explains the all-encompassing breadth of their message (Birch, 1991, 240–69; Gossai). What the prophets seek is that the nation who calls itself by Yahweh's name reflect his person in every dimension of life. Thus, they speak to the actions and the ethos of the marketplace, judicial abuses, economic inequalities, and national foreign policy decisions. The persistent denouncing of religious ritual is not a call to definitively abolish sacrifice, but is rather a cry against religion divorced from justice and righteousness (e.g., Isa. 1; Hos. 4, 6; Micah 6; Amos 4–6).

This demand for worship of the one true God and for justice and compassion is not limited to God's people. It extends to every nation. Several prophetic books contain extensive sections of oracles directed against other nations' idolatry, cruelty in warfare, and unrestrained greed (e.g., Isa. 13–23; Jer. 46–51; Ezek. 25–32; Amos 1–2; Obad.;

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Nahum). In sum, mission within the prophetic corpus envisions that the people of God *be a blessing* among the nations in holiness and truth (cf. Gen. 12:1–9; see ABRAHAMIC COVENANT), yet these concerns are universalized to encompass all of humanity.

**The Future Hope of the Prophets.** The tone of the prophets is overwhelmingly negative. Most announce imminent and inevitable judgment. Yet, many also envision a future of peace, prosperity, and holiness beyond the coming divine chastisement. Most fundamentally, the prophetic hope centers around the *Messiah*. Different passages offer several pictures of the person and ministry of Yahweh's Anointed One (Kaiser, 1978, 182–261; Satterthwaite, Hess, Wenham). He will be a king and a shepherd, and he will be led by the Spirit of God. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah (Isa. 42; 49; 50; 52:13–53:12; 61), more than any other description, points to the extent of Yahweh's love and holy requirements: although meek, the Servant will persist even unto death to accomplish the task of bringing justice and salvation to the ends of the earth, for the glory of the Lord.

Another related dimension of the prophetic hope is the *eschatological role of Zion*. Its importance for mission lies in the belief that in the future the nations would stream to the mountain of God to learn of Yahweh and enjoy his bountiful provision (e.g., Isa. 2:2–4; 25:6–9; 66:17–24). Interpreters differ in their understanding of the fulfillment of the promises concerning the Messiah and Jerusalem, yet all agree that in some measure these hopes have been realized in the life and ministry of Jesus, at Pentecost, and in the history of the church.

**Classic Prophetic Mission Passages Reconsidered.** Those interested in missionary outreach and recruitment naturally go to the Old Testament seeking echoes of the New Testament mandates to take the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth. Two portions that have continually been appealed to are the call of Isaiah (Isa. 6, especially verse 8) and the Book of JONAH. The utilization of these passages, however, often does not reflect the textual data.

The charge to Isaiah is not to go to the nations with a word of hope. He is to announce irrevocable doom on his own people, without any expectation of repentance and escape from disaster (Isa. 6: 9–13). What is more, the words “Here am I, send me!” are not a response to an open-ended invitation to participate in God's plan for world evangelization, but instead reflect the willingness of the prophet to accept his difficult commission. He is the only human being present in this temple scene. Yahweh, although he has multitudes of seraphs ready to do his will (vv. 2–4), has decided to send someone from Judah. Isaiah apparently never leaves Jerusalem, and much of

his ministry is directed at the monarchy. Nevertheless, a global element is present in the angelic proclamation that the whole earth is full of God's glory (v. 3). A careful reading of these lines in the context of the book, however, reveals that it will be Emmanuel, the Davidic king (Isa. 7, 9, 11, 32), who is also the Suffering Servant of later chapters, who will bring that universal glory to Yahweh through his righteous person and reign.

Warnings not to evade the touch of God to go to the nations sometimes point to the prophet Jonah for biblical support. The overriding sovereignty of God, it is said, will redirect the path of the disobedient to conform to the MISSIONARY CALL. The problem with this view is that the notion of going to the nations contradicts the Old Testament hope of their coming to Zion. In light of the vocabulary of 1:2 (cf. Gen. 4:10; 18:20), what one expects is that Jonah will go preach judgment against the sinful city. In fact, this is what he does when he finally arrives at Nineveh (3:4). It is not until chapter 4 that the prophet says why he ran away: he knew that the love of God extended beyond covenant boundaries (4:2, 11; cf. Exod. 34:6–7). He desired above all else the destruction of a violent empire, who was the enemy of Israel (3:8). The Book of Jonah, therefore, does not speak of obstinateness at obeying a missionary call. Perhaps a better application of its message resides in the realization that God's mercy must overcome all human prejudice and hatred, even if it is rooted in the memories of horrific suffering at the hands of the powerful.

In sum, the Old Testament prophets do not directly address world missions, as this is understood in the New Testament and the Christian church. Instead, their contribution lies in that they display the character of God, who, on the one hand, requires that his people accomplish the mission of being a holy people among the nations. On the other hand, this same Yahweh demonstrates that his love and justice are universal, both in the future judgment of all nations and in the worldwide ministry of Messiah.

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**Old Testament Theology of Mission.** Given that Israel was not sent out across cultural or geographical barriers, can one speak of mission at all in the Old Testament? Such a view, however, identifies mission too exclusively with the activity

of human missionaries, whereas the Bible speaks first of all of the mission of God in God's world, and derives all human mission from that prior reality (see *MISSIO DEI*). From that point of view the Old Testament is fundamental for two reasons. First, it presents the mission and purpose of God with great power and clarity and with universal implications for all humanity. Second, the Old Testament shaped the very nature of the mission of the New Testament church, which, indeed, felt compelled to justify its mission practice from the Scriptures we now call the Old Testament.

***The Manifesto: "The Gospel in Advance."*** Coming after the primal history of Genesis 1–11, in which the nations of humanity are portrayed as in rebellion against God, scattered and divided under his judgment, God's call of Abraham and the promise made to him, in Genesis 12, come as a radical new start in human history. After the three specific promises of posterity, blessing, and land comes the astonishing declaration of God's intention: "through you, all the families/nations of the earth will receive blessing" (Gen. 12:3, and cf. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4f.; 28:14; 35:11). Although the focus of attention from here on would be Israel as the descendants of Abraham, the ultimate mission of God is to bless the nations of humanity (see *ABRAHAMIC COVENANT*)—good news, indeed, in the light of the preceding chapters, and described as such by Paul, in defense of his own mission to the (Gentile) nations, in Galatians 3:8.

Missiologically the covenant with Abraham contains two balancing truths. First is the *universality* of God's purpose in the election of Abraham and Israel. They were called into existence only because of God's "missionary" purpose of ultimate blessing to all nations. Israel's election was not for the rejection of the nations, but for the sake of their salvation. Hence Paul's insistence that the in-gathering of the Gentiles in his day was not a contradiction of the promises made to Israel, but rather their eschatological fulfillment. Blessing the nations (which was the fruit of his mission) was the very reason for Israel's existence in the first place. Let those who wanted to make the Gentile converts into followers of Moses, "consider Abraham . . ." (Gal. 3:6–9).

Second is the *particularity* of the means God would use to bring about this universal blessing—"through you . . ." The instrument by which God would bless the nations would be the historical, particular, unique people he had created and called. Their uniqueness would ultimately be inherited by the Messiah, Jesus, as the one in whose name alone "repentance and forgiveness would be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). It is important to hold these balancing truths together in a *BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSION*: the inclusive, universal

goal (God's commitment to bless the nations); and the exclusive, particular means (the people, the Person, through whom God chose to do so).

***The People: "A Light to the Nations."*** The nation of Israel was not, of course, physically sent out to the nations. Yet there are aspects of their identity and role that clearly have missional significance (see *ISRAEL'S ROLE*). First, there was the uniqueness of their historical experience of God's revelation and redemption (Deut. 4:32–40). No other nation experienced what they had of the knowledge or the saving power of God. This unique experience, however, was not an exclusive privilege, but a trust: "so that you might know that Yahweh is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath, and there is no other." The uniqueness of Israel's covenantal experience was the basis of their understanding of the uniqueness of Yahweh as God. This dimension of Israel's redemptive monotheism underlies the missionary nature of the New Testament proclamation of the *UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST* as Lord and Savior. (Note the way certain key Old Testament monotheistic texts are christologically expanded and quoted in the New Testament: e.g., Deut. 6:4, 4:35, 39 and 1 Cor. 8:5–6; Isa. 45:22–24 and Phil. 2:10–11).

Second, Israel was called to ethical distinctiveness, as part of what it meant to be "a light to the nations." As early as the patriarchal narratives, the link between the socioethical quality of life of the covenant community and the fulfillment of God's promise of blessing to the nations is made (Gen. 18:18–19). In Deuteronomy 4:6–8 Israel's visibility before the nations is put forward as a motivation for obedience to the law. Indeed, this missional perspective transforms a Christian understanding of the meaning of the law itself. Obedience was not only to be a matter of response to the grace of God's redemption (Deut. 6:20–25), but was to be for the purpose of attracting others to the light of God's presence among God's people (Isa. 58:6–10; 60:1–3; 62:1–2).

Third, Israel was given an identity (priestliness) and a task (holiness) in the foundational declaration at Sinai (Exod. 19:3–6). The priesthood in Israel stood between God and the rest of the people, both teaching God's law to the people and representing the people before God through sacrifice. Entrusted to Israel as a whole, the task of being God's priesthood in the midst of the nations is a mission in itself—to bring the knowledge of God to the nations, and to be the means of bringing the nations to God. Both centrifugal and centripetal dynamics are present in prophetic visions of this role (e.g., Isa. 2:2–5; 66:19–21). To be holy was to be fundamentally different (Lev. 18:3), and that difference was to be visible in social, economic, and political terms, not just in religion (Lev. 19). There is a correspondence

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between the desired visibility of Israel's distinctive ethic as a means of drawing the nations (Deut. 4:6–8) and the New Testament ethical exhortations that have the same missionary implications (Matt. 5:14–16; John 13:34f.; 1 Peter 2:9–12). As Luke observed, the social and economic life of the early Christian community was inseparable from the apostolic preaching in producing the growth and spread of the church (Acts 2:44–47; 4:34 [quoting Deut. 15:4]).

**The Scope: The Totality of Human Need.** Mission involves declaring and applying the redeeming work of God to the brokenness of the world. But what is the nature of that brokenness and what does redemption consist of? Again, it is the Old Testament that provides so much of the fundamental WORLDVIEW that underlies the assumptions and practice of Christian mission. Its comprehensive analysis of the human predicament in terms of moral rebellion, the personal, social, historical, and ecological effects of sin, alongside the rich vocabulary through which this whole taxonomy of evil is expressed, all combine to forestall a shallow vagueness about what salvation needs to be and leaves us in no doubt that only God can accomplish it. An adequate understanding of the gospel depends upon an adequate appreciation of the radical effects of SIN. It is the Old Testament that provides this earthy realism.

Similarly, the Old Testament presentation of redemption offers a rich variety of models, all of which have influenced the Christian understanding of salvation through Christ and the MISSIONARY TASK of the people of God. The exodus, of course, stands as the key Old Testament model of redemption (and is celebrated as such, Exod. 15:13), with its comprehensive deliverance of Israel from political, economic, social, and spiritual bondage. The same holistic understanding of God's concern is found in the laws that the redeemed people were to follow in the land—perhaps focused most clearly in the Jubilee institution (Lev. 25), with its thrust toward restoration of people to meaningful participation in the community through access to fruitful resources. But it too is based on the theological roots of God's sovereignty and historical redemption (the exodus). The Jubilee strongly influenced Jesus' understanding of his own mission, and found eschatological echoes in the early missionary preaching of the church (Acts 3:21).

Then there is the sacrificial system, providing atonement and cleansing from sin. The cultic dynamics of Leviticus have been woven deeply into the Christian understanding of the death of Jesus, and in the hands of Paul, become, paradoxically, the language he uses to portray the power of the cross to unite Jew and Gentile in God's forgiveness (Rom. 3:25–31; Eph. 2:11–22 etc.). When Jesus declared, then, that “repentance and for-

givenness would be preached in his name to all nations,” the understanding of what those terms mean was already prepared for in the Scriptures (as indeed he was pointing out, Luke 24:45–47). Clearly, a holistic understanding of the nature of mission flows from a biblically holistic view of what redemption means and includes (*see* HOLISTIC MISSION). It is this breadth of understanding that the Old Testament contributes.

The Old Testament, however, has rich resources for mission which are not directly tied in to the redemptive-historical tradition of Israel. The wisdom literature, for example, with its strong creation base and its adaptation of the wisdom of other cultures to the faith of Yahweh, offers a WORLDVIEW and an approach to life and living that is perhaps the most cross-culturally bridge-building material in the Bible. Questions of what leads to a happy and successful life (Proverbs), how to wrestle with the problem of suffering (Job), and what to think in the face of futility and death (Ecclesiastes) are perennially and transculturally relevant, and provide an opening for the message of redemption from elsewhere in the canon.

And the worship of Israel at times rises to a breadth of universal vision in its faith imagination, in summoning all nations and all the ends of the earth to praise Yahweh (e.g., Pss. 47, 67, 96, 98, etc.)—a vision that is implicitly missionary in effect—as Paul realized when he quotes such material as the climax of his own missionary vision of the ingathering of the Gentiles (e.g., Rom. 15:7–12).

**The Goal: “To Bring My Salvation to the Ends of the Earth.”** The eschatological vision of the Old Testament envisages the nations being brought in to share the blessings enjoyed by Israel. That was, of course, the very reason for Israel's election in the first place, and indeed “Israel” comes to be redefined and extended in a way that prophetically anticipates Paul's missionary theology in Romans 9–11.

In some contexts the nations are portrayed as summoned to celebrate what God had done in Israel, even when, paradoxically that included Israel's victory over them (cf. Ps. 47:1–4). The only justification for that must have been that the nations would somehow benefit from Israel's salvation history, unique as it was (cf. Pss. 22:27–28, 67; 96:1–3; 98:1–3). The Deuteronomistic history has some remarkable passages anticipating this universal blessing, most notably of all the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:41–43) in which God is asked to do for the foreigner whatever he asked in prayer (which had not even been promised to Israel!), so that God's name would be known and praised throughout the earth. Did those Gentiles who appealed so movingly to Jesus have any suspicion

of the way they fulfilled this prayer (Matt. 8:5–13; 15:21–28)?

But in other contexts we find a more breathtaking vision that the nations would ultimately be included, along with Israel, as the extended people of God. Psalm 47:9 includes Gentile nobles “as the people of the God of Abraham.” Isaiah 19:19–25 extends the privileged status of Israel (“my people, my inheritance, my handiwork”) to their historical enemies. Isaiah 56:3–8 anticipates the joyful inclusion of certain categories of people previously excluded by the law (Deut. 23:1–3). Doubtless Luke intends us to see this text finding its first fulfillment in the salvation of the foreigner who was also a eunuch, and who was reading Isaiah at the time (Acts 8:26–39)! Significantly, though he had been to the temple in Jerusalem, the Ethiopian eunuch actually found joy when he believed in Jesus, the temple’s fulfillment. A little later in Acts, James uses Amos 9:11–12 to clinch the theological (i.e., scriptural) justification for the amazing success of the Gentile mission (Acts 15:13–18).

This great Old Testament vision lies behind Paul’s missiological theology of the multinational nature of the eschatological community being created in the Messiah, Jesus. Far from undermining in any way God’s faithfulness to his promises to Israel, the ingathering of the nations was nothing less than the fulfillment of the very mission and *raison d’être* of Israel.

***The Servant of the Lord: “A Light to the Nations and the Glory of Your People Israel.”*** The mission of Israel was also bound up with the identity and mission of the Servant, the mysterious figure in Isaiah 40–55 whose identity seems to oscillate between that of Israel and that of an individual yet to come. The mission of the Servant would be one of justice, gentleness, enlightenment, and liberation (Isa. 42:1–9). But it would also involve rejection and apparent failure (Isa. 49:4; 50:6–8) in the task of restoring Israel to God. In response to that, his mission would be extended to include the nations to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6). In that way, the mission of the Servant would be the fulfillment of the mission of Israel itself.

This dual nature of the Servant’s mission—restoration of Israel and bringing salvation to the nations—lies behind the perception of the New Testament that the first task was Jesus’ primary mission, while the second was entrusted to the church. This probably influenced the shape of Luke’s two-volume work. His Gospel describes the mission of the servant to Israel, and Acts describes the fulfillment of Israel’s scriptural mission in the ingathering of the Gentiles. This combined missiological understanding of Luke–Acts seems clearest in the “hinge” material of Luke 24:44–49 and Acts 1:6–8. It also seems that the dual nature of the servant’s mission influenced

the historical and theological shape of Paul’s missionary strategy (Acts 13:46–48; Rom. 15:8–9), explaining among other things why one so conscious of his commission to the Gentiles believed it crucial that the gospel be preached “to the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16; 2:9–11).

The Scriptures of the Old Testament, then, not only provide the essential vision and themes of Christian mission, but also shape its initial and enduring theological structures.

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**Pentateuch, Mission in the.** Scholars have debated whether the concept of mission can be found in the Pentateuch. While there are no explicit examples of preachers being sent to other tribes or nations, still the five books of Moses do contribute to an understanding of mission. The Old Testament speaks about mission because Yahweh is a missionary God. The Pentateuch reveals this in several key passages.

Genesis 1–3 teaches that humanity is alike in two ways. All people are created in the IMAGE OF GOD (Gen. 1:26–27), and all people are affected by SIN and need redemption. Genesis 3 tells the tragic story of human sin, which leads to suffering and separation. It also reveals God as a missionary God who seeks to reconcile humanity to himself. God could have destroyed Eve and Adam because of their sin; but, instead, God sought them in the Garden and provided for their needs. In this way God distinguished himself from all other deities in the world. In the world’s religions people seek for gods, but in Christianity the true and living God seeks after fallen humanity.

Genesis 3:15 has been called the *protevangelium* because it provides the first mention of the gospel. Evangelical scholars have seen in this verse a foreshadow of the cross where Satan injured Jesus Christ, but Jesus crushed Satan and the power of sin (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:9; 20:2). God prefers to save people rather than judge them. God’s holy nature makes the gospel necessary; his love motivated and provided it.

Genesis 12:1–3 speaks of God’s call to Abram (see also ABRAHAMIC COVENANT). From this passage on, the history narrated in the Old Testament is the history of Israel, “and the history of Israel is the history of redemption” (Kane). God

## Problem of Evil and Mission, The

chose Abram and his descendants to fulfill his redemptive plan. Their election was not an end in itself, but the means to an end—world redemption.

In Genesis 12:1–3 God promised Abram several things: land, a name, and a nation; however, most important, God promised Abram that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” God repeated this promise to Abram (later Abraham) four more times (Gen. 18:17–19; 22:16–18; 26:2–5; 28:13–15). God’s particular blessing of Abram resulted in the universal blessing of all peoples. People are blessed by Abram’s example of faithfulness, but ultimately God blessed the peoples of the earth through Abram’s descendant, Jesus Christ.

The NIV translates the Hebrew word *goyim* in verse 3 as “peoples,” and that is superior to “nations,” as some versions render it. God is not referring here to nations as political entities; rather, God is saying that through Abram every ethno/linguistic group on earth will be blessed. Surely this must be an encouragement to those who endeavor to discover and evangelize unreached people groups (see also PEOPLES, PEOPLE GROUPS).

In choosing Abram and his descendants God revealed a threefold purpose for Israel. First, Israel was to receive and guard God’s special revelation to the world (Heb. 1:1–3). Second, Israel was to provide the door through which the Messiah would enter history. Third, Israel was to be God’s servant and witness to the nations.

The Book of Exodus tells the story of God’s deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. The exodus is the pivotal event in the Old Testament, as central in the Old Testament as the cross is in the New Testament. Again, God’s deliverance was not an end in itself, but a means to accomplish God’s plan for world redemption. This becomes clear in Exodus 19:5–6. This passage records God’s words to Moses and the nation of Israel. In these verses God made conditional promises to the Israelites. If the Israelites would obey God and keep his covenant, then God promised to make them a “treasured possession,” a “kingdom of priests,” and a “holy nation.”

Of special interest here is the phrase “kingdom of priests.” God intended for the people of Israel to become a nation composed of priests. Their role was to minister to the other nations. Old Testament priests were expected to teach the people God’s law and mediate between God and the people. God wanted the Israelites to teach the other nations about his love and grace. They were to stand as a living testimony to the other nations. Unfortunately, Israel did not fulfill this role. Throughout their history they did little to fulfill God’s intention for them. The Pentateuch, however, repeatedly emphasizes Israel’s instru-

mental role in God’s mission to the peoples of the earth.

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**Problem of Evil and Mission, The.** Religious worldviews all sense the need to explain suffering and moral evil, although some give greater attention to this than others. There is no single problem of evil that applies to all religions; the reality of suffering, combined with other beliefs about the cosmos, the religious ultimate, and the human person, produce distinctive problems within the various traditions.

**Evil in World Religions.** Monotheistic religions such as JUDAISM, Christianity, and ISLAM place evil in a subordinate relationship to God, the righteous Creator of all that exists. The task then is to account for evil without making God directly responsible for it. Islam, for example, recognizes evil as the product of human moral failure. But whereas in Christianity evil is a problem because it is perceived to conflict with God’s love and goodness, in Islam it is a problem because it seems to conflict with God’s omnipotence. Thus the QUR’AN and later Islamic theology stress that Allah is in control of all that occurs; in some sense, even suffering and evil come from him.

Religious traditions stemming from the Indian subcontinent (HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, JAINISM) look to *karma* as an explanation for present sufferings and evil. Living things are said to be continually being reborn. One’s state in this life is determined by one’s behavior and dispositions in previous existences, just as present actions will shape future lives. *Karma*, the impersonal principle that regulates such rebirths, is said to provide an explanation for the great disparity in our world—why some people suffer so much and others relatively little. On a popular level, dissatisfaction among Hindus and Buddhists with strictly philosophical explanations for suffering is reflected in the widespread belief in many demons, spirits, and gods who are responsible for our ills.

Common to the Hindu and Buddhist traditions is the view that evil and suffering are rooted in ignorance. This is related to an ontology that distinguishes between levels of reality and truth, ascribing evil and suffering to lower or penultimate levels. Thus in Advaita VEDANTA HINDUISM and ZEN BUDDHISM suffering and evil are regarded as the result of introducing a false duality into an essentially nondualistic reality. “Evil” dissolves when dualistic categories are overcome. But this



relativizes evil by making the good–evil distinction applicable only on a lower level of reality; ultimately there is no duality between good and evil.

Perhaps no religion concentrates so directly upon the experience of suffering as does Buddhism. Although suffering seems to be a universal and inescapable phenomenon, Buddhism claims that there is a way to eliminate it. Suffering is rooted in desire or craving, and by eliminating desire suffering is eradicated as well. In Buddhism there is no problem of reconciling evil with an all good and all powerful God, for there is no such God in Buddhism. Both the problem and its solution are offered in strictly naturalistic terms of cause and effect.

In FOLK RELIGIONS worldwide evil is dealt with by invoking the realm of spirits, demons, ancestors, and gods—both as explanations for our problems and as powers for controlling evil and suffering.

***The Problem of Evil in Christian Theism.*** The problem in Christian theism is to reconcile evil with the biblical picture of God as all good and all powerful: If God is perfectly good, he must want to abolish all evil. If he is limitlessly powerful, he must be able to abolish all evil. But evil exists. Therefore, either God is not perfectly good or he is not limitlessly powerful.

It is helpful here to distinguish several issues. The *existential* or *pastoral problem of evil* must be distinguished from strictly philosophical or theological problems. The pastoral problem is concerned with providing appropriate resources and support for one who is struggling with the reality of suffering or evil in his or her own experience.

The *logical problem of evil* maintains that there is an explicit or implicit contradiction among the following statements: (1) God is omnipotent, omniscient, and all good; (2) God exists; (3) God created the world; and (4) the world contains suffering and evil. If so, then orthodox Christian theism is falsified. But clearly the statements are not explicitly contradictory. The burden thus lies with the critic to provide missing premises which, when combined with the above, would produce clear contradiction.

Much more influential is the *evidential problem of evil*, which maintains that the mere presence of evil and suffering, or the amount of evil in our world, while not logically inconsistent with the existence of God, nevertheless provides strong evidence against the existence of God. Some critics claim that the mere presence of any evil in our world counts against THEISM; others hold that the degree of evil, or the apparently gratuitous nature of evil, counts against Christianity.

One can respond to the evidential problem in various ways. Some theologians are content with demonstrating: (1) that evil is not logically in-

compatible with Christian theism; and (2) that belief in God is not implausible or unreasonable given the reality of evil. Others go beyond this to offer a *theodicy*, which attempts to show why God allows evil, offering an explanation for evil and suffering within Christian theism.

It is important to note that evil and suffering are phenomena every WORLDVIEW—not simply Christian theism—must address. The viability of any worldview depends in part upon its ability to account for evil satisfactorily. Furthermore, in assessing the case for Christian theism, the problem of evil should not be treated in isolation. Evil is one of a large set of factors relevant to the question of God's existence. The reality of evil does provide negative evidence against theism, but this must be evaluated along with a variety of other factors providing positive evidence for God's existence.

Although the struggle with suffering is a recurring theme in Scripture (Job, Psalms, Habakkuk, Romans, 1 Peter, James), nowhere are we given a complete explanation concerning the origin of evil or why God chose to create a world in which such suffering would ensue. Scripture never denies the reality of evil or glosses over its horrible consequences. Yet God is righteous and is not the direct cause of evil. Ultimately, the origin of evil is hidden in God's sovereign will and the mystery of moral freedom.

Christian theologians have generally responded to the challenge of evil by emphasizing three themes. First, since the time of Augustine many have stressed that moral evil is due to the misuse of human free will. Evil and suffering are the result of sin, the abuse of freedom. Second, Christians hold that God permits evil for the sake of achieving a greater good. As Augustine put it, "God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil to exist." A world in which persons can make moral choices and mature spiritually, even if this results in significant evil and suffering, is better than a world without such freedom. Related to this is the "soul-making" theodicy, which emphasizes that God's purpose for his creatures is conformity to the image of Jesus Christ and that it is precisely an environment in which there are real moral choices and struggles with adversity that allows for such spiritual development.

Third, the heart of the gospel lies in the staggering claim that the power of evil has been broken in the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The infinite and holy God has identified with evil humanity by becoming a man, suffering evil at the hands of sinful men, being put to death on the cross, and then demonstrating God's victorious power over evil through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15). The same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to believers today (Rom. 8:11).

## Revelation, General

**The Problem of Evil and Missions.** Central to Christian missions is leading others to Jesus Christ, the only one through whom there is victory over evil and suffering. It is only as persons are given new life in Christ and are liberated from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13) that they can experience victory over evil. Evil is an enemy that already has been defeated at the cross (Col. 2:15), although for a limited time its influence continues.

The problem of evil is particularly acute today, after a century of unprecedented violence and suffering. Few criticisms of Christianity appear more frequently, or in as many diverse contexts, than the problem of evil. Secularists claim that evil falsifies Christianity. Hindus and Buddhists assert the superiority of their own traditions because of the alleged inability of Christianity to account for evil. A culturally sensitive apologetic that responds to the challenges presented by the problem of evil is essential to missions.

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**Revelation, General.** Apart from revelation, there is neither genuine knowledge of God nor Christian faith. The core idea of revelation comes from the Hebrew *gamlah* and the Greek *apokalyptō*, whose basic meaning is “to uncover” or “to disclose.” Revelation is the activity of God whereby he “uncovers” or discloses what was previously not known nor could be known.

The Scriptures speak of two kinds of revelation: general and special. General revelation is distinguished from special revelation in mode, content, and function. Special revelation is that divine activity whereby God discloses himself (knowledge, will, and purposes) to specific persons at particular times in history for the purpose of redemption. The inspired record of this is given in the BIBLE. On the other hand, general revelation is God’s universal self-disclosure. Through general revelation a general knowledge of God has been made available to all humanity at all times. The main biblical passages which relate to general revelation are Psalm 19:1–6; Job 36:24–37:24; Romans 1:18–32; 2:14–15; Acts 14:15–17; and Acts 17:16–34 (many include John 1:9).

These passages speak of four ways (modes) in which general revelation is conveyed. First, the most evident mode of general revelation is the created order (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:19, 20). Something of the greatness, majesty, and nature of the Creator is disclosed by what he has made. Sec-

ond, God’s continuing care for what he has made testifies to his reality and goodness (Acts 14:17). Prayer and sacrifice during difficult times and thanksgiving during plentiful times have been a universal human experience, indicating a natural awareness of human dependence upon God. That God provides for human needs discloses his care and kindness. Third, human moral CONSCIENCE is another source of general revelation (Rom. 2:14, 15). God has created human beings with the ability to know moral right and wrong. This sense of right and wrong, at least partially, corresponds with God’s moral nature. Fourth, the innate awareness of God, or what John Calvin called the *divinitatis sensum* (sense of divinity), is another way in which God is disclosed. This innate awareness is the seed of religion. Though this seed has germinated differently in the many and diverse religions of the world, these religions testify to the internal awareness of the reality of God and the desire to know him. History is possibly a fifth mode of general revelation. Traditionally many have held that God discloses himself through the course and events of history. Certainly God acts in history and is directing the course of history. However, significant questions have been raised concerning our ability to discern God and his purposes in history. Even with the benefit of special revelation, the significance of particular historical events are often ambiguous and open to differing interpretations.

Dealing with the concrete content of general revelation is more problematic. The question of what can be known about God on the basis of general revelation alone (natural theology) has received considerable attention. The views of this have varied widely. Pluralistic theology, a contemporary form of liberal theology, contends that any knowledge or experience of God has its source in some form of general revelation only. It denies special revelation and rejects the uniquely inspired status of the Bible.

Thomas Aquinas is representative of a second approach that has had wide acceptance traditionally. Aquinas argued that God’s existence could be proved and some knowledge of God attained through rational reflection on the created order. Such knowledge is not sufficient for salvation but was deemed to be adequate to prove the existence of God. The limitations of this view have become increasingly evident. The ability of these arguments to convince largely rests upon one’s presuppositions and worldview.

A third approach is provided by John Calvin, who saw general revelation as having the ability to supplement and deepen the knowledge of God provided by special revelation, but only as general revelation was viewed through the “spectacles” of special revelation. Calvin insisted that because of sin it is not possible to develop a sys-

tematic and reliable knowledge of God. At best one gains bits and pieces of knowledge of God. In the twentieth century, Karl Barth's complete denial of general revelation represents the other extreme of the continuum of views. For Barth, the infinite qualitative distinction between God and humanity (God's total otherness), humanity's sinfulness, and Barth's tendency to equate any revelation with salvific experience of God led to a complete negation of the possibility of true knowledge of God, however minute, through general revelation. While this approach has appealed to many, it does contradict the testimony of Psalm 19, Romans 1:19f., and Romans 2:14–15.

Some of the difficulty in determining the precise content of general revelation rests in the fact that Scripture itself does not deal exhaustively with the issue. However, some indication is given of what can be known of God in general revelation. Psalm 19:1 states, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." God intended creation itself to reveal the great intellect, wisdom, creativity, and ability of the One who made it all. Romans 1:20 declares that God's "eternal power and divine nature" can be known through that which he has made. It should be evident that he has the abilities and power necessary to effect that which he has made and that he possesses the attributes normally associated with deity.

Other considerations, however, mitigate against the attainment of concrete and consistent knowledge of God through general revelation. Human sinfulness (Rom. 1:21f.; 2 Cor. 4:4), human finitude (i.e., the natural limitations on human perception and understanding), and the fact that creation itself suffers under God's judgment (Rom. 8:20, 21), all contribute to the human inability to derive a natural theology. Special revelation is necessary to overcome these barriers to knowledge of God. Although general revelation potentially and in principle yields a definite knowledge of God, the actual attainment of such knowledge is severely limited and can only be attested through consistency in Scripture. General revelation points to God's abilities but is less clear on his character and purposes. The same creation that points to God's kindness because of his provision for human needs (Acts 14:17) also is the cause of great suffering through catastrophes, droughts, and the like. Calvin rightly asserted that we must look at general revelation through the "spectacles" of Scripture. Special revelation provides the necessary interpretive framework from which one can more clearly discern the abilities, character, and purposes of God witnessed to by general revelation.

What then is the function of general revelation for us today? Scripture suggests two ways in which it continues to serve God's purposes. On the one hand, it is an evidence of God's continu-

ing love and mercy toward humankind. God continues to provide a witness to himself (Acts 14:17) and to stir humanity to seek him (Acts 17:27). On the other hand, general revelation serves God's redemptive purposes. Human rejection of general revelation demonstrates both God's justice in judging human sin (Rom. 1:19ff.; 2:12–16) and the need for special revelation and the gracious provision of redemption through his Son, Jesus Christ.

**Implications for Missions.** One's understanding of general revelation has important implications for several areas that pertain to the church's obligation to and practice of missions.

**View of Other Religions.** This is particularly true in relation to non-Christian religions. Religious PLURALISM presupposes that some form of a universal, general revelation is the ground of all religions, Christianity included. Karl Rahner's "Anonymous Christian" thesis represents an inclusivist approach which, while maintaining the superior and definitive nature of special revelation, allows for the possibility of true knowledge and redemption in other religions. As such, other religions are not hostile or in competition with Christianity. Rather, they are limited attempts to respond to God's general revelatory activity that need to be completed or corrected by special revelation. Evangelical theology's perspectives have ranged between seeing religions as well-intentioned but erroneous means of responding to God to being the product of active rebelliousness to what has been revealed by God in general revelation.

Religious expression is the consequence of the fact that God reveals himself and that humanity has both the innate ability and urge to know him. The only source of knowledge of God available to non-Christian religions is general revelation. However, the fallen state of creation and human nature results in the corruption of truth available in general revelation. Scripture's teaching on false worship, the inevitable and willful distortion of general revelation (Rom. 1:19ff.), Satan's deceptive activities, as well as redemption, all indicate that, whether well-intentioned or not (humanly speaking), non-Christian religions cannot attain true knowledge of God or accomplish reconciliation with God. Christianity must regard other religions as inadequate (at best) forms of worship which must be replaced by indigenous and culturally relevant forms of true worship based on special revelation (cf. Acts 17:22ff.).

**Nature and Source of Salvation.** Basing themselves on general revelation, many today hold that SALVATION is possible apart from the proclamation of the gospel. The pluralist maintains that all religions are equally ways of salvation and the source of knowledge for salvation (usually understood as some form of moral life)

is general revelation, to which all people have equal access. Inclusivists maintain the necessity of Christ's atonement for salvation, but not the necessity of knowing and confessing Christ. If one responds to what knowledge of God is made known in general revelation, this faith is just as efficacious a saving faith as that faith which is consciously placed in Christ and the proclaimed gospel.

Scripture may permit an openness to the possibility that some may find full acceptance by God apart from the knowledge provided by special revelation or the gospel (e.g., Melchizedek). However, Scripture is silent concerning how such individuals came to faith so we must be careful about drawing conclusions from such exceptions. Scripture is more clear that humanity has willfully distorted what truth is given in general revelation and that the proclamation of the gospel is needed for salvation (cf. Rom. 10:14, 15). Therefore, an important element in the church's motivation for mission is the recognition that general revelation is not a sufficient source for salvation. In obedience to the Lord's command and in light of human estrangement from God because of SIN, the church is compelled to go to all the world with the gospel of salvation.

**Contextualization.** CONTEXTUALIZATION is concerned both with communicating the gospel to other cultures and with the development of culturally relevant theology. The universal nature of human beings, of their religious need and experience, and of general revelation make contextualization of theology possible. Therefore, we both expect to find areas of common ground from which to communicate the gospel and some points of truth and experience in other cultures which can deepen our understanding of God and help shape culturally relevant theologies. We should avoid the extremes of radical discontinuity between the gospel and culture, as in neo-orthodoxy, and radical continuity between gospel and culture, as in liberal and pluralistic theologies. The SYNCRETISM of the latter is avoided only by subjecting the ideas, insights, and practices of culture to the criteria and authority of Scripture. Those elements in culture that are consistent with Scripture can be utilized in contextualizing the gospel and theology.

**Dialogue and Cooperation.** The postmodern spirit and religious pluralism have been leading advocates of religious DIALOGUE. They presume the basic equality of all religious expressions and seek to grow in knowledge of God through mutual dialogue and cooperation. A biblical understanding of general revelation, Scripture, Christ, and salvation cannot approach other religions in this way. True worship and knowledge of God comes only through submission to Christ and the revelation provided in Scripture.

The doctrine of general revelation does allow for the possibility of interreligious dialogue in areas of mutual concern (moral, social, ecological, etc.). Further, dialogue is a legitimate way to gain mutual understanding and respect and may even cause the Christian opportunity to reflect differently on his or her faith in such a way as to gain new understanding. But Scripture is the sole authoritative and reliable source of knowledge of God. Truths gained through reflection upon general revelation are at best partial and must always be judged by Scripture.

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**Satan.** The basic meaning of the word "satan" is "accuser"; the verb from which it derives is used six times in the Old Testament (Pss. 38:20; 71:13; 109:4, 20, 29; Zech. 3:1) with that meaning. The term can also mean "adversary" or "slanderer." In Zechariah it refers to an accusation made by Abishai against Shimei, which is true but not slanderous. However, in the five Psalm passages it is used of slander. Context determines its meaning.

The noun is used occasionally in the Old Testament of humans. David is the first human in the Old Testament called a "satan" (1 Sam. 29:4), meaning in context "an adversary." Others include Abishai (2 Sam. 19:22), Solomon's military enemies (1 Kings 5:4), Hadad of Edom (1 Kings 11:14), and Rezon of Syria (1 Kings 11:23, 25).

It is also used of celestial beings in the Old Testament. In Job 1 and 2, Satan is referred to fourteen times in the role of God's adversary in the discussion about Job. In Zechariah 3:1–2, Satan stands at the right hand of the angel of the Lord to accuse Joshua the high priest. Of the almost twenty celestial references to Satan as an adversary of God, every instance but one uses the article "the" with the word referring to "the Satan." This designates a particular adversary. The one case in which a celestial satan is not hostile to God is in Numbers 22:22, where that adversary is an angel (32) who is acting on God's behalf. Of the Old Testament references to celestial adversaries only once is the word used without an article and thus appears to be a proper name: "Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to number Israel" (1 Chron. 21:1).

Satan is referred to much more frequently in the intertestamental literature, the Apocrypha, and Pseudepigrapha, than in the Old Testament.

This may be because of the feeling that God had abandoned the Jews because of their sin, destroying the temple with its Most Holy Place. The Jewish people thus transcendentalized God and allowed for much more evil activity between heaven and earth than in earlier religious belief. Surrogate terms such as Asmodeus, Azazel, Belial, Satanail, Mastema, and Semjaza are commonly used in this literature to designate Satan.

The Hebrew (Old Testament) word “satan” never appears in the New Testament, which uses instead a transliterated form of the Aramaic word *satanas* in its thirty-five occurrences. However, the Aramaic term is usually translated Satan in English versions of the New Testament, the same as the Hebrew word in the Old Testament. Equally often in appearance in the New Testament is the Greek word *diabolos*, translated devil. This is not a different term, only a Greek translation in the Septuagint of the Hebrew word *satan*. Thus, its meaning is the same. In Revelation 12:9, both terms, Aramaic and Greek, are used to refer to the great dragon John saw in his revelation: “and the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan.” The word “devil” never appears in the Hebrew Old Testament.

Unlike the Old Testament, the New Testament always uses the word “satan” (adversary) to refer to Satan, the greatest enemy of God and Christ. Almost half (15) of the 35 occurrences of the word in the New Testament are in the Gospels. It appears only twice in Acts, 10 times in Paul’s letters, and 8 times in Revelation.

The New Testament, like the intertestamental literature, uses other words for Satan (2 Cor. 12:7) and the devil (Matt. 4:1). These include Beelzebul (Mark 3:22), Belial (2 Cor. 6:15), and possibly Abaddon and Apollyon (Rev. 9:11). Additionally, metaphors are frequently used to describe Satan, including the terms Strong Man (Matthew 12:29), Evil One (Eph. 6:16), the Destroyer (1 Cor. 10:10), the Tempter (Matt. 4:3), the Accuser (Rev. 12:10), and the Enemy (1 Cor. 15:25).

Some animal metaphors are used of Satan: the Serpent (Rev. 12:9), the Dragon (Rev. 12:7), and the Lion (1 Peter 5:8; 2 Tim. 4:17). He is also referred to in cosmic terminology as the Prince of Demons (Matt. 9:34), the Ruler of this World (John 12:31), the Prince of the Power of the Air (Eph. 2:2), and the God of this World (2 Cor. 4:4).

The origin of Satan is never revealed in the Bible. Since dualism is not an acceptable biblical postulate for a co-eternal existence of God and Satan (Satan is referred to in the Bible only in male terminology, as are also the angels), Satan’s origin must be accounted for as a created being. Isaiah 14:12 speaks of the “Day Star, son of Dawn” as “fallen from heaven” and Ezekiel 28:13 contains the phrase “you were in Eden, the gar-

den of God . . . with an anointed guardian cherub . . . on the holy mountain of God . . . and the guarding cherub drove you out from the midst of the stones of fire . . .” Some see the origins of Satan in these passages. However, in the immediate context, Isaiah is writing a taunt against the king of Babylon, and Ezekiel is describing the fate of the king of Tyre. Whether these are allegorical allusions to Satan as well is debatable.

Somewhat parallel passages in the New Testament may provide some insight into the question of the origin of evil angels. Peter speaks of angels sinning and being “cast into hell committing them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment” (2 Peter 2:4). The expression “cast into hell” is literally in Greek “tartarize them.” Jude writes: “And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6 rsv).

Since Matthew refers to the devil and his angels, it is conceivable that the devil is himself a disobedient angel and the destiny of both is the “eternal fire” which is “prepared for them” (Matt. 25:41). Thus their destiny, if not their origin, is clear. However, Genesis has Satan present in the beginning of human creation tempting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3). He is in the form of a serpent on this occasion. That the serpent is indeed Satan is clearly stated in Revelation 12:9: “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (cf. Rev. 20:2).

Satan’s power has always been limited by the will of God. Job was allowed to be afflicted by Satan, but only to the extent allowed by God. Even though Satan has the power of death (Heb. 2:14), the use of that power is subject to the will of the Almighty. Even though Satan had the kingdoms of the world within his power and could deliver them to Jesus at his temptation (Matt. 4:9), that power was derived from God (Luke 4:6) and these kingdoms are under his influence only because they have chosen to sin and follow Satan rather than God. “The whole world is in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19 rsv). But, “The Evil One cannot touch” those who are born of God and do not “go on sinning” as a way of life but remain dedicated to serving him (1 John 5:18).

Satan is responsible not only for tempting humans to sin against God but also for leading cosmic powers to influence the church toward disunity which Jesus said would cause the world to disbelieve in him (John 17:21). Thus, Paul writes that through the church the manifold wisdom of

## Shalom

God is made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10). In the first four chapters of this Ephesian letter Paul is arguing for the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ, among other reasons because of its comic implications. The price of a divided church is a disbelieving world.

Satan is popularly but erroneously called Lucifer. This name does not appear in the Bible. The English term Lucifer is a translation of the Hebrew and Greek words for "light bringer." The English word is actually a transliteration of the Latin word *luciferos* meaning "light bringer," which refers to the morning star or day star, Venus. The word appears in Isaiah 14:12 where Isaiah tauntingly calls the king of Babylon "Day Star, son of Dawn" because symbolically he has fallen from his position of power in the evening so soon after having arisen in the morning. In the history of biblical exegesis this passage was connected with Luke 10:18 in which Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" and the word Lucifer came to be widely used as another name for Satan.

With the recent rise of interest in Satan and satanism in the West (see SATANIST, SATANISM), as well as an awareness of spiritual orientation of much of the rest of the world, it is crucial for missionaries from every culture to be aware of Satan and his schemes. Though there are excesses, the contemporary rise of the SPIRITUAL WARFARE movement is therefore a welcome development in mission. A mission theology of Satan and his work across cultural contexts is in the process of formation, and ensuring that it is biblically founded rather than experientially formed will remain a priority for missiologists in the future.

JOHN MCRAY

**Shalom.** Hebrew word meaning wholeness. It is translated into English using such terms as completeness, soundness, peace, well-being, health, prosperity, and salvation. It implies a state of mind that is at peace and satisfied, and social relationships characterized by harmony and mutual support. It is based on three fundamental principles: this world and all in it belongs to God; all humans share equally in God's loving concern (God shows no favoritism to some people or nations); and the reign of God in creation and in human communities leads to peace, justice, and truly fulfilled lives. *Shalom* is a transcultural and timeless concept, but like other such symbols it finds its expression in the concrete situations of real life in real cultures and real history. In the Old Testament, the focus is more on earthly wholeness. In the New Testament, the dimension of eternal life comes into sharper focus.

One attribute of *shalom* is *agape*, the identification with and unconditional commitment to the other (see LOVE OF GOD). This is not a response to the desirable, lovable, or admirable, but to the needy, undesired, unloved, and enemy. *Shalom* initiates action, accepts vulnerability, bears suffering, and always hopes for the best. The supreme manifestation is Christ's crucifixion. A second attribute is righteousness. In Scripture, true *shalom* and righteousness flow from right relationships with God (Isa. 60:17), and reflect his character of righteousness, love, justice, peace, and perfection. There can be no *shalom* while one persists in sin and evil (Isa. 48:18; 54:13), and the renewal of righteousness is essential to the restoration of *shalom*. A third attribute is PEACE. This is not, as the modern world sees it, simply freedom from feelings of guilt, serenity, and peace of mind, nor merely the absence of war. It actively seeks harmonious, mutually edifying relationships in community life. A fourth attribute is the concept of health. *Shalom* communicates the sense of human well-being in which physical, emotional, mental, moral, and spiritual health are inextricably intertwined. Unlike the Western WORLDVIEW, which differentiates between spirit and body, spiritual and material realities, the Hebrew worldview views humans as whole beings in which spiritual, moral, mental, and physical attributes are inextricably intertwined. A fifth attribute is *koinonia*. *Shalom* speaks of social fellowship and communal harmony among friends, parties, and nations.

*Shalom* is an essential part of God's cosmic plan, and is one of the threads running through Scripture linking cosmic, human, and individual histories into a single, coherent story. It began at CREATION, when God saw all he had created and it was good. Only man by himself was not good (Gen 2:18), because he was not in community.

The fall shattered this harmony (see FALL OF HUMANKIND). In the biblical worldview, sin is at root the breaking of *shalom*, the severing of relationships. It began with the break in right relationships with God when humans put themselves as the center of their being and worshiped themselves. It led to broken human relationships between genders (Gen. 3:15), brothers (Gen. 4:8), and human communities (Gen 11:9). The result was jealousy, hatred, ethnocentrism, rivalries, injustice, violence, and war.

The establishment of *shalom* is at the heart of God's plan of SALVATION. In Christ, God reached out to save fallen humans and to reconcile them to himself. Salvation begins with forgiveness with God through Christ Jesus, and finds expression in the restoration of human relationships to God, and to one another in the church, the body of Christ. *Shalom* is associated with a peace covenant, in which this restoration of relationships

and righteousness takes place (Num. 25:12; Isa. 54:7–8; Ezek. 34:5).

The final and full manifestation of *shalom* will occur when Christ returns and the kingdom of God is established over all creation. Then *shalom* and righteousness will reign in Zion (Isa. 60:17; Ps. 85:8–9), and violence and destruction will occur no more. *Shalom* is both a present reality in the life of the believer and the church, but also a future culmination in which all creation will be restored in harmony under the reign of Christ.

*Shalom* is of the essence of the KINGDOM OF GOD. It symbolizes the presence of God, who works to restore the entire creation to fulfill the purposes for which he created it. In the signs of this kingdom, such as salvation, reconciliation, and healing, people see the presence of God in this world, bringing life out of death, love and peace in the midst of hate and violence, and meaning to meaninglessness. Nature itself is included in God's salvation, for it will be a part of the new heaven and new earth that are essential in God's work to restore *shalom* throughout all his creation.

*Shalom* is to characterize the *ekklesia*, the CHURCH, the assembly or gathering of God's people. It is the test and hallmark of the church's divine nature as the outpost of the kingdom now on earth—the community that emerges when the covenant relationship between God and his people is restored, and that gives expression to the harmony intended by God. This church is not a social institution, although it finds expression in social forms. It is the community of the Spirit open to all who turn to God for reconciliation. At its heart is *koinonia*, the fellowship and harmony that give rise to a new saved and saving community based on the covenant of love that binds people together in mutual submission to one another. It is a new community that breaks down the walls of language, race, class, gender, and nationalism. It is also called to make peace, to seek social justice, provision for the needy, including widows, orphans, and the poor; and protection of the exploited and oppressed. Above all, it is apostolic, sent into the world with a divine commission to proclaim that the rule of God is at hand, that Jesus is Lord, and that people should change their ways and love in the light of the new reality and form new communities of followers.

*Shalom* is to characterize the life of the individual Christian, unlike the West, which sees autonomous, free individuals as the fundamental units of human reality, and differentiates between personal and social systems. Scripture sees individuals as fully human only as they are a part of communities of *shalom*, and healing as rooted in the community. Dan Fountain points out that "God's plan for the world is this: That all persons everywhere, in every nation, know God's

saving health and be delivered from disobedience, disruption, despair, disease and all that would destroy our wholeness."

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**Sin.** There is perhaps no concept more central and strategic to the Christian message than that of sin. The concept of sin is central to the biblical narrative of salvation history. It is central to the Christian explanation of suffering and death and is a crucial component of the meaning of the cross. It is key in any evangelistic presentation of the gospel and essential to the call for repentance and faith, in salvation, in sanctification, and in biblical eschatology. And it is foundational to the missionary mandate. It is because of sin and the eschatological consequences of sin, that missionaries go forth preaching a message of judgment and hope.

Missionaries cannot afford simply to take for granted their use of the concept of sin, for at least two reasons. On the one hand missionaries often go to societies in which a sense of sin, and a language for speaking of sin, seem to be markedly absent. On the other hand, many missionaries come from increasingly post-Christian societies where the concept of sin and judgment has come under attack and strong disapproval. Missionaries themselves are increasingly disapproved of as supposed purveyors of an unhealthy sense of sin and guilt. It is important, then, for missionaries to carefully reconsider their understanding and use of the concept of sin.

One might suppose that the concept of sin is simple, not complex, easy to translate and explain in other languages. Such is not the case. When accurately understood, sin carries a heavy load of meaning. Built into the meaning of that one word are ethical/moral, theological, anthropological, and eschatological implications.

**Ethical/Moral.** The language of sin presupposes a vigorous notion of good and evil, right and wrong, true moral obligations, normative ideals, and absolute standards. To violate what is ethical and good, to transgress against another person, to fail to exemplify the oral character traits one should, is to sin. Theft, murder, adultery, incest, slander, drunkenness, envy, and witchcraft are spoken of as sins.

At one level this is not a particular problem for missionaries, since all cultures have discourses of moral condemnation—discourses which presuppose notions of good and evil, right and wrong. At another level, missionaries face two distinct problems. First, cultures differ in terms

of the ethical and moral norms and ideals which are recognized or stressed. Missionary messages about sin may thus presuppose notions of good and evil, right and wrong which contradict the consciences of those to whom they speak. This has many practical and profound implications for missionaries who hope to make the conscience of their listeners an ally rather than a foe (for a full treatment of such implications, see Priest, 1994).

Second, the biblical themes of God as the source of moral standards and of moral evil as disobedience to God, are implied by the biblical language of sin—but are not necessarily shared by the cultures of the world.

**Theological.** Dictionaries stress that “sin” is a religious term. “Sin” differs from “immorality,” “evil,” or “crime” in that it implies a vertical Godward dimension—a theological orientation. Sin is “against God.” The Genesis 3 narrative of original sin focuses not on a horizontal relationship (theft, adultery, murder), but on the vertical one, relationship to God. The prohibition, “Don’t eat the fruit!” was of a nature to factor out all other issues except the simple issue of relationship to God. The narrative is one a child can grasp. But the vertical and horizontal are linked. After God is rejected, then Cain kills Abel.

In Psalm 51 David cries out to God, “Against you, you only have I sinned. . . .” David has committed adultery, lied, and murdered faithful Uriah. He has sinned against many, but it is the horror of his failure toward God which grips him. In the Bible God is the central equation, the fundamental fact, the integrating factor of the universe. The ten commandments begin with God, and on that foundation move to the horizontal. ETHICS and morality are grounded in theology. Whatever else sin entails, it is rebellion against God.

Missionaries often discover that the society to which they go is more likely to link morality to the ancestors than to God. While many societies will have a vague notion of a high god, such a god is distant and not intimately concerned with people’s ethical behavior. Instead of assuming a strong sense of God and a linkage between God and morality, missionaries must help to construct and re-articulate who God is, as well as the linkage of God and morality. The sense of sin is greatest where the sense of God is greatest (cf. Isa. 6). But the willingness to face God with our own sin will come only where a powerful message of love and grace makes such possible.

Missionaries in secular societies face their own difficulties. Here several centuries of effort have gone into denying that God is necessary to ethics and morality. As a result, the term “sin” has been moved to the margins of moral discourse. Nonetheless, as many philosophers have recognized, the effort to provide foundations for

morality and ethics apart from a transcendent source, has utterly failed. The astute apologist will find it possible to present a persuasive witness that God is essential as the foundation of morality, and move from there to the gospel—including discussion of sin.

**Anthropological.** The concept of sin, as used in Scripture, implies truths about people. It implies, first of all, a high view of human personhood. It would not be meaningful to apply the word “sin” to a tornado, a snake, or a dog. People are active moral agents with free will. Sin is presented in Scripture as evil which is actively chosen by culpable human agents. Such agents are not simply products of heredity or environment. They are active in choosing between good and evil.

The concept of sin also implies a terrible truth about the human condition. Subsequent to the first primordial sin, all humans enter the world as sinners. “Sinful” is an adjective which applies not just to acts, but to people. It is not just that people occasionally commit sinful acts. They are themselves sinful. Sin is not simply episodic (like crime), but a pervasive on-going condition. People are sinful at the deepest levels. Repeatedly the Bible stresses that the outward acts simply reveal something about the inner state: the dispositions of the heart, such as lust, covetousness, and pride.

The concept of sin points to both freedom and captivity. People who actively and freely choose that which is wrong find themselves also to be “slaves” to sin. These twin themes are both important to any presentation of the biblical view of the human condition. Again, such a presentation must take into account what the relevant culture says about human nature, in order to more effectively articulate and communicate the biblical view. For example, one may have to counter the claim of human determinism—that humans are therefore not accountable—or the claim that humans are by nature good, and not sinful.

**Eschatological.** The word “sin” carries with it the idea of culpability and deserved punishment. “In the day that you eat of it, you shall die.” “The wages of sin is death.” The very language of sin carries with it the idea of deserved and future judgment. While the wicked may flourish in this life, the implication is that there is moral harmony and justice in this world, and the wicked will be punished. The concept of sin carries with it implicitly the notion of deserved and coming punishment. Sin points to the coming judgment. Sin points to HELL.

Missionaries often express frustration when they cannot find a word for “sin” in the language of the people with whom they work—little realizing the heavy load of meaning carried by that one word, and the unlikelihood of finding a single word with the same load of meaning in any



culture except one heavily influenced by Christianity. Indeed there was no Hebrew or Greek word which carried the same range of meaning as our English word “sin.” Instead there were many words drawn from everyday moral discourse with which to speak of sin. Dynamically equivalent vocabulary exists in every culture. Instead of looking for a single word and expecting that word to carry the full load of meaning, the missionary will need to pay attention to the meaning itself, and communicate that meaning into the language and culture. A deep knowledge of language and culture will discover fully adequate lexical and symbolic resources for communicating biblical truths concerning sin.

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**Theology of Mission.** A discipline that reflects on the presuppositions, assumptions, and concepts undergirding mission theory. Prior to the 1960s, a number of important people like GIBERTUS VOETIUS, JOSEF SCHMIDLIN, GUSTAF WARNECK, Karl Barth, Karl Hartenstein, Martin Kähler, WALTER FREYTAG, ROLAND ALLEN, HENDRIK KRAEMER, J. H. BAVINCK, W. A. Visser t’Hooft, MAX WARREN, Olav Myklebust, BENGT SUNDKLER, Carl F. H. Henry, and Harold Lindsell reflected theologically on mission. As a separate discipline with its own parameters, methodology, scholars, and focuses, theology of mission really began in the early 1960s with the work of GERALD ANDERSON. In 1961, Anderson edited what many consider to be the first text of the discipline, a collection of essays entitled *The Theology of Christian Mission*.

Ten years later, in *The Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, theology of mission was defined as “concerned with the basic presuppositions and underlying principles which determine, from the standpoint of Christian faith, the motives, message, methods, strategy and goals of the Christian world mission.”

**Theology of mission is multidisciplinary.** Missiology is a multidisciplinary discipline that draws from many cognate disciplines. Within missiology, theology of mission examines the various cognate disciplines and clarifies their proximity to or distance from the center, Jesus Christ, asking whether there is a point beyond which the cognate disciplines may no longer be helpful or biblical. Theology of mission integrates who we are, what we know, and how we act in mission. It brings together our faith relationship with Jesus Christ, our spirituality, God’s

presence, the church’s theological reflection throughout the centuries, a constantly new re-reading of Scripture, our hermeneutic of God’s world, our sense of participation in God’s mission, and the ultimate purpose and meaning of the church and relates all these to the cognate disciplines of missiology. Theology of mission serves to question, clarify, integrate, and expand the presuppositions of the various cognate disciplines of missiology. As such, mission theology is a discipline in its own right, yet is not one of the related disciplines alongside the others, for it fulfills its function only as it interacts with all of them.

**Theology of mission is integrative.** When mission happens, all the various cognate disciplines occur simultaneously. So missiology must study mission not from the point of view of abstracted and separated parts, but from an integrative perspective that attempts to see the whole together. Theology of mission has to do with three arenas: (1) biblical and theological presuppositions and values are applied to (2) the ministries and mission activities of the church, set in (3) specific contexts in particular times and places.

First, theology of mission is *theology* because fundamentally it involves reflection about God. It seeks to understand God’s mission, his intentions and purposes, his use of human instruments in his mission, and his working through his people in his world. Thus theology of mission deals with all the traditional theological themes of SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, but it does so in a way that differs from how systematic theologians have worked. The differences arise from the multidisciplinary missiological orientation of its theologizing.

In addition, because of its commitment to remain faithful to God’s intentions, perspectives, and purposes, theology of mission shows a profound concern about the relation of the Bible to mission, attempting to allow Scripture not only to provide the foundational motivations for mission, but also to question, shape, guide, and evaluate the missionary enterprise itself (*see also* BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSION).

Second, theology of mission is *theology of*. In contrast to much systematic theology, here we are dealing with an applied science. At times it looks like what some would call pastoral or practical theology, due to this applicational nature. This type of theological reflection focuses specifically on a set of particular issues—those having to do with the mission of the church in its context. Theology of mission draws its incarnational nature from the ministry of Jesus, and always happens in a specific time and place.

Such contextual analysis facilitates a better understanding of the concrete situation, an understanding that helps the church hear the cries,

## Theology of Mission

see the faces, understand the stories, and respond to the living needs and hopes of the persons who are an integral part of that context. Part of this theological analysis today includes the history of the way the church's missions interfaced with that context down through history. The attitudes, actions, and events of the church's missional actions in a context will influence subsequent mission endeavors there.

Thus some scholars who deal with the history of theology of mission may not be especially interested in the theological issues as such, but may be concerned about the effects of that mission theology on mission activity in a context. They will often examine the various pronouncements made by church and mission gatherings (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Ecumenical, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic) and question the impact of these on missional action. The documents resulting from these discussions become part of the discipline of theology of mission.

Third, theology of mission is specially oriented toward and for *mission*. Reflection in this arena is found in books, journals, and other publications dealing with the theory of missiology itself. However, neither missiology nor the theology of mission can be allowed to restrict itself to reflection only. As JOHANNES VERKUYL stated,

Missiology may never become a substitute for action and participation. God calls for participants and volunteers in his mission. In part, missiology's goal is to become a "service station" along the way. If study does not lead to participation, whether at home or abroad, missiology has lost her humble calling. . . . Any good missiology is also a *missiologia viatorum*—"pilgrim missiology" (1978, 6, 18).

**Theology of mission is praxeological.** Theology of mission, then, must eventually emanate in biblically informed and contextually appropriate missional action. The intimate connection of reflection with action is through a process known as PRAXIS. Although there have been a number of different meanings given to this idea, ORLANDO COSTAS's formulation is one of the most constructive.

"Missiology," Costas says, "is fundamentally a praxeological phenomenon. It is a critical reflection that takes place in the praxis of mission. . . . (it occurs) in the concrete missionary situation, as part of the church's missionary obedience to and participation in God's mission, and is itself actualized in that situation. . . . In reference to this witnessing action saturated and led by the sovereign, redemptive action of the Holy Spirit, . . . the concept of missionary praxis is used. Missiology arises as part of a witnessing engagement to the gospel in the multiple situations of life" (1976, 8).

The concept of praxis helps us understand that not only the reflection, but profoundly the *action* as well is part of a "theology-on-the-way" that seeks to discover how the church may participate in God's mission in the world. The action is itself theological, and serves to inform the reflection, which in turn interprets, evaluates, critiques, and projects new understanding in transformed action in a constantly spiraling pilgrimage of missiological engagement in a context.

Because of the complexity of the inter- and multidisciplinary task that is theology of mission, mission theologians have found it helpful to focus on a specific integrating idea that serves as a hub through which to approach a rereading of Scripture. This "integrating theme" is selected on the basis of being contextually appropriate and significant, biblically relevant and fruitful, and missionally active and transformational.

Clearly we are trying to avoid bringing our own agendas to the Scripture and superimposing them on it. Rather, what is being sought is a way to bring a new set of questions to the text, questions that might help us see in the Scriptures what we had missed before. This new approach to Scripture is what DAVID BOSCH called "critical hermeneutics."

In 1987, the ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS OF MISSION said,

The mission theologian does biblical and systematic theology differently from the biblical scholar or dogmatician in that the mission theologian is in search of the "habitus," the way of perceiving, the intellectual understanding coupled with spiritual insight and wisdom, which leads to seeing the signs of the presence and movement of God in history, and through his church in such a way as to be affected spiritually and motivationally and thus be committed to personal participation in that movement. . . . The center, therefore, serves as both theological content and theological process as a disciplined reflection of God's mission in human contexts. The role of the theologian of mission is therefore to articulate and "guard" the center, while at the same time to spell out integratively the implications of the center for all the other cognate disciplines (Van Engen, 1987, 524-25).

Thus we find that theology of mission is a process of reflection and action involving a movement from the biblical text to the faith community in mission in its context.

**Theology of mission is definitional.** One of the most interesting, significant, yet frustrating tasks of mission theology is to assist missiology in defining the terms it uses, including a definition of "mission" itself. By the way of illustration, the following may be offered as a preliminary definition of mission

Mission is the People of God intentionally crossing barriers from Church to non-church, faith to non-faith to proclaim by word and deed the coming of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, through the Church's participation in God's mission of reconciling people to God, to themselves, to each other, and to the world, and gathering them into the Church through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit with a view to the transformation of the world as a sign of the coming of the Kingdom in Jesus Christ.

**Theology of mission is analytical.** Theology of mission examines the theological and theoretical assumptions, meanings, and relations that permeate mission. To do this, mission theologians have found it helpful to partition the task into smaller segments. We noticed earlier that Gerald Anderson used the terms "faith, motives, message, methods, strategy, and goals." Jim Stamoilis studied *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* by analyzing "the historical background, the aim, the method, the motives, and the liturgy" of mission as that took place among and through the Eastern Orthodox.

Following this method, some mission theologians organize their questions around the fact that mission is *MISSIO DEI*, it is God's mission. So one finds a number of mission theologians asking about "God's mission" (*missio Dei*), mission as it occurs among humans and utilizes human instrumentality (*missio hominum*), missions as they take many forms through the endeavors of the churches (*missiones ecclesiae*), and mission as it draws from and impacts global human civilization (*missio politica oecumenica*).

So theology of mission is prescriptive as well as descriptive. It is synthetic (bringing about synthesis) and integrational. It searches for trustworthy and true perceptions concerning the church's mission based on biblical and theological reflection, seeks to interface with the appropriate missional action, and creates a new set of values and priorities that reflect as clearly as possible the ways in which the church may participate in God's mission in a specific context at a particular time.

When theology of mission is abstracted from mission practice it seems strange and can be too far removed from the concrete places and specific people that are at the heart of God's mission. Theology of mission is at its best when it is intimately involved in the heart, head, and hand (being, knowing, and doing) of the church's mission. Theology of mission is a personal, corporate, committed, profoundly transformational search for a trinitarian understanding of the

ways in which the people of God may participate in the power of the Holy Spirit in God's mission in God's world for whom Jesus Christ died.

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**Trinity.** Whereas in recent decades much scholarly thought about God has been drawn toward process theology or to some form of universalism, a small but healthy list of books has probed classic Trinitarianism, and some of this work has sketched the missiological implications.

Rejecting the speculative and frequently post-modern argumentation of the former, the latter approach anchors itself in what the Bible says about God's dealings with his covenantal people, and with the world, across the centuries, culminating in his gracious self-disclosure in Christ. While the biblical witness strenuously insists on the oneness of God, this one God is not *simplex*: the biblical material cries out for the kind of elaboration that issued in the doctrine of the Trinity. If the later elaborations (e.g., technical distinctions between "person" and "substance") should not be read back into the pages of Scripture, it does no harm to apply the term "Trinity" to what the Bible discloses of God, provided anachronism is avoided.

Even the Old Testament includes hints of the non-*simplex* nature of the one God (see, e.g., Erickson). But the biblical furnishing of the elements that called forth the doctrine of the Trinity comes to clearest focus in its treatment of Jesus the Messiah. Already in the Old Testament, one stream of prophetic expectation pictures Yahweh coming to rescue his people, while another stream pictures him sending his servant David. When these streams occasionally merge (e.g., Isa. 9; Ezek. 34), they do so in the matrix of anticipated mission.

## Trinity

Selected features of New Testament witness to God as triune become clear when their missiological bearing is articulated.

First, the kind of monotheism disclosed in the Bible is far more successful at portraying God as a loving God than any *simplex*-monotheism can ever be. A unitarian God may be thought to love his image-bearers in the space-time continuum. But it is very difficult to imagine how such a God could be said to be characteristically a God of love before the universe was created, unless the word "love" is stretched to the breaking point. Although little is said in the Bible regarding the intra-Triune relationships before creation, there are important hints. The Son enjoyed equality with God before the incarnation, but, far from wishing to exploit his status, in obedience to his Father's commission emptied himself, became a servant, and died the odious death of the cross (Phil. 2:6–11). In John's Gospel, the Son's love for the Father is expressed in unqualified obedience (e.g., John 8:29; 14:31). The Father's love for the Son is displayed both in withholding nothing from him and in "showing" him all that he does, including commissioning him with a mission that ensures all will honor the Son as they honor the Father (John 3:35; 5:16–30). Embedded deeply in Paul's thought is the conviction that the Father's giving over of the Son to death on the cross is the ultimate measure of God's love for us (Rom. 8:32; cf. 1 John 4:9). The love of God that ultimately stands behind all Christian mission is grounded in, and logically flows from, the love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. As much as the Son loved the world, it was his love for the Father which drove him to the cross (hence the cry in the Garden, Mark 14:36). The Father loved the world so much that he sent his Son (John 3:16). Thus it was the Father's love for the Son that determined to exalt the Son and call out and give to him a great host of redeemed sinners.

Second, the doctrine of the Trinity stands behind the incarnation. If God were one in some unitarian sense, then for God to become a human being the incarnation would either so exhaust God that the incarnated being would have no one to pray to or the notion of God would have to shift from his transcendent personhood and oneness to some ill-defined pantheism. Incarnation in the confessional sense is possible only if the one God is some kind of plurality within unity. The Word who was with God (God's own companion) and who was God (God's own self) became flesh, and lived for a while among us (John 1:1, 14). The Lion of the tribe of Judah comes from God's own throne (Rev. 5).

For God to become human, something other than a *simplex* monotheistic God was necessary. This is more than a technical point. The high point of revelation is the coming and mission of

Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 4:1–4). His disclosure of God (cf. John 14:7) not only through instructive words and deeds of justice and mercy, but supremely in the cross, depends on the incarnation, which itself is dependent on biblical Trinitarianism. Conversely, if it were not for the incarnation of Jesus Christ, if it were not for what the incarnate Lord accomplished, it would be difficult to assign any sense at all to the conviction that believers come to "participate in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

Moreover, the sending of the Son becomes the anchor for the sending of the disciples (John 20:21). As he has had a mission from his Father, so we receive our mission from him. Indeed, in this sense the Christian mission is nothing more than a continuation of the mission of the Son, the next stage as it were. None of this would be particularly coherent if unitarianism replaced Trinitarianism.

Third, although orthodox Trinitarianism insists that all three persons of the Godhead are equally God, it insists no less strongly that each does not perform or accomplish exactly what the others do. The Father sends the Son, the Son goes: the relationship is not reciprocal. After his death and exaltation, the Son bequeaths the Spirit: the reverse is not true. The Spirit is given as the "down payment" of the ultimate inheritance: that cannot be said of the Father or the Son. When the exalted Christ has finally vanquished the last enemy, he turns everything over to his Father: once again, the two persons of the Godhead mentioned in this sentence could not have their roles reversed without making nonsense of the biblical narrative.

The bearing of these observations on missiological thought is twofold. First, God discloses himself to the ideal community, the archetypal community, "a sort of continuous and indivisible community," as the Cappadocians taught (the words are attributed to Basil of Caesarea). This stands radically against the isolated individualism espoused by many forms of liberal democracy. It is an especially important component of our vision of God in all attempts to evangelize and disciple societies less enamored with individualism than are many Western nations (*see also* INDIVIDUALISM and COLLECTIVISM).

Yet the Persons of the Godhead are not three indistinguishable godlets, like three indistinguishable peas in a pod. They interact in love, and, in the case of the Son to the Father and of the Spirit to the Son and to the Father, in obedience, they each press on with distinctive tasks in their unified vision. In confessional trinitarianism, the three Persons of the Godhead are equally omniscient, but they do not think the same thing, that is, the point of self-identity with each is not the same as with the other. The Father cannot think, "I went to the cross, died, and

rose again." Each is self-defined over against the others, while preserving perfect unity of purpose and love. This observation, lightly sketched in Calvin, has been probed more thoroughly in recent times. It preserves the individual person without succumbing to individualism. This stands radically against a collectivity in which individuals are squeezed into conformity or submerged in the community, no longer a community of free persons.

It is within such a framework, then, that the church should pursue the unity for which Jesus prayed (John 17). This unity is in fact precisely what has been lived out among countless Christians over the centuries, in fulfillment of Jesus' prayer: a oneness in love, in shared vision, despite all the diversity—mirroring, however imperfectly, the oneness of God. The oneness of the collective, or of a unified ecumenical structure, is a poor reflection of this glorious reality. Indeed, this oneness in love becomes a potent voice of witness to the world (John 13:34–35). We love, not only because he first loved us, but because God is love (1 John 4:7–12).

Fourth and finally, full-orbed reflection on the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity for mission demands extended meditation on how the Triune God pursues a lost and rebellious race of those who bear his image, on the distinctive roles of the Father and the Son, on the part played by the Holy Spirit in this mission. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:7–11), enabling the person without the Spirit to see and understand what would otherwise remain closed off (1 Cor. 2:14). The Holy Spirit also strengthens believers for every good work, conforming them to Christ in anticipation of the consummation of the last day. His is the initiative in explosive evangelism in the Book of Acts; his is still the regenerating power that transforms men and women when the word of the gospel is heralded today.

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**Two-Covenant Theory.** This theory contends that because God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham and the patriarchs (Gen. 18:19, etc.) and ratified it with all Israelites at Sinai, and because Jesus made a second covenant with

the Gentile world in mind, his gospel should be theologically understood as intended for non-Jews only. This means that Judaism should be regarded by the followers of Jesus, whether Jews or Gentiles, as a divinely guided religion that is parallel to Christianity, "neither superseded by it, nor fulfilled within it" (Myers, 1990). This perspective allegedly has validity even though it is readily granted that the New Testament gives no endorsement to this radical reconceptualization of the significance of the new covenant instituted by Jesus in fulfillment of the prophecy made by Jeremiah (31:31–34). Hans Joachim Schoeps is often quoted in its support: "The continuous existence of Israel almost 2000 years *post Christum natum*, still undisturbed in its consciousness of being God's covenant people, is testimony that the old covenant has not been abrogated, that as the covenant of Israel it continues to exist alongside the wider human covenant of the Christian Church" (1961, 256, 7). Evangelicals rejoice that the Jewish people continue to exist due to God's faithfulness (Jer. 31:35–37), despite all efforts to destroy them. This is the great fact that makes certain the coming of their Golden Age. Then, reunited to Jesus the Messiah, they shall be as "life from the dead" to the Gentile nations (Rom. 11:1–16, 25–36).

According to this theory Jews do not now need to believe in Jesus in order to be saved (despite the Jewish witness before the Sanhedrin to the exact opposite in Acts 4:12). The evangelization of the Jewish people is unwarranted and should cease. Jewish religious leaders should be heeded when they contend that the hostility between Christianity and Judaism generated over the centuries by the church's persistent efforts to evangelize their people should give way to mutual acceptance and friendly religious dialogue between their separate religious communities.

In this connection the words of Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), an Austrian Jewish philosopher, are often quoted: "We are wholly agreed as to what Christ and his church mean to the world: no one can reach the Father save through him. But the situation is quite different from one who does not have to reach the Father because he is already with him. And this is true of the people of Israel (though not of individual Jews)" (Glatzer, 1953).

The probability is that Rosenzweig's words would have never gained their widespread credence had he not been just about the first Jewish scholar to speak appreciatively of Christianity, the Christian church, and her significant success in world mission. In his famous book, *The Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig contends that Jews are born Jews, born into the faith community instituted between God and Israel at Sinai. By this natural phenomenon, they do not have to undergo any form of spiritual rebirth. In contrast,

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since no Gentiles are born Christians, a rebirth is essential if they desire to become spiritual children of Abraham (Rom. 4:9–12). Inevitably, Rosenzweig's position generated much debate, pro and con in Jewry. Arthur A. Cohen argued that this "heady doctrine—provides the Jew at last with a means of explaining to the Christian, in essentially Christian terms, why it is that the promise of Jesus to the Jews isn't really interesting. Jews do not need redemption in the same way as Christians. Eternal life, as the Sabbath liturgy affirms, is already planted in our midst" (1971, 210).

Mainline Protestantism largely endorses the two-covenant theory. But this has not always been the case. In 1948 when the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES convened its first international assembly, it was agreed that despite the tragedy of Auschwitz and the failure of churches worldwide to protest the German destruction of European Jewry (1939–45), the Word of God must be upheld: "The fulfillment of the church's commission requires that we include the Jewish people in our evangelistic task" (WCC Publications, Document 1). By 1988 the drift from obedience to Scripture had gained such momentum that the WCC openly suggested to its member churches that "the next step may be to proscribe all proselytism of Jews on the theological ground that it is rejection of Israel's valid covenant with God" (1988, 186). Forgotten is Jesus' admonition to Nicodemus, "a ruler of the Jews," that no one can see, much less enter the KINGDOM OF GOD unless he is born anew (John 3:1–21).

Evangelicals readily agree with Axel Torm, the former chairman of the Danish Israel Mission, who stated: "In earlier times the church downgraded Judaism in order to exalt Christ. It was a sin that the church committed. Today, people downgrade Christ in order to exalt Judaism. Is that better?" (quoted by Kjaer-Hansen, 1994, 81).

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**Universality of Mission.** The universality of mission is the mandate of mission that the gospel be proclaimed to all the peoples of the world. It includes providing all peoples with the opportunity to hear with understanding the message of salvation found only in Jesus Christ, the opportunity to accept or reject him as Lord and Savior, and the opportunity to serve him in the fellowship of a church.

The impetus of the universality of mission arises from the nature of the GOSPEL itself. The

universality of the gospel, in turn, is inextricably linked to its uniqueness, a uniqueness found in its CHRISTOLOGY (see also UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST). The incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus is the message of the presence of the eternal God providing in Christ the only way of salvation for all those living in spiritual darkness and death. The biblical witness is that "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:19–20). It is only in this unique gospel of Jesus Christ that the world is confronted with the reality of the redemption of God. Thus, the gospel is for all the world because it is about all the world. It alone reveals the alienation of all humans from God and the hope of their reconciliation to God.

The religious pluralist objects that such a particular and exclusive claim of salvation in Christ is a barrier to genuine relationship with those of other faiths (see PLURALISM and UNIVERSALISM). But if the uniqueness of the gospel is denied, how is one to affirm God's intention to provide the means of salvation for the world and the historical event that actualized salvation? It is the uniqueness of the gospel that requires that all the peoples of the world hear the content and condition of God's provision of salvation in Christ and be given the opportunity to believe in Jesus. Thus it is out of the unique message of the gospel that the necessity, urgency, obligation, and self-sacrifice of global mission emerge in their fullest implications (see also MISSIONARY TASK, THE).

Further, in the GREAT COMMISSION, the Lord Jesus commands the universal dissemination of the gospel. Matthew 28:18–20, Mark 15:16, Luke 24:46–47, and Acts 1:8 restate the intent of the commission in different words with the same effect—the gospel is to go to "all nations," "all the world," "all the nations," and to "the uttermost parts of the earth." In the Matthew passage Jesus prefaces his commission with the assertion of his absolute authority in heaven and on earth. To fail to take the gospel to all the world is tantamount to disobedience to the lordship of Christ.

The Matthew passage also provides added dimension to the scope of the commission. DONALD MCGAVRAN proposed that "all nations" (*panta ta ethnē*) refers to all the peoples of the world; that is, all humanity, all who live on earth, all the ethnolinguistic groups of the world (see also PEOPLES, PEOPLE GROUPS). The mandate of the Great Commission is to make disciples in all the world through evangelism, church planting, and instruction.

The importance of every individual, moreover, is related to the universality of mission. John 3:16 clearly declares God's intent that the mes-

sage of his loving provision of salvation be universally communicated. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Each person, as a special creation of God, deserves the occasion to have his or her spiritual need and hunger met by God's redemptive love.

The universality of mission also has eschatological implications. Our Lord appears to link global evangelization with his return (*see also* MILLENNIAL THOUGHT AND MISSION). In Matthew 24:14 he declares, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." In Revelation 5:9 praise is ascribed to the enthroned Lord Jesus because with his blood he bought people "for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."

The ultimate impetus of the universality of mission is the glory of God. That is, global mission is driven by God's intention to redeem to himself a people to love and praise him out of all the nations and people groups of the world (*see also* WORSHIP).

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**Worship.** Today as throughout history, worship and mission are linked inextricably together, for God propels his mission through the drawing of worshipers to himself. God's call to worship him empowers us to respond with his passion to do mission. Thus, worship ignites mission; it is God's divine call-and-response strategy.

Indeed, the Scriptures resound with his global call to worship via mission. The prophet Isaiah, for example, responding in the midst of worship, takes up the call to go (Isa. 6:1–8). Likewise, the Samaritan woman encounters Jesus Christ, the incarnate God. He discloses that the Father is seeking authentic worshipers, people in relationship with him. The woman responds by immediately calling others to come see the man who told her everything she had done (John 4:26). Finally, the greatest call-and-response pattern surfaces when the disciples meet with the resurrected Jesus just before his ascension (Matt. 28:16ff.). Finally recognizing Jesus' true identity, they fall down and worship him. In the context of worship, Jesus gives his crowning imperative, the GREAT COMMISSION (Matt. 28:17–20). The missionary mandate flows out of an intimate relationship with God generated in worship. God's propelling call to go into all the world becomes our response of commitment and allegiance to him. We join him in his passion to call worshipers to himself.

Wherever we have seen meaningful, authentic worship, the church has experienced a new missions thrust. Yet, a radical separation of worship from mission has dominated mission methodol-

ogies. DONALD MACGAVRAN once claimed, "Worship . . . is good; but worship is worship. It is not evangelism" (1965, 455). The typical practice has been to call people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ with worship being a resultant by-product. While ignoring God's primary call to worship, missiologists have, however, recognized the need for relevant Christian worship to nurture a Christian movement. Thus, the model of "evangelism-before-worship" has dominated evangelical mission strategies.

Yet God's call to worship him is currently sweeping around the world in great, new revolutionary ways. Along with new openness to new forms and patterns of worship, there is greater recognition of the intimate relationship between worship and mission. Such winds of worship empowering mission have been building over the past few decades in relation to renewal movements. In 1939, for example, the Methodist Episcopal Church published a small manual, *A Book of Worship for Village Churches*, for the "great army of Christian pastors, teachers, and laymen who are leading the toiling villagers of India through worship to the feet of Christ" (Ziegler, 1939, 7). The manual resulted from a desire to see the church in India take root in its own soil in tandem with the vast treasures of two thousand years of Christian heritage. Research revealed that where dynamic worship was practiced, changed lives and growing churches resulted. On the other hand, weak, stagnant and ineffective churches existed where worship of God in Christ was neglected (*ibid.*, 5).

More recently, as renewal movements grow in their experience with God, God calls them into mission. The common strategic link of each of these groups is their focus on worship with evangelism as the inclusive by-product: the "worship-propels-mission" model. French Benedictine monks, for example, have entered Senegal with the goal of creating a model of contextualized worship drawn from cultural musical traditions. They have adapted African drums and the twenty-one-string Kora harp to attract Muslims to Christ. Likewise, the Taizé Movement from France is growing through the development of contemplative, worship forms. Facilitated by the burgeoning impact of electronic media and new musical forms worldwide, the growth of a Worship and Praise Movement, originating from such streams as the Jesus People Movement through Marantha! Music and the Vineyard Movement, is forging an openness to new, global worship forms.

Among the most exciting developments are the new mission forces from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Their distinctive approaches commonly revolve around worship. In Kenya, one of the most dynamic examples of church growth is found at the Nairobi Chapel. The Chapel bases

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much of its strategy on the development of meaningful worship (especially music) for effectively communicating the gospel to a predominantly university-student based church (Long). The vision does not stop with Kenya; they are reaching out to neighboring Tanzania. In West Africa, Senufo Christians of Cote d'Ivoire are reaching out to their neighbors through their distinctive worship form—song, dance, and drama (King). Christian Inca Indians from Peru are reaching out to Native Americans of North America. Through their deeper understanding of more culturally relevant worship forms, Inca Christians are preaching through the use of Indian storytelling styles. Asians are going to other Asians; Koreans to the Philippines and American Filipinos to Japan. In one case, Taiwans' Hosanna Ministries partnered with the Korean Tyrannus Team in initiating a series of Worship and Praise activities in 1989. This partnership brought forth a movement of renewal in Taiwan where unbelievers came to Christ and believers dedicated themselves to missions (Wong). They discovered "an intimate relationship between worship and mission" (1993, 3). Worship propelled both evangelism and commitment to do more mission.

With the growing surge of worship empowering mission, we must keep five factors in mind in order to achieve a lasting impact for the kingdom. First, worship must remain worship: we must, above all, seek encounter with God. Worship services should not serve as functional substitutes for evangelism. Rather, we must seek authenticity of interaction with God and developing relationship with him. Genuine worship of the Creator will attract and confront those who long to enter into the kingdom. Likewise, evangelistic programs must pursue evangelism. The two, worship and mission, must remain distinct, yet work hand-in-hand.

Second, we must allow God to transform and make anew his original creation. Contextualization of the gospel is not an option, but an imperative. Throughout the Scriptures and history, we see people worshipping God in ways that were formerly heathen but then transformed with radically new meaning. Service order, length, language, symbolism, prayer forms, songs, dance, bowing, speeches, Scripture reading, and artifacts must be captured to nurture believers and bring the peoples of the world into relationship with the living God.

Third, we are to pursue diversity within the unity of the body of Christ (Eph. 2; 1 Cor. 12): "Diversity (of worship forms) seems to coincide with the periods of effective mission efforts" (Muench, 1981, 104). Foundational mission goals must seek to make Christ understood and known within their own context. The Celtic church, for example, known as a strong mission

church, encouraged each tribal group to develop its own worship service pattern. Likewise, worship patterns and forms must vary according to the cultural contexts—including multicultural settings. In order to know God intimately, peoples from differing contexts require the freedom to interact with him through relevant worship forms.

Fourth, there is a great need for research toward developing appropriate worship. We must allow dynamic worship to grow and change as relationship with God deepens. Worship forms are shaped by and reflect our relationship with God via appropriate, expressive cultural forms. There is great need for openness in pursuing, experimenting, exchanging, and documenting experiences in worship. Needed topics of research should include biblical models of worship that seek precedents for adapting cultural forms, comparative philosophical thought forms, historical models of worship from the Christian movement, uses and meaning of ritual (anthropology), verbal and non-verbal symbols (communication), and comparative cultural worship patterns.

Finally, we must train for worship and worship leading. In keeping with "spirit and truth" worship (John 4:23), missionaries must first of all be worshipers of the living God. Then they are empowered to take up God's passionate call to bring all peoples to worship him. Besides studying the nature of worship and the numerous patterns and forms that worship can embody, we must train people to lead worship and stimulate meaningful worship cross-culturally. Training for worship must become a major component in the formation of missionaries.

Authentic Christian worship brings people to encounter Jesus Christ. As one looks to God, God reveals his vision to us. We respond to his call. Thus, worship propels and empowers mission. Ultimately, God calls us to participate in achieving God's vision as entoned by the Psalmist: "All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name" (Ps. 86:9).

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**Wrath of God.** The word “wrath” occurs in over two hundred places in the Bible and the concept is implied in many more. The overwhelming majority of these refer the attitude, activity, or response of God to human SIN. Wrath is the continuing reaction of the holy, pure, sovereign, personal God to anything which offends his moral nature and kingly rights. This includes rejection by the offender of his person, rule, will, and affronts to his holy being, whether it be conscious and direct or subconscious and indirect.

In Scripture God’s wrath may be the threat of coming punishment and doom or of present or future judgment. In the absolute sense it is a synonym for eternal separation from God and punishment in HELL. Divine wrath may be directed toward a group or an individual. Those who do not acknowledge God, the HEATHEN, are under the wrath of God and will feel its full fury. God’s people who turn away from him or refuse to live according to his will and law are also objects of his wrath. This is the primary way the term is used of Israel in the Old Testament. In the case of God’s people there is the call to repent so that wrath may be averted and restitution offered, when the time of punishment is completed. The Old Testament also stresses that God is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8).

The precise phrase “wrath of God” appears only in the New Testament. Because the righteous visitation of wrath is a prerogative of divine sovereignty, God’s people are not to avenge themselves (Rom. 12:19). Other references to the “wrath of God” fall into a number of categories. (1) It is the lot of those who reject Jesus Christ and refuse to obey God’s will revealed in him. In John 3:36 the wrath of God is the opposite of having eternal life through believing in the Son and rests on those who do not obey the Son. Paul says wrath is being revealed against “all ungodliness and wickedness of men who . . . suppress the truth” (Rom. 1:18). He also insists that it comes “upon the sons of disobedience” who live immoral, frivolous, materialistic, idolatrous, ungodly lives (Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6). (2) It is from wrath that we are saved in Christ. As Paul affirms, we are “justified by his blood, saved by him from the wrath of God” (Rom. 5:9). (3) The outpouring of the wrath of God is a central focus of the visions of judgment in Revelation (14:9;

15:1; 16:1; 19:15) and people seek refuge from it (6:16).

The Greek word *hilastērion*, translated “propitiation” in such passages as Romans 3:25 in the KJV and NASB, has a direct relation to “wrath.” It refers to the sacrifice offered to appease the wrath of an offended deity. Either because propitiation is a word unfamiliar to moderns or because of a desire to dissociate the Judeo-Christian God with the vengeful, often irrational wrath of deities in pagan religions, most twentieth-century translations use some other rendering, such as “expiation” or “sacrifice of atonement.” God is certainly not a vengeful, capricious being but wrath is his proper, just response to sin. However *hilastērion* and related terms are handled, one must not lose sight of the fact that Paul asserts that through the blood of Jesus God’s wrath (note the occurrence of the term in the preceding context; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5) is real but turned aside by God’s grace received by faith.

The fact of God’s wrath has often been a motivation for evangelism and mission. The threat of and warning against it is a frequent, legitimate part of the Christian message aimed at winning converts. It is also one of the appropriate stimuli for Christian behavior. It is, however, dangerous to sensationalize, dramatize, or overly emphasize wrath for it is only a part of God’s nature. The prophet Habakkuk sought a balance when he cried, “In wrath remember mercy” (3:2).

JONATHAN EDWARD’S sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” is sometimes cited as an example of extreme scare tactics. Edwards’ concern was to show that although sinners do stand in danger of God’s wrath, they are in the hands of one who is also compassionate, merciful, and loving to the repentant.

The heart of the Christian message is that God, against whom sin has been committed, rightly responds in wrath. His justice demands proper punishment for wrongdoers. However, God in love, mercy, and grace has, in Christ, acted to both satisfy his justice (Rom. 3:26) and to make forgiveness and salvation available in Christ. This is the balanced and correct impetus and message of the missionary enterprise.

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