

Relationship between the Church and Mission

1. Missio-theological basis

“Church” (*ekklesia*) is a spiritual entity that does not have regional boundaries. What we refer to as “universal” is the primary definition that is contained within the term. In other words, as God is One, “one body” and “one Holy Spirit”, there is only “one Lord and one faith” that constitutes church (Ephesians 4:4-6). At the same time, church is “congregation” or an entity where the people of God within the same region is brought together. Moreover, a church is not only a part of sociological structure that contains special cultural form, but also a unique organism not to be defined as a single form or entity.

If a church is referred to as a sanctuary, it can mean that the church is an architecture; but church is more than a simple piece of architect. Church has spiritual dimension. Church can also be referred to as a community center since church is where people gather together. However, a church is something more important than a group for mere association with other people. In other words, although we don't disagree with the character of the church as universal, we have to be careful not to ignore the teachings of the churches in the Bible and the calling that it brings forth to Christians as we find the meanings of the churches in the socio-historical developmental perspective.

In the Old Testament, the principle and the responsibility of missiology came solely from the order of God. God worked within Israel and through Israel for the salvation of all the nations. Similarly, when the communion of today's church discuss missiology, it refers to the primary focus - that is, the history of the salvation that God has provided for us. In order for the salvation to come, God has specifically

called Israel amongst many other nations. Likewise, God is continuing the work by calling and selecting men and women who are committed to the work for Him. As such, missiology first start with the Trinity of Holy God which fundamentally is the beginning of missiology. People are not the main agent of missology but is rather the subject of missology.¹

For the very purpose, God revealed Himself and sent the Messiah who God worked through to successfully build up the history of missology. According to Hedlund, the idea of Messiah and servant could not be linked in the Old Testament. Jews in the Old Testament neither wanted nor encouraged others to think about suffering of Messiah.² However, two ideas coexist within Christ Jesus in the Old Testament and what Jesus actually displayed in his thorough view of 'suffering servant' .

Jesus Christ who fulfills the two roles - 'suffering servant role' and 'the returning Savior role' completes the salvational plan that God has designed. These two roles determine the fundamentals of the Gospel and at the same time allows the people who follow God, the church, to understand and to spread the Gospel to all nations. This is proven through 'the Great Commission' (below Matthews 28:19; Acts 1:8). Then, through the lens of missiology, what are the fundamentals of the real church and what are the responsibilities that the church has to fulfill? We will have to examine the fundamentals and the responsibilities of the churches in the perspective of missiology.

First, church is the people of God. In the New Testament, people of God is actively referred to the throng of people who listen and believe whereas in the Old Testament, people of God is passively referred to the people who God has chosen to become God' s people. In fact, the Old Testament had to prove that the act of God choosing and calling Israel as His people has the particularism of election-aspect as

¹ Roger E. Hedlund, *The Mission of the Church in the World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991), 73.

² Ibid., 162.

well as the universality of the nations-aspect. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel continues to be reprimanded by God through the prophets for the practice of ethnocentrism and the misunderstanding of the dual meanings and the responsibility of being the chosen people of God.

In the New Testament, God entrusted the responsibilities of the people of God through the teaching of Jesus' public life to the 'disciples' who follow Christ as the Savior and to the people gathered as such (cf. Matthews 28:19; Acts 1:8; Luke 16:15).

Second, it must be emphasized that the most important meaning of church is that it is the body of Jesus Christ. Unless we are united with the body of Jesus Christ, we can not become a part of God' s people. To unite means to remain with Him, suffer with Him, and to rule with Him. Then we can say, "we remain in Christ". If so, in Christ, individualism, ethnocentrism, racism, and the barriers of socio-hierarchical order should be broken down.

Third, a church is the building of God and the power of the Holy Spirit is within the church. What it includes is a structure, foundational process, and a function. To the believers, church is where 'the Holy Spirit resides' (1 Corinthians 3:16). So, it is where the Holy Spirit provides gifts, guides, and literal forms of relationship with His people. Church includes the 'shown church' and the 'hidden church' .

Fourth, church exists as the kingdom of God. In other words, Jesus is revealed to be the Lord and we are to be a subject to the sovereignty of Christ Jesus. The kingdom of God is the spiritual entity that is ruled by God.

Historically, what we Christians have to perceive is that a church, qualitatively, is One through one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Also, we have to perceive that the church, where the Lord resides, is holy not only in words but that the reality of holiness of the church has to be revealed. In addition, because church holds catholicity, church continuously has to be expanded throughout all nations. Church needs to be built through Christ and through the faith of the Lord Christ. Then, it

can be united to be one body with Christ. Apostolicity of the church is not in the structural essence where apostleship should be carried on, but that the teaching of the apostles should continue on through the church. Accordingly, the leadership of the apostles should be linked with loyal Christians within the church.

Here we discuss the theological and structural principles of the church. As such, attributes of a church was historically, culturally, and sociologically applied differently in the world. Thereby, the church settled with its own cultural uniqueness throughout.

Since 1800s, Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson suggested the 'Three-Self Formula'. Church community should 'self-govern' or the community should govern itself; 'self-support' or church should economically stand on its own; and 'self-propagate' or should be able to propel itself to evangelize others.

Above principles clearly was a stimulus and a challenge in questioning what missiological church is. Thus it influenced how the church should stand and form its organization. Similarly, missionaries who are in the field along with missiological administrators should apply above theories and other missiological church perspectives in organizing church administration. They first should be aware of missiological principles and know them in depth. Along with the knowledge, they should pray and try to actually willingly test out the teachings about missions in the Bible and apply them to the churches in the mission field.

Fundamentally, not only pastors, missionaries, and missiological administrators, but also all the people living on this earth is called to build the church of God. Now, people are realizing that common connection should be formulated to build up regional churches for new vision as God's missionaries and the interest is expanding. The problem is, though, whether the church fits into the churches in the Bible and the model churches provided in the Book. The discussion and application have not reached to its in-depth thoughts in the Bible and does not reach holistic interest on the topic. It should be formulated amongst the communion of the churches in the

missiological perspective.

Van Engen pointed out that suggested theories above should begin with a careful relation between the church and missiology. Historically, too, the discussion of missiological perspective amongst communion has been emphasized. What has been required is the tight knit relations between missiology and the church. In addition, the idea of missiology and the church was required for closer relationship. What the communion strategically deal with has been focused on the emphasis of the relationship between religion and social sciences. Along the way, theologians try new paradigm for regional churches in missiological dimension. While considering the facts of regional circumstances, we may state that there was imminent requirement from God's missionaries to create new perspectives.³

Consistently, there may be many different discussions on the purpose in why the church is being built, what kind of church is most fit, how church administration structure should be formed, what kind of worship style is most fit, and etc. Here, I suggest basic frame and directions for building up specific structures focusing on fundamentals of church in the view of missions and the purpose of church as mission workers.

2. The nature of local church from missiological perspective

From a point of view of missiology, a local church must be keen to what is happening inside and outside the church. This does mean neither that the church should be involved in all the incidents happening outside the church, nor mean that the church should be responsible for all the happenings outside the church.

Again, it means the church should be attentive to the people around and to the felt needs of those from foreign countries. If the church ignores the duty, the church

³ Charles Van Engen. *God's Missionary People* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991), 27.

does not understand why God has established churches in this world and as a result, church will be undermining the calling for the churches in this world.

John Stott is suggesting four conditions in which the church commits the role given from God; (1) the theology of the church (2) the structure of the church (3) the message of the church (4) the life of the church.⁴

In detail, for the Gospel to be effectively spread out via local churches, the essentials of the Gospel should be understood by the church. This is, churches should understand their own self-images. However, Stott states that there are two wrong images that the current churches hold today. One is that the churches are recognized as a religious club or that Christianity has become an introvert. This, in turn, causes churches to be irresponsible of the worship they give to the Lord God and of the missional deeds in the secular world. Next is that the churches are confused in distinguishing what a real worship is and a real mission is because mission has become so secular to the extent that what we believe has become religionless. Stott states, "Worship has missiological element and missiology has worship element, but we can't say that the two are synonymous"⁵.

What is most important is that the holiness of the Lord God through worship should be the marks of a church and that apostolic side of the church via mission should be accomplished in the world. And of course, this should be achieved not in the worldly standards and virtues but rather within other people's lives who live in this world according to the unique standards of Christianity.

Second, from the missiological view point, churches should be structurally systematized. Thus, studies on regional community should be preceded amongst all others. In order for the studies to be fulfilled, exorbitant resources are needed; resources on people, race, culture, work, family system, divorce rate, social needs,

⁴ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1992), 242-252.

⁵ Ibid., 243.

criminal rate, poverty rate, educational level, number of factories, number of temples and mosques, number of churches, and so on. If there are churches in the region, there should be research on the residing churches in the region. In that case, research should be carried out in the perspective of an objective visitor and not on the one attending the church regularly. Additionally, worship format, rituals, music, language, costumes, and other surroundings of the church must be examined.

Furthermore, church should set a direction on deciding whether the church will center around the minister or around the communion and what kind of leadership will be practiced in the church. The churches should develop according to the program they decide upon, encourage the communion accordingly, and provide consistent program to the committed people in the church.

Third, churches should reveal itself via the messages proclaimed in the church. Again, churches should deliver the truth in the Gospel in order for them to reveal their correct identities. In addition, churches should spiritually be blameless to the point where they virtually are recognized by others in such way.

Amongst all this, Stott suggests that there are two extreme facets that we should avoid.⁶ One facet is total fixity. What total fixity refers to is the way in which messages are wrapped in traditional format and content. The other facet is total fluidity. What it refers to is that the Gospel is fully understood when one is within the context and that in context is where the Gospel is needed. If there is no context, there is no Gospel is what total fluidity refers to. In order for us to balance between these two extreme points, we have to persistently learn and challenge the Word while not ignoring the world and the culture.

Through *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *martyria*, Van Engen suggests people of the church has the calling to participate in the missiological churches.⁷ “Koinonia” is

⁶ Ibid., 252.

⁷ Charles Van Engen, 89ff.

the right to associate by sharing the love of others. If the church does not show Christ love, we can dare say that the church is not sharing the true relationship. Regardless of the churches in one's nation or outside the nation, if the love of Christ is not spread throughout others and within the community, Jesus' teachings to the church is not being proven (John 13:34; 1John 2:10-11; 4:7-11; Romans 13:8; 1Peter 1:22).

The relationship of love is not at the emotional level, but is rather at a active actional level of related love. This is shown in the relationship between the Father and the Son in the 'incarnation model'. Based on the model, all the activities such as Bible studies, discipleship training, small cell group, prayer meetings, and social volunteering can come alive to practice the love of Jesus.

"*Kerygma*" is the proclamation that Jesus is the Christ and that He is the Lord. The relationship built upon "koinonia" is formed to declare the Lordship of Christ Jesus. "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:15-17).

If the Gospel is reached with the emphasis on "kerygma", the proclamation of this word should be made for those who, like Apostle Paul, is within the relationship of Christ (Acts 2:38-39; 13:38-39; 28:3). The proclamation of the churches that Jesus is the Christ and is the Only Lord should be declared not only within the churches but throughout all nations as a universal value. This confession and commission is the fundamentals of the churches that can't be excluded, avoided, nor divided.

"*Diakonia*" is the act of serving of those who believes the works of Jesus Christ and realizes the depth of His works. Those who confess Jesus as their Lord are those who agree to the experiences of the Lord as a servant (Phillipians 2:5ff) and who agree to commit their lives to live as the Lord Jesus carried out His life.

Lord Jesus stated that He will judge people not according to how much work they have done or what great deeds they have achieved, but according to how they served and responded to others' needs (Matthews 25:31-36). Also Jesus declared that He came to the world not to be served but to serve and to show the example of serving others (Matthews 20:26-28; Mark 10:43-45; below Phillipians 2:5). If the head of the church, Jesus, demonstrate the Lordship but the body of the church does not commit to the example, it only indicates that the head and the body is in separation.

3. Missiological role of the church

As shown above, what God wants from the churches in this world is the call for the missionaries of God to the world. "This purpose on the churches can come with authoritative power from the will of Jesus Christ, the head of the churches, the Holy Spirit who energizes Him, the Father who builds up the Holy Spirit, and through the missional works of God the Holy Trinity." ⁸

To the purpose in which God builds the churches and chooses people through the churches instills "insight in understanding the existence and the calling of the church that it has been completely called to serve" ⁹. Looking into the existential fundamentals of the church, churches should recognize that it is called as "the church in the world and as the church for the world that meets the new of the world and is called upon the world" ¹⁰. It is needless to say that the concept is brought forth upon which is based on the history of the salvation that the true salvation brings spiritual salvation to the people. The service that the church offers is fundamentally different than that the world offers.

⁸ Charles Van Engen, 87.

⁹ 요하네스 블라우, 『교회의 선교적 본질』. 전 재욱 외 2인 옮김. 서울: 대한 예수교 장로회 총회출판국. 1988, 135.

¹⁰ Ibid., 137.

John Lapp summarizes the relationship of the church and the mission as below.¹¹ Primarily, the calling for missions is a duty for all churches. At the same time, the distinction between international missiological works and national missiological works has narrowed down. It is because the two domains have to work together. Also, when we talk about missional basis, all the churches in this earth must be the base for the missional works in that God is overlooking all the occurrences in the world. All the churches are simultaneously sending and receiving.

Second, different departmental areas within the church should give and receive. Interchange and learning is one of the most important aspect in accepting and acting out the real missions. Additionally, missiology is showing generosity and tolerance to others on the basis of the faith people hold. Churches should demonstrate generosity and tolerance in faith.

Third, excavating missionaries is crucial. Missioners should focus not on the ministry of their base, but on the field duties and should commit and help those in the field. Also, missionaries should realize and have a clear identity that they are not integrating ministers who take control of the local church missions but rather a helper who is building up local churches.

Fourth, we all should live a missional life and train ourselves to be true missionaries. Untrained soldiers can't be prepared for actual war. Similarly, people without missionary training in real life won't be able to adjust to a sudden change in life. All this should be learned through churches and thus, churches should run their programs with this in mind.

Fifth, missioners are connectors to the local regional churches and to the sending churches. They must understand their roles and consistently communicate with the churches that they are connectors to the two sides.

¹¹ John A. Lapp, "Taking the Form of a Servant': The New Church Order and the Practice of Mission" In *Mission Focus*. 1995. Vol. 3.

Finally, as economical levels differ in different regions within the world, global churches must participate to consider others' views and share the resources and work toward being the road to reconciliation. The world is becoming more varied, diversified, and at the same time, specified. In such times, it is difficult for a church that has plenty of resources to share its specified resources with others, and especially with others who are in different continent or who don't share the same culture. In such aspect, church with another church and church with other mission centers should cooperate and form a trust-based communication.

From a different view point, Ralph Winter pointed out the relationship of churches and missions in the mission field.¹² The very beginning is the "pioneering stage". This is the stage where sent-out missionaries minister to a tribe who didn't hear the Gospel. In this stage, missionaries exert all their gifts and leadership to work hard for the purpose to spread the Gospel.

Second is the "parental stage". Here is where the gift of teaching comes to place. Newborn churches being involved in missions is like a relationship between a small child and a parent. Thus, the "parents" should be careful not to fall into "paternalism". When parent churches treat local churches as a small child and try to take care of it all, it only prohibits the maturity of the churches and becomes an obstacle.

Third is referred to as the "partnership stage". This is where churches show adult-to-adult relationship rather than parent-to-child relationship. This is also the stage where in their relationship, missional ministry can cooperate with the church. When parents rear their children well, they can ultimately work together. Similarly, when churches are cultivated well enough, the supporting churches and regional churches become collaborators. This is an example of churches in missional dimension

¹² Jonathan Lewis. ed. *World Mission Part I*. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1994.

that has matured into being a part of the world church.

Fourth is the “participantal stage”. Mature enough churches show their leadership in the field of missions. As long as the term ‘mission’ exists, churches should be strengthened to complete the calling of Jesus and fully use the resources the churches hold. Then, churches will be able to start the first stage at other places. This is the circulation-progression relationship of missiology and church.

In the Old Testament, the concept of mission was centripetal and the role of Israel was passive. It is not too much to say that in the Old Testament, there is no record of ministry that shows cross-cultural and continuous works of missions. It was rather that other nations came to the Israelites to conform to the culture of Israel. It was not the other way around where Israelites transcended their cultural boundaries for other cultures. Israelites were aware of the responsibilities they had in making and showing the works of saved community model. Those insiders or outsiders who came were treated the same without insult and were expected to conform to the Israelite culture (Leviticus 19:33-34).¹³ This was centripetal¹⁴ mission in that the Israelites expected the surrounding nations to be influenced by them and flow into the group of those who worship the Lord God as they migrated. In other words, the works of missiology like in the case of Jonah to the land of Nineveh is exceptional and that the example works as an antitype.

McGavran points at least four domains where churches should be responsible for

¹³ Peter Cotterell. *Mission and Meaninglessness: the good news in a world of suffering and disorder*. London, U.K.: SPCK, 1990, p.142.

¹⁴ Of course this ‘centripetal’ meaning can be divided into theological aspect and missiological aspect. Missiologically, it means that other nations can join into Israel nation by believing the faith of unique Yaweh God. Theologically, ‘centripetal’ means that the history of entire Old Testament flowed from the centripetal point where Jesus the Lord came as the Christ in this world and that He is the Savior of the world.

in the relationship between the churches and mission. First, churches should prioritize evangelizing others to the point where all the surrounding people hear the Gospel. World evangelization is the utmost task and the most holy obligation for the churches.

Second, the congregation subjected under all denomination is referred to men and women who fear and adore God. Church is a community that worships God and thus continuous prayer is required. Congregation in the church should be encouraged to live a life based on the Word. Third, may it be a church or a family or a Bible school, churches should provide systematic teachings and studies of the Bible. This doesn't happen coincidentally but churches should plan out, invest, and continue to invest in executing such studies. Fourth, churches should apply biblical as well as ethical standards in every aspect of life such as in the lives of families, neighbors, districts, nations, and inter-nations. Accomplishing the will of God is possibly achieving the justice, peace, and mercy of the world order that will eventually be attained only when Jesus comes.¹⁵

Conclusion

Although each church is under different circumstances and different cultures, all should be partners encompassing each other to be a part of the history. While local regional churches aim to globalize their churches, they should remember that without local regional churches, globalized churches can not exist. Globalized churches refer to churches that shine its light of power and will of incarnated God, the Lord Jesus Christ, to all people living in every area and every generation. This is acknowledging other cultures and sharing the joy of others while enjoying the diversity. Clearly, Christianity is not a monopolized property of the Western powers nor is something to

¹⁵ Donald A. McGavran, *Momentous Decisions in Missions Today*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984, 11-12.

be divided according to regional factionalism. This is a perspective and entity that globalized churches entering the new century should sustain upon.¹⁶

Now, the role of the churches in this world existing for the purpose of the world missions does not depend on who can quantitatively and competitively carry out the works of missions, but rather on who can serve and cooperate others well. Models of early churches (Acts 4, 6) in Acts display holistic approach to missions that is accompanied by the support of the Word and service to others. Jesus Christ himself also clearly stated that he “came to serve and not to be served” (Matthews 20:28). Jesus teaches that we as disciples should also live accordingly.

In regards to missions, virtues of the people and the role of churches is not found competitively. It all starts with the cooperation formed under the name of the Lord and the idea of service. And this is especially for the people who live in the post modernistic society. All should acknowledge each other’ s equality as well as develop a relationship based on co-existence and co-dependence. Missiology is God’ s history for saving this world. Churches should participate to combine love, service, message, teaching, and healing to successfully fulfil total missiological ministry of the churches.

The advent of the Lord Jesus is a certain promise and the calling of missions given to all the churches that must continue on till the return of Jesus. To restate, the order of missions and eschatology should parallel its continuation until the promised time of Lord Jesus(Kairos). What church history proves is that when mission-consciousness vanishes, the churches also cease its existence.¹⁷ If any church is careless about the fundamentals of missionary community, it eventually brings forth flaw in its existence and expansion of Christianity itself.

¹⁶ Wilbert R. Shenk. "Toward a Global Church History" In Internation Bulletin. Vol. 20. April 1996, p. 56.

¹⁷ Ibid., 54. "Where mission consciousness extinguished, the church dies."

Bibliography

Cotterell, Peter. *Mission and meaninglessness: The good news in a world of suffering and disorder*. London, U.K.: SPCK, 1990.

Engen, Charles Van. *God's missionary people*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991.

Hedlund, Roger E. *The mission of the church in the world*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1991.

Lapp, John A. "'Taking the form of a servant': The new church order and the practice of mission" In *Mission Focus*. 1995. Vol. 3.

Lewis, Jonathan. ed. *World Mission Part I*. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1994.

McGavran, Donald A. *Momentous decisions in missions today*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984.

Shenk, Wilbert R. "Toward a global church history" In *International Bulletin*. Vol. 20, April 1996.

Stott, John. *The contemporary Christian*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1992.

블라우, 요하네스. 『교회의 선교적 본질』. 서울: 대한 예수교 장로회 총회 출판국, 1988.