

The Character of the Church 4

The Church is Missionary

We are arguing that the character of the church is revealed in its history. That is, what the church has been, it is. So far we have selected four descriptors of the Church saying that the Church is persecuted, catholic, reforming and missionary. The roots of the church are always in persecution. The gospel always contests the claims of the world and the assertions of our own human nature. Becoming a Christian means that we renounce, or even contradict, something in our nature and circumstances. God now rules our life and we march to the beat of a different drum. The Church spent centuries sorting out its theology and drawing the boundaries of its teaching (dogma). This theology may be summarised by saying that God is one Substance in three Persons (the Trinity) and Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures (human and divine). Dogma is not the gospel but it protects the faith from error. The Church is always under the threat of heresy. This is because the Christian faith is a Truth position: Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6). The Christian Faith is a statement about the Truth: the Truth is one, its variations are many. This is not claiming that Christianity is the only truth; that whatever Christians say is always true; or that there is no truth in other religions or beliefs. Essentially, Jesus Christ is the Truth (Truth is a Person) and our statements about Him are attempts to express what this may mean. Some statements may vary because of the cultural setting but they should all honour Jesus Christ and express the ecumenical truths of the Church. Because there can always be heresy in the Church, the Church has to be Reforming. That is, the Church needs to be capable of correcting itself in line with the scriptures. This requires an interpretation of the text which means that we have to continually discern what God is saying. On occasions this may become contentious. Hopefully, we will have Christian ways of resolving our tensions.

The Church is Missionary: the Great Commission

Jesus Christ has commanded us to go into the entire world. The Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20) commences with a statement of the total authority of Jesus Christ: 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth'. Our mission is based on the authority (power, significance) of Jesus Christ and who He is. Therefore (this is a logical consequence) we are to:

- 1) Go and
 - 2) Make disciples of all nations.
- To do this we are to
- 3) Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And we are to

- 4) Teach them all that Jesus has commanded.
- This is rounded off by the statement that 'I am with you always even to the consummation of the age'.

This is the mandate for Christian missionary activity.

At **Pentecost** the gospel made an appeal to many nations, even in the authentic sound of their own language: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, those from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts, Cretans and Arabs (Acts 1:9-11). They all heard the wonderful works of God in their own language. This has been a principle of Christian mission ever since: for people to hear of God in their own language. A major task of Christian mission has been the translation of the

scriptures into foreign (indigenous) tongues. This is part of the Incarnational principle whereby God comes to us by means of things we understand. All that can be said about God can be expressed in a human being (Col 2:9).

Persecution stimulates Mission

After the martyrdom of Stephen, the disciples were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ to them (Acts 8:4-5).

Peter and the Gentiles

A very significant event takes place in Acts 11 and 12. Peter is directed by a dream to go to the gentiles in the form of the centurion, Cornelius. The gospel is preached to the gentiles (non-Jews) and they receive the Holy Spirit as the first disciples did, with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Acts 10:44-47). Therefore, the gentiles are baptised and the new religion jumps the Jewish barrier but does not deny its Jewish roots (Acts 24:14).

Paul is called to the Gentiles

As a result of his conversion experience on the Damascus road, Paul is sent to the gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17). Although the revelation comes to Peter the ministry comes to Paul (Gal 2:9). After 17 years in preparation of the gospel (Gal 1:18; 2:1), Paul commences his four missionary journeys. These involved going to the Jewish world (the Diaspora) and to the Gentiles of the Roman Empire.

Paul's Four Missionary Journeys

1) Paul's first journey was to Asia Minor (modern Turkey) described in Acts 13-14. When Paul first entered a town he would go to the Jewish synagogue. Here he would place the gospel in its OT context and declare that he worshipped the God of the fathers of Israel (Acts 24:14). When they would not accept that Jesus was the Christ he would leave them and go into the market place and move from fighting the defensiveness of Judaism to fighting the sorceries of paganism (Acts 19:9).

2) In his second missionary journey Paul goes back to Asia Minor and then goes to Europe (Macedonia and Greece) in Acts 16-18:22.

3) His third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:15) takes him basically to the churches he established on his second missionary journey in Greece and Asia Minor.

4) His fourth missionary journey was when, having appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:11), Paul is sent to Rome.

On his missionary journeys, Paul helps forge the doctrines of the significance of Jesus Christ and the practise of the Christian community. He suffered much (2Cor 11:22-28) which helps forge his teaching on the ministers of God (2Cor 6:4-10).

The Missionary Church and its History of Mission

1) The church is persecuted for its first 300 years.

2) Christianity becomes the religion of the Roman Empire which is collapsing because of the barbarian invasions. In the 400 and 500AD Christianity stretches from Britain across Europe to Palestine and along the top of Africa to Spain. A major civilising instrument of the Church at this time was the developing monasteries.

3) The control of the Church is challenged by the rise of militant Islam, which spreads its control by conquest. By 750AD Islam controls North Africa into Spain, Palestine and the Near East (Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Iran).

4) Christian Missionaries from Ireland and England convert the Barbarian kingdoms: Willibord (658-739) was known as the Apostle

to the Frisians (Netherlands) and Boniface (675-754) was the Apostle to the Germans.

5) There was a mass baptism of Russians in 988 expanding the Orthodox influence which separated as a church from Rome in 1054.

6) The Ottoman Turks (Islamic) overcame the Christian Byzantium Empire invading the Balkans in 1371. So the East is Islamic, a situation that the Crusades (1200's) did not reverse.

7) The Spanish and the Portuguese commenced exploration in the 1400-1500's: Columbus to America (1492); Dias rounds the Cape of Good Hope (1487); Portuguese reach Malacca (1509) and Macao, China (1514); Magellan circumnavigates the globe in 1519-22. Catholic missions follow these explorations to Central America (Mexico, Panama) and the Philippines (1565), Francis Xavier goes to India (1542) and Japan (1549), Ricci goes to Beijing (1601).

8) Protestantism follows English and Dutch explorations. The Pilgrim Fathers arrive in America in 1620. The English go to India (Carey 1793) and the Dutch go to Indonesia (1849).

9) William Carey, a Baptist shoemaker, goes to India in 1793. He translated the Bible into 35 languages and dialects.

10) In 1865, Hudson Taylor, who has already been in China, forms the China Inland Mission.

11) C.T. Stud goes to China (1885), India (1900) and Africa (1910).

12) Since WWII, with the independence of most colonised countries, missionary work has changed. Christianity has had to dissociate itself from Western Civilisation and take on more indigenous forms. However, with globalisation and its monoculture (which is technology based), the collapse of atheism (see A. McGrath) and the translation of the scriptures, Christianity is well placed for evangelism to all people groups.

The 10/40 Window (see attached)

Spirits are territorial. Between latitudes 10 and 40 above the equator lie the non-Christian religions. This area includes 2/3 of the human race. This is the new missionary challenge outside the West. There is also the profound challenge of materialism and agnosticism (unbelief) in our own culture.

Hudson Taylor's Testimony and its Spiritual Instruction

Hudson Taylor established the pattern for Faith Ministry in Mission. Following his autobiography we see that he prepared himself for China as follows:

1) He feels that his consecration to God is accepted. His calling comes out of his consecration to God and his focus on serving God.

2) He considers the way Jesus sent out the 12 and the 70 without purse (Mtt 10:5-15; Lk 9:1-6). He seriously considers the faith-walk.

3) He gains relevant training (medical). He finds a way to make himself relevant to human need.

4) He waits on God; meditates on His Word. He intensifies himself in the Word. He becomes more Word-minded.

5) He takes opportunity for Christian work. He looks for and seeks out ways of ministry.

6) He is aware of tithing and giving things away. He fears being weighed down by possessions. Life and psyche develop its own freight which can hamper ministry and the ability to move when God speaks.

7) He lives as one having, at any time, to give account to God. He seeks to have a clear conscience before God and man but sees himself primarily as accountable to God.

8) He lets God know of his needs and waits upon God's supply. He develops the habit of prevailing prayer whereby he prays until he

senses a spirit resolution of his requests. Then there is no further need to ask.

9) He learns that God is faithful. This becomes his experience and the rock on which he stands 'amid the clashing strife'.

10) He obtains a testimony. He has dealings with God. He learns how God works and he testifies to God's working in his circumstances.

11) He restricts food intake and the accumulation of possessions. There is a fasting that directs us away from the flesh towards the truths of the spirit. The voice of the spirit can be drowned by the appetites of an unbridled flesh.

12) He gives away his wealth. Christians travel light. He lays up treasure in heaven: What you own, owns you.

The signs of the Missionary for Jesus Christ

1) Be convinced that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

2) Believe in God's provision for all your needs (Phil 4:19).

3) See God's will in your circumstances.

4) Handle the opposition of the world/flesh/devil.

5) Stand on God's Word, the promises of scripture.

6) Pray without ceasing.

7) Seek out and maintain Christian community.

8) Be prepared to empty yourself of all self-appointed things.

The Missionary Challenge is (as always)

1) Give your self to God. Practise consecration.

2) Ask for His Holy Spirit direction.

3) Prepare yourself for a target environment (niche market).

4) Get trained, speak the language, obtain the skills.

5) Get God's heart (love) for these people.

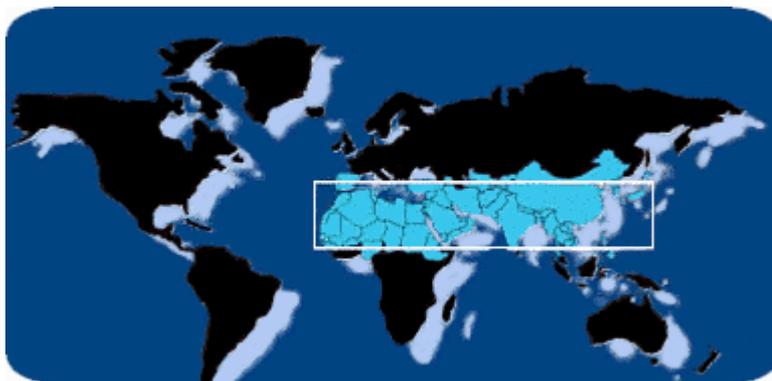
6) Go there in God's provision and promises.

7) Fight the good fight, finish the race (2Tim 4:7).

8) Go further into God with less dependence on anything else.

9) Pray (cry out to God) habitually.

The 10/40 Window



The core of the Unreached People Groups of our world live in a rectangular-shape area on a world map know as the 10/40 Window. It extends from north-west Africa across Asia, between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north of the equator and spans approx. [60 countries](#). It is the darkest, neediest, and most difficult region to reach on the face of the earth. Only supernatural power released through prayer can begin to open this window.

The Physical Need . . .

...The 10/40 Window contains only 1/3 of the world's land mass and yet 2/3 of the world's population live in the Window.

...There are over 400 mega cities (cities with more than 1 million people) in the world today. 300 of these cities lie within the Window.

...The Window contains the majority of the world's least evangelized mega cities. Of the top 50 cities on this list, all 50 cities are in the 10/40 Window.

...More than 97% out the poorest of the poor live in the Window.

...On average, people living in the 10/40 Window exist on less than \$500 per person per year.

The Spiritual Need . . .

...If we think about where the knowledge of Jesus is almost completely void, places with the fewest churches and Christians - the Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu lands come into our view, the heart of the Window.

...71 % of all Muslims, 98 % of all Hindus, and 68% of all Buddhists live in the 10/40 Window.

...There are 34 Muslim countries, 7 Buddhist nations, 3 Marxist nations and 2 Hindu countries in the Window.

...There are 55 countries in the world that are considered "Unevangelized." 97% of these are in this Window.

...There are over 1.3 billion people living in the Window who have little or no chance to hear the gospel.

...In the Window, we find 86% of the people groups which are less than 2% Christian.

...There are 500 people groups in the Window that have never heard the Gospel.

Christianity In the Window . ■ ■

...The church is only sending 8% of its missionaries into the Window.

...Only 1.2% of all mission funds go to the Window.

...Only 1% of all Scripture distribution is distributed to the 10/40 Window.

...Only 3% of all the languages for which the Bible has been translated are directed toward the Window.

...9 out of the 10 countries where the physical persecution of Christians is the most severe are in the Window.

...The greatest revival ever on earth is taking place in the 10/40 Window countries of Asia. Every day in communist China over 25,000 people accept Christ. In India, an estimated 15,000 people are turning to Jesus daily. In the early eighties there were only 15,000 known Christians in the Himalayan country of Nepal compared to over 200,000 followers of Christ today.