AGWM Missiology Committee Report

DEFINING MISSIONARY…
Identity and Function

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Defining Missionary Identity and Function

The views of Evangelical Christians have significantly changed regarding how we understand and apply the term *missionary* and its cognates. In recent years, some have called for a moratorium on the terms *mission* and *missionary*.[1] These particular voices argue that such descriptors (e.g., missions, missionaries, mission agencies, missiology, and missional) simply no longer work for the Church in the present climate of twenty-first century life. In their view, this terminology provides not only an inadequate account of the biblical vision, but also serves as stumbling blocks in the way of effectual gospel witness due to long-held stereotypes over the missionary persona in both western and non-western societies.[2]

On the other hand, there is a predominate usage of the term for many Christians who define "mission" as all the Church does in the world to advance the kingdom of God. A natural progression leads to a notion that if this concept represents a biblical understanding of mission, then it also infers that every Christian is a missionary. Thus, the words of Stephen Neill's premonition, "If everything is mission, nothing is mission."[3] If taken one step further, if everyone is a missionary, then no one is a missionary.

Because the term *missionary* does not appear in the Bible, providing a definitive meaning can be difficult. Of course, other theological terms not found in the Bible enjoy wide acceptance in the Church to help describe complex biblical views. But unlike terms such as Trinity and incarnation, no broad consensus exists over a biblical definition of *missionary*. The question emerges then: What can be learned from informed and biblical reflection about the ministry function to which the term *missionary* refers? However, before moving to the biblical text, an overview of etymological and historical perspectives may prove helpful to provide a framework for this discussion.

Genesis and Development of the Term "Missionary"

Since the word *missionary* does not appear in the Bible, it becomes necessary to understand the term from an etymological and historical perspective. Derived from the Latin word *mitto* (to send) or *missus* (sent), the word *missionary* has traditionally been understood as a designation for someone sent on a mission for God, through the Church or a mission agency, in

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[1]See Colin Andrews (pseudonym), "The Death of Missions: An EMQ Symposium." In *Evangelical*

[2]Rick Love, "How Do We Deal with the Baggage of the Past? Blessing the Nations in the 21st Century: A 3D Approach to Apostolic Ministry," in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25(1): 31-37.

[3]Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension: The Duff Lectures,* 1958 (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1959), 81.

order to propagate the gospel of Christ. The relationship between the sender and the sent one surrounds the issues of the motivation, aim, and task of the mission.

Though some scholars have rejected that a precise equivalency exists between the term *missionary* with New Testament words,[4] others contend that the biblical function of *apostle* is closely associated to that of pioneer missionaries who are *sent* to initiate gospel ministry.[5] The idea that lies behind *apostolos* is a person who is commissioned and suggests a historical connection with the ancient Near Eastern office of an emissary, in which the envoy authoritatively represents the one who sent him. This office appears to have functioned during the Jewish Second Temple period through the use of the Aramaic term *sâliáh.*[6] For the Early Church, the Greek term *apostle* was preferred and adopted, but carried overtones from the Semitic concept of the envoy or messenger. The concept is expressed in Jesus' statement in John 13:16, the sending of the disciples in Mark 6:7-13. 30, and the community *apostolate* formed by Paul (cf., 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). The New Testament describes apostolic functions of witness, service, church planting, and leadership training, which later became equated with the missionary vocation.

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Historical Shifts

Missiological reflection must include historical and theological considerations. We look historically at what God has done and theologically to see what He wants us to do. Globalization has helped us to realize that our historical perspective is very limited in the light of all that was really going on. Our considerations are limited to histories written mostly from a Euro-centric or North American perspective. Nonetheless, they are valuable as we learn from the triumphs and failures of the past. As we expand what we know, we can also formulate questions and challenge national historians to rise to the challenge of researching other perceptions and points of view. The following historical overview provides insights into the dramatic shifts that have occurred with how we perceive the missionary identity and vocation.

Early Missionary Activity

Soon after the rise of Roman Christian rulers, missionary teams undertook the evangelization of barbarian peoples throughout the Roman Empire. As time passed, missionaries were sent to evangelize France, Ireland, Anglo-Saxons, Germans, and Scandinavians. The activities of Celtic monks helped to establish the Church in other remote areas of the West.

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[4]See Walter McConnell, "The Missionary Call: A Biblical and Practical Appraisal," in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43 (April 2007): 210-216.

[5]E.g., Michael C. Griffiths, "Today's Missionary, Yesterday's Apostle," in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 21 (April 1985): 154-164.

[6]Martin Karrer, "Apostle, Apostolate," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 1, eds. Erwin Fahlbusch, Jan Milic Lochman, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 107-109.

Toward the East, Nestorian missionaries penetrated central Asia, China, and beyond. The primary emphasis of these missionary efforts focused on church planting, Bible translation, and leadership formation.

Era of Mission Exploration

A shift in missionary terminology, however, began to emerge in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the terms *mission* and *missionary* were used to describe the activity of *sending* qualified monks and priests overseas. David Bosch records that "for fifteen centuries the church used other terms to refer to what we subsequently came to call *mission*: phrases such as "propagation of the faith," "preaching the gospel," "apostolic proclamation," "promulgation of the gospel," "augmenting the faith," "expanding the church," "planting the church," "propagation of the reign of Christ," and "illuminating the nations.""[7]

During this age of exploration, missionary activity increased. Jesuit workers like Xavier, went to Goa, Japan and China. Afterward, Robert de Nobili was sent to India and Matteo Ricci to China. This era of missionary expansion came through the efforts of the Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, and other religious orders to reach the unevangelized peoples in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. However, a shift in missionary approach began as European missionaries accompanied their nation´s explorers and colonizers on quests to possess new lands. These missionaries began a process of "Christianizing" indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, the cross was accompanied by the sword of conquest. As a result, the missionary persona was quickly viewed as associated with the colonial oppression and enslavement. Unfortunately, by the fifteenth century, the Roman Catholic inquisition was also linked to the Dominican and Jesuit missionary efforts and introduced a dark age of mistreatment, torture, and even death as they sought to persecute heresy and convert the "natives" to Christianity.

Protestant Piety and Zeal

Later, the emergence of Protestant missions marked a new dawn for the Christian missionary movement. The powerful Pietist reform movement within the German Lutheran church awakened a passion for the witness in foreign lands. By the early 1700s, over fifty Pietist missionaries from Germany were working in India. Pietism greatly influenced Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who became the leader of the Moravian movement. In 1732 Moravian believers began sending missionaries around the worldto 28 different countries in 28 years.

Puritan mission efforts from England, and through many who immigrated to North America, also helped to shape a distinct Protestant missionary profile. For example, John Eliot was a Puritan missionary who was instrumental in the conversion of the Massachusetts' Indians in the New England colonies around 1660.

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[7]David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*: *Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 228.

Missionary Awakening

John and Charles Wesley led the Evangelical Awakening in England. They were greatly influenced by the Moravians. In the 1800s many missionaries were sent out from their Methodist movement. In North America, the Evangelical revivals and Great Awakening in the 1700s were a major factor in the rapid expansion of missionary activity. Jonathan Edwards, a Puritan leader of the Great Awakening, was passionate about missions. His publishing of the journal of missionary David Brainerd served to inspire thousands of missionaries throughout the nineteenth century. Among those were William Carey, and other missionaries, who utilized language study, Bible translations, and self-supporting initiatives, to enhance their missionary work and sustain their ministries. In 1792, Carey inspired the creation of the "Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen." Soon there followed an explosion of modern missionary societies and agencies, which sprang to life in England and Scotland.

The Great Century

It was in the nineteenth century that the scope of missionary activity greatly expanded. From England, missionaries like Adoniram Judson, David Livingstone, J. Hudson Taylor, and others raised the consciousness of the western church regarding the need for missionary labors among the unevangelized. In continental Europe and North America, Protestant mission societies also emerged and some were integrated into denominational structures providing greater capacity for sending men and women to the fields. Catholic mission orders experienced a resurgence of missionary fervor. The emergence of ministries like the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (1886) created new energy to mobilize the young people to participate in world mission. This era of world evangelization resulted in the missionary role becoming more specialized, which included: administrators, agriculturists, doctors, nurses, builders, social workers, and teachers.

Twentieth Century Missionary Roles

The western missionary vocation experienced far-reaching changes in the twentieth century. Following two world wars, national independence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America coincided with former colonial powers losing control. Western missionaries were viewed with suspicion and stereotyped as paternal figures. European and American missionaries who had earlier served in roles of pioneer church planting, Bible translators, and Bible teachers were suddenly in decline.

Within a generation new roles were assumed. Missionaries, especially from older "mainline" churches, increasingly became managers of schools and hospitals, heads of institutions and mission treasurers, and served in specialized ministry roles. Over time the relationship between western missionaries and younger national churches evolved from dependence, to independence, to interdependence (mostly in Latin America, Asia, and Africa). Churches in Two-Thirds World nations began to feel their obligation to become sending

churches, and missionaries were viewed as invited guests, rather than authorized messengers.[8]
This has been called the "internationalization of missions." As a result, an increasing number of
western missionaries began to question the validity of their roles.[9]

Present Conditions and Missionary Identity

Several trends and issues emerged in the closing decades of the twentieth century, which
partly shaped the missiological landscape as the Church moved into a new millennium, such as:

- The center of gravity for Christendom shifted from the Northern hemisphere to
  the Southern hemisphere as the Christian population in the Two-Thirds World
  surpassed the numbers found in the West.
- Missionaries from sending churches in the Two-Thirds World began to exceed
  those from the West. "From all nations, to all nations."
- A noticeable decline of long-term cross-cultural missionaries from western
  sending churches began. While short-term missions flourished, questions arose
  concerning the continued need for the long-term cross-cultural missionary.
- A demographic explosion of the Pentecostal movement occurred in the Two-
  Thirds World, which galvanized a renewed level of spiritual fervor and missional
  awareness.
- Inter-faith mission partnerships emerged as a strategy for world mission
  participation.
- A growing call in some sectors for the Church to return to an apostolic pioneer
  model with a focus on unreached people groups in order to fulfill the Great
  Commission.

Contemporary Perceptions

*Jesus undeterred, went right ahead and gave this charge: "God authorized and
commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and
near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold manner:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then you instruct them in the practice of all I have
commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day, right up to the end
of the age. (Matt. 28:18-20, MSG)*

This version of the Great Commission does not represent the traditional reading found in
formal-equivalence translations; rather it reflects a popular idiomatic interpretation. Popular
usages of the terms *missions* and *missionary* are part of the battle for any church-based missions
agency, denominational missions department, or church mission board. This section will provide
a brief discussion about some contemporary perceptions of the term *missionary* and *mission* in

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[8]See James A. Scherer, "Missionary," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 3, eds., Erwin Fahlbusch,
Jan Milic Lochman, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 573-577.

[9]Ibid., 575.

the twenty-first century in view of the world at large, the North American church (esp., Assemblies of God), and missionaries in the Assemblies of God World Mission (AGWM) structure.

Global Factors

The word *missionary* can mean either a person who travels attempting to spread a religion or creed" or "a naïve religious fanatic."[10] The practical images are just as broad. The idea of the pith helmet wearing white man, with machete and Bible in hand, cutting a trail in the jungle thicket no longer reflects a realistic or helpful view of a missionary for either the Church or the world. Jonathan Bonk observes, "Public perceptions of missionaries have typically oscillated between eulogy and vilification. Both extremes contain elements of truth, but neither can tell the whole truth."[11]

One example of how missionaries are affected by various perceptions of missionaries can be observed in how governments have increasingly restricted the number of missionary work visas compared to previous generations. Some countries seem to be in a constant state of ambiguity regarding their response to missionary presence. Currently it is illegal for an American AG ordained minister to preach in a British AG church without a visa in the United Kingdom. In the Czech Republic, all AGWM missionaries have recently been denied religious worker visas. While a missionary in places of sub-Saharan Africa may be more easily understood and accepted by the larger culture, a missionary in Paris would be wise to not use the "M" word.

Many geo-political nations in our world today have implemented such rigid barriers that increasing numbers of missionaries are required to enter countries by means of business, educational opportunities, medical positions, and other approaches. This working reality has understandably resulted in Christian cross-cultural workers purposively avoiding the term missionary all together and rather emphasizing the purpose behind the term mission.

Another issue is the rise of missionaries from Two-Thirds World countries. It is estimated that by 2025, only 3 of the 10 nations with the largest Christian population will be from advanced nations.[12] While many people would not readily associate the term "missionary" with an African,[13] a growing number of Africans are beginning to see themselves as worthy to be conduits of Christ's charge to make disciples of all nations.

A couple of stories illustrate this amazing trend from two different regions of the world. For instance, James from Ghana was a "missionary" planting a church outside of Amsterdam.

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[10]http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/missionary.

[11]Jonathan Bonk, "Missionaries as Heroes and Villains," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (July 2008).

[12]Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 90.

[13]Rose Nkechi Uchem, *Shifting Perceptions of Mission: Values of Missionary Religious Life Today,* 261.

However, when his family was deported from Holland, they made their way to Manchester, England. Since that time, he and his wife have planted two churches and they view their deportation experience as God's providence at work, which confirms in their minds God's calling on their lives to the European continent. Another example is Binoy and his wife, Vincy, who originate from India and Bahrain. They believe that God has called them to plant churches in the UK. As a result of their belief in God's calling as missionary church-planters, they have already started fourteen churches and a school of ministry.

Other dynamics at work include multi-national missionary teams. For example, a translation team formed in the USA prepares to go to an Asian country to translate the Bible into the language of an indigenous people. Four of the ten team-members are from Third World countries. Each individual considers himself or herself a *missionary*. Their calling is not diminished by their financial situation or station in the host country.

One major trend that has bearing on our understanding of *a missionary,* reflects large numbers from Asia and Latin America migrating to Europe, America, the Middle East, and other parts of the world. As the center of global Christianity has shifted to the south, so has the base for global mission sending. Consequently, the western Christian will soon realize that the term *missionary* in the near future may not reflect an English-speaking, fair-skinned, or wealthy individual, but rather represent a multi-lingual, dark-skinned, economically challenged person from the Southern hemisphere. Third-World churches have taken the Great Commission as their own and serve as an essential role in reaching many of the unreached people groups in the world. Presently, there are nearly 4,000 Third-World missions' agencies.[14] Thus the ever-broadening definition of missionary continues to break the proverbial Western mold. As such, it will be interesting to see if the "Rest" will ultimately define the concept of a *missionary* different from the "West" as this century unfolds.

Trends in the American Church

It probably all started when the first pastor put the sign up at the door leading out of the sanctuary. His heart was in the right place and he probably wasn't even thinking of the global ramifications. We all have seen the sign, "You are now entering your mission field." The idea that we are all missionaries has been communicated in youth groups, Sunday sermons, mission conventions, etc. While it may not be based in a theological conversation, it is widely held among the grassroots church across America.

A Catholic priest observed, "What makes the missionary vocation more difficult today is that the mission field is no longer defined by geographic borders."[15] Presbyterian pastor Leon Bloder recently had a series of messages entitled, "Evangelism Re-defined: The Missionary Next Door." Thus mission serves an exciting and fulfilling part of a person's Christian experience. Unless, a pastor invites a missionary to speak in the Sunday service and as a result people decide

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[14]David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends AD 30-AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 71.

[15]Father Lewinski, "Rekindling the Spirit of Mission in Parishes," in *Origins* (June 2011), 50.

to take advantage of the "Sunday off" option. The problem is that people don't want to learn about missions unless they are getting the opportunity to experience mission.

With ease of travel, mission teams from local churches across the USA travel around the world for "drive-by" mission experiences. Southern Baptists annually send out 20,000 short-term mission's teams. According to MARC, in 1998 there were 450,000 short-term trips around the world. Most of these people were encouraged to be a "missionary" for a week or two. The term *missionary* is then used to justify the activity and costs of these short-term trips.

At Celebration 2000 for the AG in the USA, a call was made for all foreign missionaries to come forward. A couple hundred responded. This was followed by a call for all U. S. missionaries to come forward. Again, a few hundred responded. Finally a call came for all high school missionaries to come forward and thousands responded. This kind of moment raises a question. Have we helped to facilitate misconceptions concerning the true understanding of the missionary identity and vocation by endorsing an ever-broadened definition of missions and missionary?

Some assert missions represents the willingness to open your mouth and admit, "I once was lost, but now I'm found." This simplistic view of missions allows for all to see their lives as a missionary sent to their world. While traditionally others would define this view to represent evangelism, the church in the USA is again seeing results by associating the concept that "everyone is a missionary" on the local level.

The discussion of world missions is also at the forefront of many of our Assemblies of God pastors and church boards. A campaign called the Missionary/Pastor Dialog (MP Dialog) has been a useful entry point to communicate the silent frustration between our pastors, churches, and the AGWM organization. The booklet, featuring thirteen statements from a missionary to a pastor, and thirteen statements from a pastor to a missionary, represents the need for AGWM to be in transparent and foster on-going dialogue with local pastors. While this has happened in the past, the MP Dialog demonstrates that we need to broaden our level of engagement.

Trends in AGWM

The AG and AGWM constitute a wide assortment of individuals who came together in the early twentieth century because they believed God had called them to take the gospel around the globe in a variety of ways and means. The motivational factor for this corporate calling, it was believed, sprang from the Holy Spirit's empowerment upon the Church. Pentecostal historian, Gary McGee, called it the "radical strategy." From our inception, our Pentecostal fellowship has placed a strong emphasis upon the role of the Holy Spirit and calling.

Greg Mundis has stated, "The core value of this belief in the Spirit's leading is unshakable in the life of every AGWM missionary."[16] Being Spirit-led should be at the center of the AGWM sending structure. Yet, misunderstandings arise over how we should flesh out our

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[16]Greg Mundis, *Towards a Pentecostal European Urban Church-Planting Missiology* (self-published, Dissertation, 2006), 52-53.

calling as individuals with an abundance of callings. This factor becomes more complex when it involves local members in AG churches. For example, when missionary candidates proceed from appointment through the itineration process, and afterward work through the first few years of their first term, only to return to home for yet another itineration to discover that members from these local AG congregation consider themselves "veteran" missionaries because they have just returned from yet another short-term missions trip, where they constructed a church in the period of a few days. If that was not unsettling enough, new candidates return to an environment where they observe funds being used to send district officials and pastors in order to underwrite a "missions experience," as they struggle to get a slight acknowledgment at a district council after being gone for a few years.

Yet, despite these kinds of activities, AGWM missionaries often overlook these issues because they sense the divine call as people of the Spirit. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge the tensions that presently exist in our sending base and sending structure in order to positively respond to these issues. One example of this tension can be observed in a recent blog that made its way to the AGWM Facebook page entitled, "I Give My Kids Tylenol. Can I Call Myself a Doctor?" This author submitted the view that she was a "real" missionary because of the following reasons:

- *I have made a decision that has ripped through my family. (i.e. I left America)*
- *I have learned a foreign language.*
- *I have sold all my possessions.*
- *I have swallowed my pride over and over again and asked churches for money.*

She goes on to say that she has "earned the title: Missionary." Interestingly, over 300 AGWM missionaries posted comments in response to this Facebook post. Among them, only twelve stated that they liked the post. Some of the comments were lighthearted others were quite heated, which demonstrated a grass root interest and frustration over the definition of "missionary" among AGWM missionaries themselves.

To add an additional layer to this discussion, recently a missionary kid from Africa stood before a group of AGWM missionaries to Europe and asked for forgiveness for all of the jokes that she was raised on how "they weren't real missionaries." Moreover, another missionary living on foreign soil rejoices in the fact that a pastor in America has dropped all financial support of missionaries living in the USA. Added to this dilemma, missionaries find themselves competing for the same missions dollars and the same mission services, conventions, and personal meetings with a pastor.

Niall Ferguson in *Civilization: The West and the Rest* writes in regards to a nation losing its power that that there are three fatal deficits: a manpower deficit, an attention deficit, and a financial deficit. Around the globe AGWM is desperate for workers. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. There is always a financial deficit. More funds are always needed. But the real problem that we are all having is an attention deficit with the local church. Most districts report about one-third of all churches give nothing to AGWM. Career missionaries across the West are in decline. Mission services have been morphed to mission windows or infomercials.

Do we still have the attention of the local AG church? The lack of unified passion and vision may be our real struggle impacting AGWM.

Christopher Wright comments, "We ask, 'Where does God fit into the story of my life?' When the real question is where does my little life fit into this great story of God's mission."[17] With this in mind, James Engel and William Dyrness observe, "Strategic decisions are based on three foundational considerations: (1) Experience that has been analyzed and interpreted, (2) A reliable intuition, and (3) Information on current realities."[18] For AGWM to discover where we fit in God's missions, it will require movement through these three considerations.

The second step mentioned by Engel and Dyrness is of utmost importance for Pentecostals. While they call it "a reliable intuition," they further explain this to be "a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit." As Pentecostals, our strength rests here and it must be part of our decision making process for defining "missionary" in the twenty-first century. McGee's "radical strategy" must maintain its pneumatological component. If the Spirit's leading is an "unshakeable" quality of a Pentecostal missiology as Mundis suggests, perhaps it should also be considered in defining "missionary." We must take Wright's question to heart and ask how does the Assemblies of God (USA) fit into God's great story of mission. Perhaps, our defining the term "missionary" is not so much an academic exercise as a spiritual one.

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[17]Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), page #.

[18]James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), page #.

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

The Gospels and Acts

The words *mission, missions,* and *missionary* never appear in the Gospels or Acts, yet the theme of missions pervades each book. Indeed, the driving theme of the gospel itself reflects the good news that God's mission to reconcile humanity to himself has reached its climax. Naturally, if the good news about God's mission is to be made known, it needs proclaimers. It needs missionaries.

In the Synoptic Gospels, both Mark and Luke begin their narratives with the mission of John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-14; Luke 1:13-17), while Matthew places it just after the infancy narratives and before the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Matt 3:1-12). The Gospel of John introduces John the Baptist as the first testifier to Jesus and declares His pre-existence and greatness (John 1:15; 19-26). More than simply introducing the themes of mission and missionary, these portions emphasize that a herald is being sent by God himself, and He will be active in calling and sending all future emissaries (Matt. 9:38). This is a key understanding of the missionary role in both the Gospels and Acts. It is not simply out of personal desire or religious enthusiasm that missionaries will fan out across Judea, Samaria, and the entire world. Rather, it is all part of God's long standing plan for His creation, and they will be specifically commissioned by God and empowered by the Spirit.

Jesus' own actions are framed in terms of missionary activity. He is God's emissary, proclaiming freedom and the fulfillment of God's covenant for His people (Luke 4:21). Jesus extends the missionary calling to His disciples (John 20:21, 22). His disciples will be more than students who simply learn their master's teachings. Instead, their training will prepare them to be "fishers of men" (Mark 1:17; Matt. 4:19). The training of the disciples for ministry means actively proclaiming the Good News as Jesus sends them out in small groups to evangelize the towns and villages of Galilee (Matt. 10:1-16; Mark 6:6-12; Luke 10:1-20).

In as much as the emphasis of Jesus' teaching and preaching centers on the coming of God's Kingdom and fulfillment of His covenant with His people, the target audience of Jesus is, naturally, the children of Israel (Matt. 15:24-26; Mark 7:27). This focus is also extended to His disciples (Matt. 10:5-6). Much has been made of this exclusive attention on Israel, and we need not engage in dialogue about it here, except to note two key points.

First, the unquestionable importance of Israel's priority as a theological motif in the Gospels must be tempered with and qualified by the actual ministry and actions of Jesus. It is significant that in such brief accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, numerous accounts of Jesus' willingness to extend the message and restorative power of the Good News to non-Israelites occur in the Gospels (e.g., Matt. 8:5-13; 15:21-28; Mark 5:1-20; 7:25-30; Luke 7: 3-9). There is no inconsistency here; rather, an intentional inclusion of events expressly meant to undergird and reinforce that Israel has always had a purpose that looked outside itself.

Second, focus on Israel and the fulfillment of the covenant reflects only part of a larger theological theme. This idea speaks to the very mission of God as initiated in Genesis and seeing its climax in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God's plan for restoring all

things to himself included as a major element, the election of a people who would be a light to the nations and through whom the ultimate restoration would come (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Gen. 12:1-3). To a great extent, this theme encapsulates the mission and purpose of Jesus and explains the symbolism of much of His actions. Jesus comes to embody Israel and to accomplish on her behalf what she could not accomplish on her own.[19] He combines this function with a reconstitution of the true Israel who will be divinely empowered to fulfill the purpose of being a light to the world. We need to look no further than Jesus' forty days in the wilderness and His selection of twelve disciples as proof of the importance of this theme.

The significance of this understanding for missions cannot be overstated. If the purpose of Israel as God's chosen people was to be a light to the nations, then it follows that the renewed Israel must also embrace its role as a light to the nations. It is evident that the post-Easter community of believers understood the importance of their identity as the renewed Israel. Their conviction that the place vacated by Judas Iscariot must be filled to bring the number back to twelve (Acts 1:12-26) is combined with a more serious and deeper, though not as transparent, theological statement in the episode of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

The severity of the punishment of these two potential defrauders must be connected to the importance of the integrity of the newly forming community of true Israel. Just as the strikingly similar sin of Achan placed the ancient Israelite community in jeopardy as they were about to come into their inheritance (Joshua 7), so the unchecked actions of Ananias and Sapphira placed the future of the renewed Israel in jeopardy as it was about to enter into its inheritance. The Early Church accepts the identity as the renewed Israel, but it remains for them to truly understand and embrace their inheritance. Clarifying what is and has always been the main purpose of the true Israel becomes the burden of the second part of Luke's two-volume Gospel, the book of Acts.

Recognizing the tension that existed between the acceptance of both identity and purpose highlights the struggle at work within the Early Church in Jerusalem. Many incidents narrated in Acts with non-Israelites and in non-Israelite territory act as a foreshadowing of the inevitable decision that must be made. Luke furthers the discussion by showing how men such as Peter accept the reality of Israel's purpose but embrace it with less than true and lasting conviction.

Thus, we recognize another layer in the importance of Paul in Acts for the theology of missions. In Paul we have a convert who embraces the identity of the new community as the true Israel with a level of theological and biblical understanding as yet unknown in Luke's account. Paul's ability to grasp the implication of the Church as the renewed and true Israel launches him immediately into missionary activity (Acts 9:19-20). The missionary ventures of Paul narrated in the rest of the book of Acts are more than his simple embrace of a personal responsibility to the Gentiles. They stem from a deep conviction that if the whole world is the Lord's, then being a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:5) means that the priestly function must be for the sake of the rest of world.

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[19] N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 90.

Summary

This brief overview of the Gospels and Acts has focused on larger but foundational themes. Rather than analyzing specific narratives or incidents in the texts that contribute pieces to the puzzle of who and what a missionary is, we have chosen to ground our understanding of a missionary in the themes of election and purpose. The Gospels connect the coming of Jesus with the fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel. But this is done not simply so the covenant might be fulfilled and God stand vindicated in His faithfulness; rather, the covenant is brought to its climax so Israel can finally become what it was intended to be: a light to the nations. The coming of the Age of the Messiah and the outpouring of the Spirit launches the Church into a worldwide mission. Just as Israel was to be a light to the nations, so the Church must be that light. Just as Jesus was sent by the Father, so Jesus sends those who embrace their identity in Him as children of God.

The Pauline Mission

We would be amiss to argue that Paul's missionary model was the only one at work in the first century. Nevertheless, we contend that Paul's mission represents an exemplar model (notwithstanding Christ himself and the Trinitarian mission). This assertion is based on the extent of Paul's influence on the New Testament's corpus (in both narrative and didactic genre), and by the degree of success that Paul's mission achieved.[20]

Accounts of Christian mission contained in Scripture provide positive examples and prototypes of how the Holy Spirit led the Early Church in the task of the Great Commission. Their inclusion demonstrates God's approval of the mission models at work in the New Testament record, of which Paul's mission features prominently.

David Hesselgrave suggests several reasons why missionaries today should look to Paul's mission for understanding and direction:

- The Greco-Roman world of the first century is remarkably similar to our own today.
- Because Paul was the master builder of the church (1 Cor. 3:10), he provides an instructive approach.
- Even though Paul regarded his message as normative, he also considered that his Christian living was an example of what followers of Jesus should be and do.
- The broad parameters of Paul's missionary work have not changed: missionaries go where people live, they preach the gospel, they gain converts, they gather new believers into churches, they instruct new believers in the faith, and they appoint leaders.

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[20]Martin Hengel suggested that Paul's mission was an "unprecedented happening, in terms both of the history of religion in antiquity and of later church history…With Paul, for the first time we find the specific aim of engaging in missionary activity throughout the world;" see Martin Hengel, *"Origins of the Christian Mission,"* in Between Jesus and Paul (London: SCM, 1983), 49, 52.

- Just as Paul's missionary methods took into account local circumstances, missionaries today will naturally adapt specific aspects of Paul's *modus operandi*.[21]

Eckhard Schnabel, among others, considers Hesselgrave's evaluation of the applicability of Paul's missionary methods to be balanced and fair. Nevertheless, Schnabel acknowledges that the question of whether and how to apply Paul's missionary methods today remains a difficult one, asserting: "Whenever we move from Scripture to our own time, seeking to let Scripture shape the life of the church, we face the dichotomy of a historical past and contemporary present."[22] For Pentecostals, this hermeneutical dilemma is even more pronounced. Historically, Pentecostals have viewed themselves as coming out of a restoration movement that looks back to the New Testament church as either providing a norm for ministry today or, at a minimum, an ideal to be followed.

Thus, seeking to define the biblical understanding of a *missionary,* requires making a judgment as to which patterns and principles observed in the New Testament should be normalized, or which serve a more descriptive purpose. Ott and Wilson suggest an approach of three degrees of relevance in order to distinguish the intention of the biblical authors, namely: (1) Prescriptive, (2) Descriptive, and (3) Representative.[23] In the first category, we understand that certain things in Scripture should be considered *prescriptive,* such as the command to love each other and the preaching of the gospel. Yet, not everything would fall into this arena and should be considered *descriptive.* For example, while providing a historical value, the narrative account of the apostles casting lots in the book of Acts, in order to decide on who would fill the office of Judas, should be understood as *descriptive* of events and not be adopted as a *prescriptive* task for discerning the will of God. Another example of the *descriptive* nature of interpretation would include matters related to customs and culture, like Paul's custom of preaching the gospel first in local synagogues.[24]

The third category reflects consistent patterns that carry *representative* value. Through the use of repetition, literary emphasis, and other devices, the biblical authors make patterns stand out as normal practices, even if they are not deemed as normative (absolute, authoritative).[25]

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[21]David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 44-46.

[22]Eckhard Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 37-38.

[23]Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 45-46.

[24]The descriptive nature of interpretation is not restricted to narrative portions of Scripture alone, but also applies to the interpreting process of didactic sections as well.

[25] Ibid., 45. According to Ott and Wilson, patterns with *representative* value are as follows: (1) Repeated consistently (thus only one pattern is found), (2) Stand in harmony with the rest of Scripture, and (3) Not unique to a particular context or culture.[25] By identifying patterns that hold *representative* value, ministry principles can be developed provided there are strong parallels between the contemporary situation and the biblical context, and the

In this unit, we will consider how certain areas of Paul's mission can help us make a connection between the apostolic ministry of the Early Church and the contemporary understanding of a missionary. Our discussion will be limited to two areas relevant for defining missionary identity and function through the lens of Paul's letters. These two areas comprise the following: (1) Pauline Mission and Special Calling, and (2) Pauline Mission and Apostolic Ministry.

Pauline Mission and Special Calling

It is noteworthy that in every letter attributed to Paul, he identifies himself as the "apostle" of Jesus Christ, with the exception of Philippians, Philemon, and Thessalonians (e.g. Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).[26] By his own admission, Paul describes his apostolic self-consciousness as characterized as one "untimely born" and who undeservedly received God's grace as an apostle of the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:8-10). He viewed himself as "the least of all the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:9), and considered himself unworthy of his commission. In following Christ, he endeavored to be a servant to all in order to win as many as possible (1 Cor. 9:19).[27] His calling shaped the content of Paul's mission, which was the message of Christ crucified and resurrected (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10).

Set Apart for the Gospel

The gospel came to Paul by a revelation of the risen Christ through a Damascus road experience (Gal. 1:12). According to Paul, he was *called* (καλέσας; *kalesas*) by God's grace (Gal. 1:15) and *set apart* (ἀφορίσας; "to separate"). Paul's description of his calling, especially the phrase, "[God] set me apart before I was born," echoes Old Testament call narratives—most notably, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa. 49:1, 6; Jer. 1:4, 5). His testimony provides insight into an apostolic self-consciousness, which highlights his focus and resolve as someone chosen to proclaim the gospel among the Gentiles (Gal. 1:16).

In Acts, we observe further insight into Paul's calling. For instance, Ananias received instruction from the Lord that Paul would be "my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). When Paul recounts his

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patterns can adapt to current missiological realities in their application. Also see Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stewart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 101-102.

[26]One reason for why Paul omitted this term in reference to himself in the Thessalonian correspondence may be explained partly by his statements in 1 Thessalonians 2:5-7.

[27]Even the placement of the term *apostle* in relation to Paul's name in his correspondence with churches signifies an emphasis on function over status (i.e., "Paul the apostle" versus "The apostle Paul"). Though Paul recognizes his own right to use his apostolic authority and position, based on his encounter and commission by Christ, he hesitates to wield his authority for his own sake, but for the building up and strengthening of the Church (e.g., 2 Cor. 10:8; 2 Cor. 12:10). Thus, Paul's spiritual gifts and ministry are to fulfill functions in the Church.

own calling in Acts 22:21, Luke uses the Greek verb *exapostellõ* ["Go; *I will send you* far away to the Gentiles" (ἐγὼ εἰς ἔθνη μακρὰν ἐξαποστελῶ σε)].[28]

The calling of Paul (and the Twelve for that matter) reflects both a special and descriptive pattern. It was special in that Paul's conversion and calling were extraordinary in many senses. Paul was clear that his calling did not originate with human beings but with God (Gal. 1:12). However, the subjectivity of Paul's calling and his own interpretation of where God was leading him were shaped by the Church.

For instance, nowhere do we see Paul working in isolation from other apostles or from the Church (including those churches he did not plant) as an independent agent. Rather, Paul seeks solidarity with other Christian leaders and with the Early Church. We observe in Acts 13 that Paul yields to a new missionary assignment with Barnabas as both the Holy Spirit calls and the Church gives counsel. In Acts 16, Luke provides a description of a "we consensus moment," which reflects the sensitivity of Paul and his fellow workers to the leading of the Holy Spirit in mission decisions, but also the role that the group dynamic played in discerning the will of God. These dynamics shed light on an important dynamic in the early missionary period: individual and collective calling.

Missionary Calling and Individualism

When assessing the *missionary call* through the lens of Paul's theology and mission, it helps to distinguish between individualism and collectivism. Paul's calling represents God's recognition on an individual for a special service, who is part of the larger Church. Though Paul's calling was unique and extraordinary in many senses, it also corresponds to a representative pattern found in Scripture that God calls individuals within the universal Church to specific ministry responsibilities (e.g., Noah, Abraham, David, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Philip).

Paul's experience supports the concept of God setting individuals apart for special service and in unique manners, which underscores the idea of individual calling to full-time vocational missionary service. In Paul's case, this can be viewed from two angles.

- First, Paul's commissioning by Christ required full-time devotion.[29] His call to be a witness of the gospel in "all the world" (Acts 22:15) required full-time vocational commitment. Though the biblical accounts intimate that at different intervals Paul had to schedule time to work on his tent-making business to help

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[28]Luke emphasizes the call and commissioning of Paul through the repetition of Paul's encounter and commissioning by Christ (3 times in Acts) and the usage of Greek words that strongly convey the sense of his apostleship. For example the language of Acts 26:17-18: ἐξαιρούμενός σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς οὓς ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω σε ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν, τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκότους εἰς φῶς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κλῆρον ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ.

[29]See Schnabel, 383-384.

fund the ministry (Acts 18:1-3), his primary concern was to give full attention to the mission task when possible (Acts 18:5).

- Second, Paul emphasized that the Spirit distributes a variety of gifts among believers. The variety of services connected with the gifts, and the variety of manifestations of God's power connected with these gifts, are for the work of the ministry (1 Cor. 12:4-5). While all believers receive giftings by God's Spirit and share in the missional nature of the Church, this does not mean that everybody shares the same kinds of gifts. Paul's teaching suggests that while everyone is valuable in the Church, not everyone is called to the same ministry focus (e.g., missionary service).[30] Paul does affirm that God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues (1 Cor. 12:28). Yet, Paul follows up this statement by arguing, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret (1 Cor. 12:29-30)? Rhetorically speaking, Paul's brings home the message that individual callings do exist.

With this acknowledgment, however, we should note that while a pattern exists in Scripture for the concept of individual calling, a sense of ambiguity will probably remain over this issue. Just as Scripture does not provide an explicit listing of criteria of "who is a missionary," the Bible doesn't offer clearly enumerated guidelines for how an individual receives a calling for missionary vocation. The ambiguous nature of divine calling for ministry vocation in the Bible may explain the degree of uncertainty when trying to define a *missionary*. Schnabel cites eight common misunderstandings among Christians concerning the biblical concept of God *calling* people to service:[31]

- The missionary call is a definite event.
- Paul's Macedonian call in Acts 16:9-10 is a model of the missionary call.
- The missionary call always comes through a mystical experience.
- Christian cannot become successful missionaries without a call.
- A missionary call is the best test of fitness for missionary service.
- A call to full-time Christian ministry is given only to people who are especially gifted.
- A missionary call is completely irrelevant to becoming a missionary.
- A missionary call involves only God and the person who is called.

Because these misunderstandings are so prevalent among many Christians in the Church today, Schnabel suggest two distinctives that can be made to direct believers in this regard: First, We should distinguish between Jesus' call to all believers to be salt and light in our world (Matt. 5:13-16), and Jesus' call to some of his followers to leave their professions and devote their lives to proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:19; Acts 26:16-18).[32] Second, we should

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[30]Ibid., 384

[31]Schnabel, 385, 386.
[32]Ibid., 386.

distinguish between God's call to full-time service and personal guidance that includes the assignment of specific tasks.[33]

Missionary Calling and Collectivism

Paul's calling did not take place in a vacuum. Though his commissioning did not originate with humans, Paul quickly realized (as did others, e.g., Barnabas) the need for the Church's recognition concerning God's call on his life. Thus, Paul's missionary calling came with an understanding that the corporate Church shares in the apostolic nature (2 Cor. 5:18–6:2), and as such, it was important for the sending body to participate in the sending of missionaries (Acts 13:1-3; 15:1-35). To add another layer to this relational dynamic, Paul received his call to apostolic ministry in the context of a collectivistic society, which differed greatly from Western individualism today.[34]

Thus, the sending culture of the Church would have been radically different in a collectivistic society, and two implications emerge:

- A collectivistic environment helps to centralize vision toward mobilization efforts. While this could have possibly stifled creativity and individual expression in the Early Church, it does appear that freedom was allowed for teams and individuals to use their unique giftings and callings (e.g., Paul's apostolic team; Apollos) to evangelize, plant churches, and nurture local church leadership. This dynamic allows for definition of priorities toward fulfilling a mutually shared mission. Certainly, a case could be made that independent "lone-ranger" type workers were present in the first century church as well. But it may be a stretch to claim that the same degree of independence was at work then as occurs in the missionary movement of the Western church culture today.
- A collectivistic approach allows the local church, national church, or sending agency to say "no" or redirect individuals whose *individual calling* does not align with the collective commission of the group. A collectivistic environment should provide a greater degree of solidarity among missionary teams on the field as individuals crucify personal ambitions that conflict with the corporate calling of the group.

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[33]Ibid.,

[34]This brief treatment does not allow for an extensive evaluation of this motif in Paul's letters by examining the religio-socio-cultural background in his ministry context. A cursory reading of Paul's letters, however, will trigger insight into this theme through the extensive use of metaphors Paul draws on that reinforces this notion of collective calling in the relation to commissioning and ministry service.

Pauline Mission and Apostolic Ministry

Paul's Use of Apostle

The Pauline corpus provides the most helpful source of information about the technical use of *apostolos* and *apostle* in the New Testament. According to the Pauline letters, Paul applies the term *apostle* in two ways:

- First, he uses the term in an official sense of representative spokesmen who were commissioned by the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-11). This charge brought the responsibility of bearing witness of the risen Christ (Acts 1:22; 4:33) and establishing the Church through providing an authoritative foundation (Eph. 2:20; 4:11; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:1-11; Gal. 1:17; 1 Thess. 2:7). According to Scripture, the qualifications for those who held this office included: (1) A personal commission from the resurrected Lord (Gal. 1:1), (2) To be an eyewitness of the resurrection (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Acts 1:20-22), (3) Conferred authority from Christ as a builder of the Church (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10), and (4) A ministry characterized by signs and wonders, which according to Paul, serve as "signs of an apostle" (2 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 15:19; 1 Thess. 1:5).

- Second, Paul applies the term in a nontechnical sense to special *messengers* (ἀπόστολοι = apostles) who either engage in pioneer church-planting ministry (e.g., Andronicus and Junia, cf., Rom 16:7), or those messengers representing sending churches with specific mission assignments (e.g., Titus, cf., 2 Cor. 8:23; and Epaphroditus, cf., Phil. 2:25).[35]

Apostolic Ministry and the Early Church

Generally speaking, the idea that lies behind *apostolos* is a person commissioned with a task and serves as an emissary. The envoy authoritatively represents the one who sends him. Many scholars believe this concept of apostle derived from the technical understanding of the Aramaic term *sâliáh*. The rabbinic *sâliáh* was sent as the authorized representative of the one who conferred a commission, primarily in legal matters. This construct is derived from a rabbinic tractate in the Mishnah that states: "the one whom a person sends is like the sender" (*Berakoth* 5.5). The idea is expressed in Jesus' statement in John 13:16, "…a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him." It can also be observed in Christ's sending of the disciples in Mark 6:7-13. 30, and the community *apostolate* formed by Paul (cf., 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25).

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[35]Scriptural support for this application can be found in Luke's writing. For example, in the book of Acts, Luke employs the technical sense of the term *apostle* over twenty eight times to the Twelve, but also uses the non-technical sense of the term in his account of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14: 14 as commissioned emissaries from the Antioch church. For a scholarly treatment on Paul's usage of *apostle* see P. W. Barnett, "Apostle," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 45-51.

One reason that may explain why the Early Church came to use the term *apostle* so prominently begins with the verb *apostellõ,* which means, "send away or send off."[36] First, in the Septuagint (LXX) the forms of *apostellõ and exapostellõ* appear about 700 times (*apostolos* only appears once in the LXX), with the sole purpose of rendering the Hebrew word *sãlah,* meaning, "stretch out" or "send." The translators of the LXX understood the Hebrew term to do more than simply describe the mere act of sending but to stress the essential purpose of the messenger (e.g., Josh. 1:16; 1 Kings 5:8; 2 Kings 19:4).[37]

Verlyn Verbrugge points out that two conclusions can be drawn from LXX usage of these terms: (1) Following the Hebrew text, the LXX uses *apostellõ* not to express an institutional appointment to an office, but the authorization to fulfill a particular function or a task that is clearly defined, and (2) If the sending is linked with a task in the use of *apostellõ,* the emphasis falls on the sender who gives authority to the one sent.[38]

Second, the term *apostellõ* (to send) was already used as a technical term in secular Greek during the first century, which expressed a divine authorization. Its substantive was used with the meaning *messenger*.[39] Hellenistic churches most likely would not have understood the concept of *sâliáh,* however, the Gentile Christians would have been familiar with the term *apostolos* as meaning divinely sent messenger.[40]

Third, if we take into consideration that the Septuagint (LXX) uses *apostolos* and *apostellõ* to describe the mission of the prophets, then Old Testament prophecy, argues Verbrugge, served as a positive basis for the special concept of apostleship in the Early Church.[41] This would mean that the Christian community of the first century preferred and adopted the Greek term *apostle* based on the overtones from the Semitic concept of the envoy or messenger. Barnett suggests that the non-technical use of *apostolos* is most likely to be traced to the *sâliáh* concept.[42]

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[36]*Apostellõ is used 132 times in the New Testament.*

[37]Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 158.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., 161.

[40]Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42]Several theories have been suggested for explaining the origin of the concept of an apostle; however, three views in particular seem to hold the most weight within scholarship. This paper subscribes to the concept of the *sâliáh* of Rabbinic Judaism, which is partially explained above. For a description of the other theories see, Barrett, 45-51.

Understanding the background of the term *apostle* provides insight into the significance of the relationship between the sender and the one sent. Paul's theological reflection expresses the importance of this motif and how this shaped his mission and his missionary identity.

In the New Testament, we observe Christ publicly declaring His universal authority (ἐξουσία; Matt. 28:18), immediately followed by the commissioning of the disciples (Matt. 28:19). Yet, beyond the relationship of the sender to the representative, Jesus stresses the content and scope of their commissioning (Matt. 28:19-20; John 20:21-23; Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:8). Christ commissions His disciples to preach the gospel to all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). Don Howell observes that in His universal authority, Christ determines not only the universal scope of the mission, and the solidarity of sender and sent one (John 20:21), but also stresses the message of forgiveness or judgment, which is to be proclaimed to all peoples (John 20:23).[43]

Hence, authority, proclamation, and universality became fundamental to how Paul perceived his own commission. According to Howell, the missionary element of this commission provides the connection between the technical and nontechnical uses of the term *apostle*.[44] If proclamation is central to the apostolic office and mission is the link between the technical and nontechnical uses of the term, then does this imply that the focus of missionary efforts today should keep proclamational ministry as a primary concern, no matter their specialized giftings?

The Focus and Nature of Apostolic Ministry

In Romans, Paul declares the purpose, goal, and scope of his apostleship was "to bring about the *obedience* of faith for the sake of [Christ's] name among all the nations" (1:5; 16:26; cf., 15:18). Paul was zealous to proclaim Christ, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). The driving force behind his calling is an overwhelming sense of God's sovereignty, Christ's Lordship, and his sense of indebtedness to the world. His response is to "preach the gospel," which he believes is the "power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:14, 16). Paul provides a description of the nature of his apostolic mission in Romans, stating:

> *For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation (15:18-20).*

Several features emerge from this text about the nature of Paul's ministry:

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[43]Don N. Howell Jr., "Mission in Paul's Epistles: Genesis, Pattern, and Dynamics," in *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, eds., William J. Larkin Jr. and Joel F. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 66-67.

[44]Ibid., 67.

- *The mission was accomplished in "word and deed."* The combination of words and works created a vision of an embodied apologetic. The proclamational ministry of Paul was paramount, but not at the expense of living out the gospel for people to see.

- *The mission was empowered by the Holy Spirit.* Paul's apostolic ministry was dependent on the manifestation of the miraculous through the operation of the Spirit.

- *The mission was couched in apostolic ambition to preach Christ among unreached people groups.* Paul was chiefly motivated by the missiological reality that nations had not had the opportunity to hear and receive the gospel of Christ. His ambition caused him to lay aside other desires (cf., Rom. 15:22) in order to fulfill his ministry.

- *The mission was carried out through pioneer-church planting.* Paul's commission to preach Christ among those who had never been told could only be accomplished through hard labor and sacrifice.

Two additional areas are worth mentioning regarding the nature of Paul's apostolic mission. First, it is evident from Paul's theology that Christ calls different disciples to different tasks, and He bestows on them different measures of faith and gifts for the work of ministry (e.g., Rom. 12:3-8). Second, it would be difficult to overlook the motif of geography associated with Paul's mission as described in Acts and his letters. In fact, Paul stresses his geographical itineration in Romans 15:19 ("from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum"). However, nowhere does Paul make geography the primary criteria of what defines his missionary work.

The Mission Assignments of Paul's Apostolic Team

For Paul and others in the Early Church, apostolic functions took the primary forms of evangelistic witness, church planting, and training local church leadership. The scope of this emphasis can be observed in Paul's letters, which demonstrate the great value Paul placed on his friends and their roles, calling them "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (e.g., Rom 16:3; 1 Cor. 3:9; Phil. 4:3). The Pauline model appears to have emphasized two primary functions of missionary emphasis:

(1) Apostolic church planting among unreached peoples (2 Cor. 10:16), and

(2) Local leadership training among younger churches in order to strengthen the body of Christ and to enable the harvest through the training of additional laborers for both domestic and international ministry (1 Thess. 3:2).

Preaching Christ and planting the church from Jerusalem as far around as modern day Albania, Paul amazingly announces his work is complete in an immense geographical area (Rom. 15:19b). Even more remarkable is that none of the churches in that region could have been older than 25 years, yet Paul informs fellow believers that his work is done.

Evidently, Paul did not establish a mission base only to call Jerusalem and Antioch for reinforcements, and then establish a long-term presence to assist a national church. Instead, his plans were to head for Spain (Rom. 15:24). But did Paul mean that biblical mission was complete, or was he just referring to his own personal engagement based upon the priorities of his own apostolic calling? In other words, was this only descriptive of his ministry?

There is sufficient evidence that Paul's mission theology encouraged continued training of younger churches and indicates that Paul considered this work an extension of the apostolic mandate of the Church. Paul himself stated that the aim of his apostleship was given "to bring about the *obedience* of faith for the sake of [Christ's] name among all the nations" (Rom. 1:5). This goal calls for reaching all nations and discipling all nations. While Paul declares his work complete in already evangelized areas and presses on to unreached peoples, he understands the aim also requires a continued commitment to disciple making, if not by his hands, then by fellow mission workers—of whom Paul appears to recognize a special calling on their lives and ministry.

Within the apostolic calling, the relationship should not undermine the pioneer work of the Church, but actually enlarge the base for greater engagement of frontier missions. Paul's method of sending back mission workers as teachers to develop local leadership and nurture the churches (e.g., Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 3:4-6; 4:6, 17; 2 Cor. 12:18; Phil. 2:19; 1 Thess. 3:6), was motivated not only by his desire to see domestic growth numerically and spiritually, but to ensure the transferal of the apostolic nature on these younger churches. In return, the younger churches were faithfully to respond to the Spirit's call and participate in the apostolic mission conferred by Christ (e.g., Rom. 15; 2 Corinthians).

NT Apostle and Today's Missionary

This leads to a central question: Is there an equivalency between the New Testament understanding of an *apostle* and the contemporary view of a *missionary*? Since the word *missionary* is not found in English translations of the New Testament, some have suggested that the concept of an apostle (office and gifts) is synonymous with our contemporary understanding of a missionary, while others hold strictly to a position that the office of apostle was solely embodied in the Twelve and was not intended to continue in the Church.

Today, the issue of apostolic ministry has found renewed interest. Charismatic leaders contend that the five-fold ministry as described in Ephesians 4:11 should be restored in the Church, and chief among them is *apostle*.[45] They define the office of *apostle* as a ministry of spiritual authority over a geographical area. However, for them the office of *apostle* should not be confused with the function of a missionary.

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[45]See C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake: How the New Apostolic Reformation is Shaking Up the Church as We Know It* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), and David Cannistraci, *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996).

While supporting the concept of apostolic leadership in the Church today, others understand the apostolic role differently. In their view, they see the role of *apostle* as someone who advances the Church through the means of church planting, crossing frontiers, and engaging movements beyond one's sending body.[46] Yet, while certain individuals receive a special gifting as apostles, they see the universal Church as sharing an apostolic nature, stating, "Some will be called to be apostles, but the whole community is to be apostolic." For example, they contend the terms used in Ephesians 4:11 do not represent offices in the Church, but instead the intention of this passage is to highlight the shared gifts among God's people for one of the five areas cited.

So, what can be concluded? Previously, we discussed how Paul's two uses of *apostle* provided a technical and nontechnical understanding. The technical use of the term designates a special office that was filled by the Twelve and Paul. However, when Paul employed the nontechnical use of the term, he was referring to fellow believers who were coworkers called to share apostolic responsibilities.

On the one hand, we observe a primary commitment by Paul and his companions to focus on evangelism and church planting activities in pioneer contexts. The testimony of Scripture portrays Paul's *apostolic* ministry as focusing on planting and extending communities of faith among all people groups of the earth.[47] Yet, on the other hand, the biblical testimony also describes Paul as highly concerned about training and equipping local leaders for the work of ministry. Ott and Strauss contend that these individuals were typically itinerant, and exercised only limited authority in the churches.[48] Further, while Timothy's extended pastoral work in Ephesus may serve as an exception, Paul's apostolic team never assumed the role of long-term pastor of the churches they planted.[49]

A governing principle of Paul's missionary work was the establishing of indigenous churches, led by national leadership. On his first missionary journey, Paul appointed local leaders as elders in every church (Acts 14:23). On another occasion, Paul instructed Titus to appoint "elders in every town" (Titus 1:5). The motivation of the indigenous church emerges from respect for the national church within any nation to rise to the full potential in leadership, evangelism, church planting, training, and financial strength.

Summary

The purpose of this unit was to consider how certain aspects of Paul's mission help us make a connection between the apostolic ministry of the early Church and the contemporary understanding of a missionary. Below, we have identified a few points in summary form.

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[46]Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 170.

[47]See Ott and Strauss, 235.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

First, the Pauline letters provide patterns that can be used to help define a missionary and the missionary vocation, but a guideline that lists explicit criteria for missionary service does not exist. Therefore, the Church should exercise care from creating guidelines that would be too rigid and dogmatic in regard to missionary identity. With this said, however, the patterns that do emerge from the New Testament concerning missionary work provide certain insights that should be guarded in our contemporary mission structures.

Second, we observe that the biblical office of apostle and that of a cross-cultural church planter appear to be analogous according to patterns that emerge in the narrative and didactic portions of the New Testament, which give us insight into Paul's mission.

Third, it is evident from Paul's calling, ministry experience, and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures that God calls different disciples to different tasks, and He bestows on them different measures of faith and gifts for the work of ministry (e.g., Rom. 12:3-8). Paul's letters emphasize the concept that while the apostolic nature rests on the universal Church, God calls and gifts certain individuals for the unique role of apostolic ministry, characterized by cross-cultural church-planting activity and specific supporting roles (e.g., Timothy, Titus, Apollos, Silvanus in evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching roles). In the New Testament, and specifically in Paul's letters, the term *apostle* refers not only to the unique commissioning and authority of the Twelve, including Paul, but also refers to other individuals who were involved in cross-cultural church-planting ministry, and some who were in supporting ministry roles in cross-cultural contexts.

Fourth, the Pauline apostolic model appears to have emphasized two primary functions of missionary emphasis:

> (a) Apostolic church planting among unreached peoples (2 Cor. 10:16). We observe a primary commitment by Paul and his companions to focus on evangelism and church planting activities in pioneer contexts. The testimony of Scripture portrays Paul's *apostolic* ministry as focusing on planting and extending communities of faith among all people groups of the earth.

> (b) Local leadership training among younger churches in order to strengthen the body of Christ and to enable the harvest through the training of additional laborers for both domestic and international ministry (1 Thess. 3:2). The New Testament describes Paul as highly concerned about training and equipping local leaders for the work of ministry.

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE … DEFINITION AND POSITION

Missionary Definition and Group Position Statements

So, who is a missionary? The historical development of the missionary role, coupled with the contemporary views of North American Assemblies of God congregations, reveals a significant broadening of how AG constituency understands and applies the term missionary. Because of the diversity of views over this issue, the current debate regarding how to define a *missionary* can be emotive and multifaceted. Yet, with Christian love and attitude, we offer this working definition for an AGWM missionary:

> **A missionary is a person called and empowered by the Holy Spirit and commissioned by the church to cross barriers of culture and language, boundless in geographic location, in order to proclaim the gospel, disciple believers, establish the church, and demonstrate compassion.**

Further, we believe the following positions are reflected in Scripture and informed by present missiological realities. These positions help guide our thoughts as we attempt to make recommendations about a way forward.

First, while recognizing that Scripture bears witness to a universal calling on all of God's people to share in the missionhood of all believers, we also observe that God sets apart certain individuals to specific mission tasks, which calls them to cross-cultural, linguistic, and ethnic barriers for the purpose of bringing about the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ's name among all nations (e.g., Rom 1:5). This distinct calling is characterized, when possible, by a vocational commitment. The Holy Spirit leads the Church to recognize and set apart certain individuals for specific works in cross-cultural ministry (e.g., Acts 13:1-3).

It is evident from Paul's calling, ministry experience, and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures that God calls different disciples to different tasks, and He bestows on them different measures of faith and gifts for the work of ministry (e.g., Rom. 12:3-8). Paul's letters make explicit that God calls and confers gifts to certain individuals for the unique role of missionary service, characterized by cross-cultural church-planting activity and specific supporting roles (e.g., Timothy, Titus, Apollos, Silvanus in evangelistic, pastoral, teaching, and other roles). Scripture indicates the continuance of this ecclesiastical practice until the return of Christ.

Second, we observe from the writings of Paul, supported by other Scriptural passages, that the biblical office of *apostle* and the role of a contemporary cross-cultural church planter appears to be analogous. In the New Testament, the term *apostle* refers not only to the unique calling and authority of the Twelve, including Paul, but is also used in reference to individuals working on apostolic teams who functioned in other roles (e.g.,

teachers, evangelists, pastors, etc.) toward the goal of raising apostolic consciousness among younger established churches.

While the term *apostle* had specific connotations in the New Testament, our movement today should exercise care from constructing applications that too narrowly define missionary identity and function. Nonetheless, the patterns that emerge from the New Testament concerning missionary identity and function provide certain insights that should be safely guarded in our contemporary mission structures. If every Christian service takes on the term *missionary*, we lose the ability to capitalize on New Testament equivalent usage, we tend to devalue the biblical concept of individual calling unto specific full-time missionary service, and we tend to reinforce a hyper-individualism, which hinders unified vision and missionary placement.

Furthermore, though the root of the term *missionary* means "to send," this does not imply that every believer should be considered a missionary and every Christian service represent missionary work. Though Scriptural evidence supports diverse kinds of missionary activity, we believe the predominate apostolic model in Scripture emphasized two priority areas of missionary function:

(a) Apostolic church planting among unreached peoples (2 Cor. 10:16). We observe a primary commitment by Paul and his companions to focus on evangelism and church planting activities in pioneer contexts. The testimony of Scripture portrays Paul's *apostolic* ministry as focusing on planting and extending communities of faith among all people groups of the earth.

(b) Local leadership training among younger churches in order to strengthen the body of Christ and to enable the harvest through the training of additional laborers for both domestic and international ministry (1 Thess. 3:2). The New Testament describes Paul as highly concerned about training and equipping local leaders for the work of ministry.

These areas of emphasis do not relegate other kinds of missionary service as invaluable as long as those services are connected in spirit and strategy with the Pauline objective "*to bring about the obedience of faith among every people group.*"

Third, there remains a need for long-term cross-cultural missionaries today. Though short-term-mission roles provide valuable support toward reaching mission objectives, on-the-ground cross-cultural workers remains critical to the fulfilling the Great Commission.

Much has been written about the shift of Christianity's center of gravity from the Western to the Southern hemisphere in the late twentieth century. The traditional mission fields now represent the most inhabited Christian nations, namely: Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As a result, the emerging churches in the Two-Thirds World have now responded in their own way to be missionary sending bodies. Ironically, Western nations that have experienced a dramatic decrease in Christian presence now receive missionaries from the

Two-Thirds World in an attempt to re-evangelize their people. The era of missions from everywhere to everywhere has dawned.

In this backdrop, some voices called for a moratorium on sending traditional cross-cultural type missionaries from the West, except in areas where specialization was needed. There were several motivations for this view:

- There was a growing belief that earlier generations of pioneer missionaries had planted a sufficient number of local churches. Now, local churches in various part of the world should rise to evangelize their own areas. As a result, missionaries from the West were no longer needed.

- There was a view that the financial requirements to send one western missionary family could easily fund many national workers to do the same tasks at a greater level of effectiveness.

Also, where missionaries have continued working alongside existing church movements, a new era of partnership between national churches attempts to bring various strengths and gifts to maximize ministry to enhance national church ministries. The advance from paternal-dependent, to independent, to interdependent relations characterizes the majority of mission work today. In this changing global environment, some may raise questions as to whether cross-cultural missionaries from the West are still wanted or needed. Yet, we believe the following represent a few of the reasons why cross-cultural missionaries are still a necessity:

- The biblical imperative remains to disciple all nations. This mandate rests on all national churches equally, which means no one national church has the right to discourage another national church to abdicate the apostolic nature conferred by our risen Lord and Savior.

- A significant percentage of our world today waits to receive an incarnational witness of the gospel for the first time. Thousands of people groups remain unreached and have no viable witnessing communities of faith in their midst.

- Though the gospel has penetrated most regions or countries of our world, which has resulted in the emergence of many indigenous local churches, there remains a large number of national churches who still struggle based on various issues and need the continued presence of western cross-cultural missionaries.

Fourth, we affirm the work of the Holy Spirit in calling and guiding individuals to commit their lives to full-time vocational missionary service. In Scripture, we observe a divine and distinct calling that is conferred upon individuals. At the same time, the Bible also reveals the Spirit using the corporate body of believers to guide the subjective interpretations of a person's individual calling. Often an individuals' sense of calling is

perceived to be associated with specific geographical placement and ministry assignments. However, a biblical approach should consider the interface between individual calling and collective mission, which yields to the role of the Holy Spirit in using Church leaders and fellow workers to speak into the discernment and decision-making process of one's missionary task. If the body of Christ is ordained to play a critical role in recognizing a person's calling and to set apart for the task of cross-cultural mission work, then that same body should have a measure of input into the prioritization of placement and assignment.

Fifth, as part of the body of Christ, we affirm that all Christians are called to share in the apostolic nature of the Church. Both the Old and New Testaments provide a description of God's intention for His people to be a missional body. The New Testament reveals the conferral of divine calling on every believer to share in Christ's mission (e.g., John 17:18). This collective mission enjoyed by all believers entreats us to be witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:8). Therefore, all Christians share the missional nature conferred on the universal Church (John 20:21). Through the empowering of the Holy Spirit, followers of Christ should passionately employ the diversity of their gifts and talents to participate with God in His mission, and yet from among this body, specific individuals are set apart for unique cross-cultural engagement to the sake of Christ's name among all peoples.

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