

MODELS OF MISSION IN THE 20C

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Introduction

The question about the nature of the mission of the Church became increasingly divisive as the 20C progressed. Up to the end of the 19C there was general agreement amongst Protestants that the aim of mission was to evangelise the world and to establish indigenous churches in every land where Christ would be acknowledged as Saviour and Lord. The world-wide missionary movement of the 19C saw missionaries from a variety of traditions working alongside one another with little difficulty despite certain confessional differences.

In 1910 a World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh which confidently proclaimed the need for the "evangelisation of the world in this generation" based on the continually rising curve of missionary endeavour which had seen the Christian Church become a world-wide phenomenon. The delegates at that conference viewed the establishing of the universal Church as a very real possibility, and they were united in their resolve to present the challenge of mission to the whole Church so that the gospel might be proclaimed to all non-Christian peoples.

After the First World War serious tensions developed between 'liberals' and 'conservatives' particularly about the nature and authority of scripture, and these divergencies in theological perspective began to divide the missionary enterprise. Since the theology of mission depends upon such basic doctrines as sin, salvation, the cross, the person and work of Christ, etc, so it was inevitable that the doctrinal differences which developed gave rise to different perspectives on what mission was about. Many evangelicals became 'separatists' - wanting nothing to do with liberal protestants who did not have a thoroughly reformed conservative view of scripture and mission. The 1920's and 1930's saw the Church more and more divided and troubled by suspicion and doctrinal differences.

This was the context in which the World Council of Churches (WCC) was formed in 1948 with the call to take seriously the biblical mandate of unity in order that the world might believe (John 17.21). This mandate was largely ignored by many conservative evangelicals who continued to devote themselves to evangelism, discipleship and church planting and saw any cooperation with the emerging 'ecumenical' movement as compromise and even a betrayal of the 'gospel'. Some evangelicals did get involved in the WCC, and wanted to influence it from within. However two distinctive streams of mission theology developed, which we can broadly label as 'ecumenical' and 'evangelical' which had their own theological preferences and missiological priorities.

At the same time tremendous changes took place in the RC Church in the 20C, and particularly since the momentous Vatican II Council (1962-1965). The Catholic Church never committed itself to the Ecumenical Movement, always seeing itself as having a distinctive place in God's universal purposes for the Church. But it has become a complex and changing Church, reflecting a diversity of theological perspective similar to that within Protestantism. Its particular views about the Church led to further differences with Protestant theology concerning the mission of the Church.

Consequently three major streams of mission theology have developed in the western church which can be broadly described as Evangelical, Ecumenical and Catholic, and we need to understand why they define mission differently and how they have developed different priorities in mission.

In more recent years there have been several attempts at a convergence of these three approaches, recognising that they all have their strengths which could mutually enrich one another. This movement has greatly contributed to the notion of 'holistic/integral mission', with its comprehensive view of the Church's task in the world, and avoidance of an exclusive emphasis on one dimension or another of the call to mission.

It is important to recognise that the labels we use identifying streams of Christian tradition are very general, and that within them there is a great variety of approach. This means that they overlap in a number of areas and sometimes share the same concerns, with basically the same theology. However there are distinctive emphases which we can identify, and in the seminar we will look at some of the documents which the three traditions have produced which bring out these differences.

1. DEVELOPMENTS IN EVANGELICAL MISSION THEOLOGY

1.1 Introduction: Defining Evangelical Theology

What is an evangelical? As in every stream of Christian thought there is a wide spectrum of theologies which would broadly regard themselves as 'evangelical'. In recent years this spectrum has broadened, partly with the influence of the Charismatic movement, partly as a result of more openness amongst evangelicals on the theology of religions, and partly in response to the challenges of postmodernism.

Back in 1977, the 'father' of the evangelical movement John Stott suggested that evangelicals are essentially 'Bible people' and 'gospel people' (Stott, 1977). That begs a multitude of questions. Derek Tidball expanded on it as follows:

"As gospel people, evangelicals stress that the heart of the gospel is the cross of Christ, usually insisting on that interpretation of the cross known as substitutionary atonement; that a personal response to Christ's work on the cross, usually called conversion, is necessary; that the fruits of the gospel should be subsequently seen in the believer's life, and that the good news should be shared with all people through evangelism." (Tidball, 1994:12)

This says nothing about a view of God, Scripture or the Church, although traditionally evangelicals have emphasised the truthfulness and sufficiency of the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ and take the life and faith of the Early Church as a model for all ages. The uniqueness and finality of the biblical revelation and its abiding relevance to all peoples of all generations is a cornerstone of evangelical thought.

Donald McGavran, the influential American missiologist who pioneered the 'Church growth' school of thinking about mission, and who regards evangelism as the pillar of mission, has defined mission in these terms:

"The classical biblical way of regarding mission is to define it strictly as 'carrying the gospel across cultural boundaries to those who owe no allegiance to Jesus Christ, and encouraging them to accept him as Lord and Saviour and to become responsible members of his Church, working, as the Holy Spirit leads, at both evangelism and social justice, at making God's will done on earth as it is in heaven.'"(Glasser and McGavran, 1983:26)

That's quite a mouthful - but it's distinctively 'evangelical'. McGavran goes on to define what he sees as the main doctrines of evangelical theology (Glasser and McGavran, 1983:101-107):

1. *The absolute inspiration and authority of the Bible*
2. *The doctrine of the soul and eternal life*
3. *The lostness of the human race and the offer of eternal salvation through Christ*
4. *Christ, the only mediator, as unique Lord and Saviour*
5. *The Church as Christ's Body, the household of God*
6. *Evangelisation in the light of the end times*
7. *The primary mission of the Church: world evangelisation and church growth.*
8. *The doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the power for evangelism*

That remains I would say a pretty good summary of the main pillars of classical evangelicalism.

1.2 Historical Developments in the Evangelical tradition (See Appendix 1)

1.3 The Lausanne Covenant

This is the classic evangelical text we will study in the seminar. Try and capture something of what has been called the 'spirit of Lausanne'. This 'spirit' is characterised firstly by the sense that God is active in the world, and we can and must be excited by what he is doing. It is also noticeable in the lack of triumphalism in the document, which is seen in the recognition of the failures of the past and a humble repentance for the self-confidence and self-congratulation with which much evangelism had been conducted in the past. This spirit was carried over into Lausanne II at Manila. It is seen thirdly in the sense of challenge for a task still to be completed of making Christ known to all the nations.

Notice that this is a 'covenant' and not merely a declaration. This was because the participants wanted not simply to declare something to be true but to commit themselves to the task of world evangelisation. This makes it a kind of binding contract together and certainly gives a sense of urgency and relevance to the document.

The Third Lausanne Congress will take place in Cape Town 16th - 25th October this year. Cape Town 2010, held in collaboration with the World Evangelical Alliance, will bring together 4,000 leaders from more than 200 countries to confront the critical issues of our time – other world faiths, poverty, HIV/AIDS, persecution, among others - as they relate to the future of the Church and world evangelization. (www.capetown2010.com) .

2. DEVELOPMENTS IN ECUMENICAL MISSION THEOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The Ecumenical Movement is focussed on the World Council of Churches (WCC) whose head office is in Geneva, Switzerland. By its very nature the WCC is a very diverse group of churches. This makes it more difficult to define its theological position than in the case of evangelicalism. It's probably fairer to say that there are mission theologies (plural) within the WCC, rather than trying to define a single theological line which it represents. Added to that its theology has been changing the whole time, with significant shifts in emphasis as the years have gone by. Although certain themes do keep cropping up, it often feels like trying to get hold of a bar of soap, since it's often difficult to see where the consensus lies.

This is made more difficult by the fact that their documents are largely in the form of reports rather than final, definite statements. It is more of an evangelical tendency to want to be dogmatic! By its very nature WCC theology is more open, flexible and welcoming of widely different perspectives. At the end of their conferences reports are presented by sub-groups working on specific areas, and there is often no agreed statement at the end to which all the delegates are expected to give their assent. Often the final reports contain testimonies, stories, case histories and much that is experience-based.

The diversity of approaches is reflected in the different ways scripture is referenced. Sometimes documents really do attempt to be faithful to scripture, but at other times it seems that the Bible is being used merely to endorse previously decided lines of thought. Sometimes there is no attempt at all to relate what is being said to scripture.

Many conservative evangelicals have voiced their unhappiness with a number of aspects of WCC theology. It seems that the WCC says very little about eternal life, the Great Commission, the need for individual conversion to Christ, church growth, world evangelisation and so on. This is because for an ecumenical person the 'horizontal' dimension is at least as important as the 'vertical' - that is, our relationships with others and with the world are at least as important as our relationship with God, in an exclusive, individual sense.

However the WCC seeks to respond to the questions and issues in the world with a theology that is relevant to them. Fundamental therefore to WCC theology is our relationship with the world and how we can change it in conformity to the Kingdom of God. No doubt many ecumenical thinkers would see the evangelical approach to the issue of justice for the poor as a kind of spiritual 'trickle-down theory' - the poor end up with no more than a trickle of our spiritual commitment instead of the priority they should receive.

No-one should argue with the central vision of ecumenism: the need for the unity of the Church; unity and mission are inseparably linked to one another, since when Jesus prayed for our unity it was "so that the world might believe" (John 17.21). So all Christians must be concerned at the way our divisions give the lie to what we proclaim. It is also fair to say that the WCC has done a lot to break down traditional missionary approaches, exposing imperialistic attitudes, emphasising the autonomy of the Church in every land, and helping to promote that model of mission which sees it as 'from everywhere to everywhere'.

2.2 Edinburgh 1910

It could be said that the Edinburgh Conference launched the ecumenical movement since it was the first occasion on which a diverse group of Christian churches came together with a common concern for mission. Some 1200 delegates

came together representing 160 boards or societies. Latourette noted that the conference marked a “new sense of fellowship amongst Christians...the growing realisation of this fellowship was to be one of the most significant characteristics of the ecumenical movement” (Latourette, 1954: 360)

It picked up the call of the 19C Student Volunteer Movement in the States for “the evangelisation of the world in our generation” and it sought to combine that with a call to the whole Church to engage in mission. The vision was of churches coming together to coordinate their work, rather than working independently. It was a moment of unique opportunity, and they saw the whole world as open to the gospel. It was a confident, visionary and idealist occasion - they really did believe that it would be possible to fulfil their vision, and they saw the Christianisation of the world as key to its security and progress. They did not focus on theology, both to avoid disagreement and to focus on a strategy for how world evangelisation could be achieved. But it was a very male, west-dominated, protestant affair (the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches hadn't even been invited), committed to an Anglo-American model of mission which was perpetuating the idea that mission was the "west to the rest 'cos the west was best"! Nevertheless it launched the International Missionary Council (IMC) which was intended to be a global forum for ecumenical exploration of the theology of mission. Bosch describes the Edinburgh Conference as:

"an all-time highwater mark in western missionary enthusiasm, the zenith of the optimistic and pragmatic approach to missions." (Bosch, 1991: 338)

However, as Bosch goes on to say, they did not anticipate the First-World War, which shattered western illusions of greatness and brought in a much more sober, realistic approach to mission, more hesitant and less victorious.

2010 marks the 100th anniversary of the Edinburgh Conference and several events have taken place this summer to mark this event. Andrew Kirk, who was very involved with these celebrations, will tell us more about it in the seminar.

2.3 The WCC and subsequent Ecumenical Conferences (see Appendix 2)

2.4 The main themes of WCC theology

We can summarise the main themes of WCC theology as follows:

- ♦ *The world is the locus of God's saving activity.* There is an emphasis upon creation rather than redemption theology. Salvation is seen in terms of recreation of the world rather than as atonement for individual sin. God's primary concern is for the world which he created and the relationship he really seeks to restore therefore is with the world before it is with the Church or with individuals.
- ♦ *The Kingdom of God is a new social order.* This arises from a strongly 'realised eschatology' - that is to say it focuses on the 'now' rather than the 'not yet' of the Kingdom. The kingdom comes wherever justice is restored and reconciliation is achieved and it is certainly about this world rather than the next.
- ♦ *Sin is corporate as much as it is individual.* The great sins are injustice, poverty, greed and oppression and all their institutionalised manifestations.
- ♦ *Salvation involves humanisation.* This is distinct from and in priority to the saving of souls for eternal life. The idea is that in Jesus God perfects humanity and sets us free to be fully human. Conversion is therefore conversion to the world, not out of the world, and is discussed in terms of discipleship and responsibility rather than in terms of a personal relationship with God. The search is for wholeness and 'shalom' in this life, so that the totality of life is transformed into the 'new humanity'
- ♦ *Reconciliation will ultimately be cosmic.* The hope is that a world community will be established in which God's purposes are fulfilled in love, justice and peace. Unity means the unity of all things and peoples in Christ, and it is that for which we work.
- ♦ *Social action is at least as important as evangelism.* If we understand evangelism as the straightforward proclamation of the gospel, then that is not enough. If God is working to save this world, then we must cooperate with Him in restoring it to wholeness. This will involve social action and political commitment to work for the changing of unjust structures. The WCC has developed quite a history now of support for political movements for

radical social change. Human rights, the environment, women's issues, and all forms of oppression come to the forefront of the agenda.

- ♦ *Openness to truth in other faiths.* This means that the approach to other faiths should be in terms of dialogue which is a mutual recognition of truth and a willingness to learn from one another. It tends to play down the uniqueness of Christ, preferring to look for the ways in which God is at work in other faiths to reveal himself in other, complementary ways of salvation.

After all of that you may be surprised to learn that the aim of the CWME endorsed at Nairobi in 1975 was expressed as:

"that the Christian community be assisted to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed, to the whole world, to the end that all may believe in him and be saved." (Paton, 1976:390):

It has to be said that some WCC documents have been supported by many evangelicals as being generally scriptural. The document *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation (1982)* which we will study in the seminar, is a good example. It's not a definitive statement, but it has been regarded since as a landmark document.

As we have already noted, one of the problems with WCC theology is that it is changing all the time, and while many of the above themes recur, there are subtle changes of emphasis from the Church to the World to the Kingdom to the World Community. Roger Bassham has summed up WCC theology superbly as follows:

"The common witness of the whole Church in its task of bringing the whole gospel to the whole world. It is accepted that the world with all its problems and possibilities must be the arena for mission. Through dialogue and involvement with the world, Christians will discover the most appropriate ways to communicate the fullness of God's salvation to people in particular situations, involving the personal and social, physical and spiritual dimensions of human existence." (Bassham, 1980:53)

2.9 Comparing Evangelical and Ecumenical Approaches to Mission

In a paper by David Bosch entitled *In search of Mission: Reflections on Melbourne and Pattaya* (Bosch, 1981) he charts the differences between ecumenical and evangelical theology by comparing the conferences at Melbourne and Pattaya, which took place in the same year of 1980. Here is a table of his main comparisons:

Melborne	Pattaya
Showed a preference for the 'Jesus' language of the gospels	Showed a preference for the language of Paul's epistles
Began with 'man's disorder'	Began with 'God's design'
Stressed unity (at the expense of truth?)	Stressed truth (at the expense of unity?)
Believed that God reveals Himself also through contemporary experience	Believed that God reveals Himself only through Jesus Christ (and in Scripture/the Church)
Emphasised the deed (orthopraxis)	Emphasised the word (orthodoxy)
Regarded social involvement as part and parcel (or all?) of the Christian mission	Regarded social involvement as separate from mission, or as a result of conversion
Judged societal ethics to be of prime importance	Judged personal ethics to be of importance
Viewed sin as having a corporate dimension	Viewed sin as exclusively individual
Tended to equate mission with humanisation or social change	Tended to equate mission with a call to conversion or church planting
Viewed proclamation as rendering support to fellowship and service	Viewed proclamation as primary: it gives birth to fellowship and service
Emphasised liberation	Emphasised justification and redemption
Heard the cry of the poor and the oppressed	Heard the cry of the lost
Considered Man from the perspective of Creation	Considered Man from the perspective of the Fall
Judged humanity positively	Judged humanity negatively
Denied the existence of clear boundaries between the Church and the world	Affirmed the existence of clear boundaries between the Church and the world

The ecumenical approach tends to put action before words, whereas the evangelical approach makes proclamation a priority. In the ecumenical approach, God's primary relationship is with the world. The Church is seen as part of the world and its agenda is set by the world and its needs. God relates to us as individuals through the world and the Church, and the direct personal relationship with God that is so much a feature of the evangelical approach is played down. Evangelicals therefore think primarily in terms of God's relationship with each one of us, through which we belong to the Church and from there we reach out into the world. Evangelicals tend to see the Church as separate from and prior to the world in God's purposes.

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION THEOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Roman Catholic mission theology actually shares a lot of common ground with evangelical theology, as well as picking up a lot of the themes from ecumenical thinking. It is important not to 'write off' theologies which come from different perspectives than our own. We may not like what the RC documents say about the Virgin Mary, say, but that should not prevent us from listening to what they have to say about mission. Many evangelicals have been very positive and welcoming of some of the documents of Vatican II.

We have seen how the evangelical emphasis in mission is on what individual Christians, as members of the Body of Christ, do in responsive obedience to the mandate of the Great Commission. God's first concern is to establish a relationship with people as individuals, and then to bind them into the fellowship of the Church from which they can be disciplined and be ready to serve God in the world. This is traditionally how much evangelism has been done: for example, we have had large crusades with famous evangelists who have challenged individual people of all ages to repentance and faith. Having made their commitment to Christ these people are encouraged to join a local church, where it is hoped they will link up with a Bible study group and from there learn to venture out with the gospel to tell others about Christ. So mission on this model is primarily proclamation of the gospel to the world by the preaching of Jesus challenging people to believe and trust in Him. The Church, and all Christians associated with it, is seen as the only channel of God's saving purposes for the world.

We have seen how the ecumenical approach is to begin with the world and its problems and to see how this challenges us to make the gospel relevant to those needs. So on this model mission is more what the church (and individuals) do in the world to bring the love of God into it. God's first concern is to renew the world, and it is that priority which gives the church its agenda for its life and mission. Individuals are then encouraged to follow Jesus (rather than preach him) into participation in the suffering of the world. The emphasis is more on what we do than what we say - how we behave and who we are is at least as important as what we believe. Ecumenicals are not keen on the word 'evangelism' - they prefer the word 'witness' which avoids connotations of proselytism. In the ecumenical documents the Church is an instrument of God's involvement with the world, but not the only channel through which God brings his love and justice to pass, since all those who are working for justice are in some sense participating in the life and work of the Kingdom of God.

In RC theology the Church comes to the very forefront of the action. Mission for them is defined in the Vatican II documents as part of the very nature of the Church, so that, as in evangelical theology, they cannot think of mission without thinking of the presence of the Church in the world. The emphasis becomes one of belonging to the Church as one of the people of God, and therefore mission is seen in terms of establishing the Church and persuading people to join it. This establishes the Church as a sign and a sacrament of salvation in the world. A sign in the sense of a pointer to what the community of the Kingdom should look like, and a sacrament in the sense of a mediation of grace to the world. At the risk of over-simplification, if evangelicals focus on *believing* (faith matters) and ecumenicals on *behaving* (action matters) then we might say that RCs think also in terms of *belonging* (communion matters). Furthermore, another simple way to see it is to look at the key words in each theology: in evangelical theology it is *proclamation*, in ecumenical theology it is *participation*. RC theology has both of those as well, but a key word for them is *presence*: the presence of the Church and individual Christians in the world, being the Church and being Jesus to others.

But these are by no means exclusive categories, and you will find each of these themes in all three traditions. I would like to think that it should be possible to combine them so that in our mission thinking we take from the strengths of each tradition, rather than focusing more narrowly on one way or another of doing things.

3.2 Prior to Vatican II

For something like three hundred years the RC Church defined itself by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) which had sought to clarify doctrine in the light of the Protestant Reformation. The Catholic Church saw itself as the only true Church and its mission as the only valid mission. The Church was defined in formal, institutional, hierarchical terms and the absolute authority of the Pope was firmly established.

That's not to say that they had been slow in their missionary endeavour. The Catholic Church advanced tremendously in the 16C and 17C. In the 18C a combination of factors, including the suppression of the Jesuits and the French Revolution, set back Catholic mission until the twentieth century.

It was not until Vatican I (1869-1870) that any serious attempt was made at reform of the theology of the Church. That Council produced two documents, but was cut short by the Franco-Prussian War, and it was never reconvened. Feeling grew as the 20C progressed that the RC Church was badly in need of reform. Theologians such as John Henry Newman, Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, Hans Kung and others represented the progressive side of the Church and pushed for a redefinition of what it meant to be the Church. They wanted to change the whole image of the Church and bring it more into line with 20C thinking. For too long the Church had been like a fortress, cut off from the world and within which peace and order could reign undisturbed. But they wanted the Church to present and represent Christ to the world in a meaningful way, and make it much more open to the world.

These moves coincided with four significant papal encyclicals on mission which helped to revive missionary endeavour. Glasser notes how membership of the Catholic Church increased between 1920 and 1950 from 390 million to 460 million, and by 1979 it had jumped to 739 million. In 1926 the Catholic Church had about 400 missions throughout the world, and by the 1980's they numbered more than 700. (Glasser, 1983:168)

The first significant encyclical came from Benedict XV in 1919, and it sought to galvanise the Church into missionary expansion to reach the 'immense multitudes of people who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death'. He wanted the Church to become truly indigenous, and these themes were underlined by Pius XI in 1926. Twenty five years later, Pius XII issued an encyclical called "On the Development of the Missions", declaring that he wanted the Church to move even faster in making Christ known to the whole world, and that was to be an urgent task. His emphasis was not so much, however, on the conversion of new Christians as on the need to raise up local clergy and encourage local Christians to exercise their gifts as laity within the Church. It would be in this way that the Church would 'propagate the reign of Christ' and make the 'frontiers of the Kingdom coincide with those of the world'. This emphasis on the involvement of the laity in mission was anticipating a key theme of Vatican II. The fourth encyclical came from John XXIII in 1959 in which he affirmed that mission was his first concern.

It was Pope John XXIII who was to be the instigator of Vatican II. He recognised with Hans Kung and others that the Catholic Church had become isolated and irrelevant to the world as well as cut off from other major denominations, how many predominantly Catholic countries were socially backward, and yet how the Church was growing in maturity in the Third World. These and many other changing factors needed to be addressed with urgency. He shared the vision for renewal which Kung and others had been pushing for and what was called the 'aggiornamento' (bringing up to date) of the Church. He summoned the Vatican II Council, which began its work on 11th October 1962, and was to prove a momentous new beginning for RC theology and mission. In response to a question about why he had convened the Council, Pope John replied by throwing open a window and declaring: "That's why! To let some fresh air into the Church!" (Glasser and McGavran, 1983:175)

3.3 Vatican II

The major papal encyclicals on mission that we have mentioned briefly had focused on the preaching of the gospel and the planting of the Church in a fairly conventional manner. This involved reproducing the Catholic structures and patterns of ministry wherever the missionaries went, and maintaining the firm authoritative hand of Rome on all

missionary activity. Vatican II sought to change this with the renewal of the Church's identity and self-understanding, the reformulation of the Church's liturgies and eucharistic practices, a new way of defining the Church's relationship with the world, and a more open and respectful attitude to other Christians and other faiths. One commentator described it as "an unprecedented venture in ecclesiological self-examination and self-understanding" (Abbott, 1966:102).

3.3.1 Vatican II and Mission Theology

This Council was the twenty-first 'ecumenical' Council of the RC Church - ecumenical in the sense of being representative of the world-wide RC Church. Over 2,600 Bishops came to it from every major continent and culture, and Pope John XXIII described it as the "greatest of the Councils held so far", and it was certainly the largest and most representative. After four years work the Council produced 14 documents of varying length and authority. The aim was not to produce 'dogma' which would be set into concrete for eternity, so there was no insistence that the teaching was definitive or totally devoid of error. The idea was to make it non-technical and full of pastoral concern for the world, indicating the new openness which the RC Church wished to project.

As we have already seen, RC theology has always seen the Church as central to the purposes of God, and therefore as equally central to the task of mission. So to redefine the identity of the Church would have tremendous implications for mission. Yves Congar had already spoken of the Church as the 'People of God', and he had been pushing for greater participation by the laity and a recognition that the Church is more than the RC Church. Karl Rahner had been saying that the Church was not in possession of the world and should not act as if it were. He had spoken of 'anonymous Christians' - people in whom the grace of God is at work even though they are outside the Church and may not even describe themselves as committed Christians. For him it was not a case of having to be in a 'state of grace' before you could attend Mass - he saw grace as God's free communication with us, and anyone can be conscious of that. Grace therefore for Rahner was available and operative in all people, irrespective of the Church.

These ideas were influential on the Council when it came to drawing up their significant document on the Church called *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the World).

3.3.2 Lumen Gentium and Ad Gentes (see Appendix 3)

3.3.4 Some questions

Some say that Vatican II was essentially about bringing mission into the heart of the Church and seeing the Church as essentially missionary by nature. But what do they mean by 'mission'? Is it about preaching the gospel to those who have never heard? Or is it more about re-evangelising those areas of the world that are already Catholic but which have lost their commitment to the Church, for example Latin America? It often seems that 'evangelisation' is about restoring the faithfulness of those already baptised, but no longer practising, Catholics. It's not that they need to 'become Christians', they need to be made aware again of the grace of God operative in their lives.

And where do social development, and more radically, liberation, fit in? Certainly they have a place in the Vatican II documents with much shared concern for human rights, war, marriage and family life, racism etc. These documents were to pave the way for the acceptance of Liberation Theology in the Church in Latin America.

3.4 Post Vatican II

Many both within and beyond the RC Church have been disappointed that Vatican II has not yet had its impact for reform that was anticipated at the time. It is true that a lot of things have changed, such as the use of the vernacular in liturgical worship and a revolution in the reading of the Bible. The door has been opened for a much more active participation of the laity.

But the drift towards humanisation and dialogue in mission worried many conservative bishops, and the Pope Paul VI in an encyclical called *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) reaffirmed the priority of mission as evangelisation and gospel proclamation. This was partly as a response to Liberation Theology. The new openness led to disunity and fragmentation in many areas of Church life and so the previous Pope John Paul II tried to assert a new authoritarianism.

So many of the themes of Vatican II have not really been built upon, and it remains to be seen which direction Pope Benedict will take.

The most significant event for mission was the encyclical from John Paul II in 1991 entitled *Redemptoris Missio*, which is an attempt at a 'summa' of official RC thinking on mission, reaffirming many traditional doctrines. It tries to exclude theologies that are not Trinitarian, reductions of the Kingdom of God to socio-political liberation, theologies which deny Jesus as a unique mediator, soteriologies which say that everyone can be saved, and missiologies which downplay the central role of the Church. It does try to safeguard scriptural teaching as a source of doctrine and it does attempt to be truly christocentric, so there are many things in it that evangelicals have welcomed.

Some say that "too much came too soon for too many" with Vatican II, and the result was confusion and division. Since 1975 there has been a steady decline of RC missionaries from the west and the USA, and the Vatican is very worried about its role and influence in previously considered solidly Catholic areas such as Latin America. Some say it will take the Church 100 years to recover from Vatican II, others that it will take 100 years for its effects to be felt!

4. The Possibility of Convergence?

Having looked at all three traditions it is possible to see that there are several points at which they are saying similar things. Certainly similar issues are on the agenda for all of them, even if considerable differences of emphasis remain. For example, all of them seem to be saying that mission is the central task of the Church and that it should include all of God's people in seeking to fulfil God's purposes in the world. However, on the Church, it could be said that the RCs separate the mission of the Church from the duties of the Church, so that the Church's social involvement is one of its duties, but not part of its mission. Many evangelicals see the Catholic documents supporting an evangelistic view of mission. What we need to note however is that for a Catholic, founding the Church means founding the RC Church! But of course all denominations think in that way - that in planting a 'church' they have to reproduce it in their own image, which is naturally the best way of being the Church!

So although we can say that the Church and the World is very much on the agenda for all of them there are significant differences. In particular differences remain about what God is doing in the world by his Spirit. A key question is the relationship between God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ and his presence and activity in the whole world. At Vatican II the Catholic Church for the first time acknowledged the possibility of salvation outside the Church. Most evangelicals remain firm that although some people may have some knowledge of God through his general revelation, salvation is only possible through Christ. The WCC has developed the idea of Christ being at work in all cultures by his Spirit, so that whatever manifestations of 'truth' there are in other faiths we may say that these are ways in which Christ is revealing himself. But there is no real consensus on this.

Also it is now widely accepted that both evangelism and social action are essential dimensions of the mission of the Church. And yet tensions remain about exactly what these things mean, and what priority we should give to each one. The WCC has been working for an integral approach of 'word and deed', although many evangelicals have felt that they are more 'deed' than 'word' orientated. Certainly conservative evangelicals have maintained the priority of evangelism, and have been reluctant to endorse more radical approaches to political and social involvement.

The search for unity amongst Christians has been one of the most difficult questions. Frequently, it has been said that unity is essential for effective mission, recognising that disunity does no service to our witness and brings the gospel into disrepute. And yet the question remains about what kind of unity we should have. Many evangelicals do not want an organic unity, as the WCC seems to see it. They regard the only unity worth having as a unity based on the truth of God's word, and as the WCC has such a spectrum of attitudes to scripture represented in its documents. It seems impossible that any meaningful unity can be reached. The Vatican II documents speak of a unity in Christ in whom all are called to participate. It is in Christ that the unity of the churches and indeed the entire human race will be established. Certainly there is a degree of convergence in that all three traditions seem to want their mission theology to be Trinitarian. But even here a shift from christology to pneumatology can be noticed in the WCC, which has raised doubts about what that really means in ecumenical theology.

So is there any basis for unity? Is there any possibility of convergence of the three traditions? Many would like to think so, and among them was David Bosch. That's why the paradigm that he proposed for mission today was called an 'emerging ecumenical' paradigm - that is to say drawing together the strengths of all three traditions in a mutually enriching approach which seeks to learn from one another. For this to happen the model of mission has to be

intrinsically 'integral'. With this we are back to our definition of the '*missio dei*', which does not of course identify with any one Christian tradition, but hopefully should enable us to transcend our differences!

Appendix 1: Historical Developments in the Evangelical tradition

1.2.1 Prior to 1966

In terms of mission, evangelical mission theology falls into two main periods in the 20C. Prior to 1966 evangelical organisations were working separately, each concerned with their own obedience to the Great Commission. Since 1966 there have been a number of gatherings which have brought evangelicals together to share a common concern for new ways of doing evangelism in the modern world.

This has brought to the surface differences in emphasis amongst evangelicals in how to do mission and what mission is. A number have focused on evangelism as the primary task of saving lost souls, with a particular concern for 'unreached peoples'. Others have recognised the need to relate the gospel to the social and cultural realities of the situation in which we try to proclaim it, although there has been a swing in thinking on social involvement back and forth. In the 19C evangelical missionaries got very involved in social projects as part of their mission responsibility, building hospitals, developing educational projects etc. It was only when the so-called liberal 'social gospel' became prominent that evangelicals reacted and became more definitely evangelical, making it more difficult for them to have too obvious a social involvement in case it was seen as compromising what they saw as the pure gospel.

1.2.2 Wheaton, Berlin and Frankfurt

In 1966 two major world evangelical conferences were held, one at Wheaton (USA), and one at Berlin. Both these events did a lot to unite the evangelical constituency in working together on a view of mission which recognised the changing and turbulent times of the 1960's. The Wheaton Congress brought together two great American mission organisations: the International Fellowship of Mission Association (IFMA) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Association (EFMA). They came together believing that:

"The time has come for evangelical leadership to make plain to the world their theory, strategy, and practice of the church's universal mission." (Lindsell, 1966:3)

Interestingly, although they rejected the WCC way of seeing mission (which we shall look at below), they were struggling with similar issues: how missions should relate to indigenous churches, how to balance evangelism and social responsibility, and what visible unity would mean in practice. The declaration at the end came out with a clear affirmation of verbal proclamation of the gospel as the heart of mission. Only at the end of the document is a recognition that the gospel does relate to social issues, and that was quite a radical thing to say at the time. They had not begun to discuss what the relationship between the two might be, but at least a relationship was recognised:

"Today evangelicals are increasingly convinced that they must involve themselves in the great social problems men are facing. They are concerned for the needs of the whole man, because of their Lord's example, His constraining love, their identity with the human race, and the challenge of their evangelical heritage. Evangelicals look to the Scriptures for guidance as to what they should do and how far they should go in expressing this social concern, without minimising the priority of preaching the gospel of individual salvation." (Wheaton, 1966:23)

Evangelicals got themselves even more firmly on the map of world mission at Berlin in a World Congress on Evangelism, at which Billy Graham was the honorary chairman and the theme was "One Race, One Gospel, One Task". This conference definitely gave a new sense of identity and unity to the world-wide community of evangelicals. It again quite clearly affirmed evangelism as the primary task of mission, but the mission theology which emerged from it was hardly what could be described as mature or fully developed.

Some wanted to react quite strongly to developments in the ecumenical movement, an example of which being the Frankfurt Declaration (1971) inspired by German reformed theologian Peter Beyerhaus, which quite dogmatically affirmed the absolute priority of our 'vertical' relationship with God over 'horizontal' relationships in the world:

"We recognise and declare: The first and supreme goal of mission is the GLORIFICATION of the name of the one God throughout the entire world, and the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, His Son. We therefore OPPOSE the assertion that mission today is no longer so concerned with the disclosure of God as with the manifestation of a new man and the extension of a new humanity into all social realms. HUMANISATION is not the primary goal of mission. It is rather a product of our new birth through God's saving activity in Christ within us, or an indirect result of the Christian proclamation in its power to perform a leavening activity in the course of world history." (Beyerhaus, 1971:107-120)

1.2.3 The Lausanne Movement

It was at Lausanne I in 1974 that a significant step forward was made in attempting to define a coherent evangelical position on the identity of mission. At the end of the Congress a fifteen point Covenant was signed by nearly all the delegates, and that became a landmark in evangelical thinking. It showed a new spirit of openness to other Christian traditions, demonstrated how a wide variety of evangelical viewpoints could be brought together in a common understanding, and showed a depth of analysis and insight into mission that was quite new for evangelical theology.

Third world theologians made a tremendous impact at Lausanne for the first time, especially Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar from Latin America. Along with other influential Third World leaders such as Bishop Festo Kivengere of Uganda, they helped to bring the social dimension of Christian discipleship to the centre of the agenda. John Stott's influence in particular was significant when he defined mission as "everything the Church is sent into the world to do" as part of God's work in Christ and 'evangelism' as the term to use to focus on the gospel message to be shared. (Stott, 1975: 65-78). Evangelism and social action were seen as complementary, and evangelism, social responsibility, Christian discipleship, church renewal and unity were all seen as integral elements of mission, although evangelism was still seen as primary. A more radical group of evangelicals saw the gospel in terms of liberation, restoration, wholeness, and a salvation that is total in its perspective embracing the whole cosmic reality.

There was another congress at Pattaya in 1980 which was something of a reaction to Lausanne from those more conservative evangelicals who wanted to maintain a spiritual, as distinct from a social emphasis in mission. There was much emphasis on strategy and how to evangelise different cultures and faiths, and the Church Growth movement made a significant impact, with its mission priority and goal of gearing all churches for numerical growth.

The next major event was again at Wheaton in 1983, and it took as its theme: "I will build my Church". At this conference a new word emerged: 'transformation', with the thought that we must not simply be converted but must be transformed, and that process will be both a personal and a social experience.

But the most significant next step after Lausanne came at Manila in 1990, which has been dubbed "Lausanne II" and which sought to consolidate what was said at Lausanne and build on it.

The theme of the conference was: "Proclaim Christ until he comes", but the socio-political dimension of the gospel was by now more or less assumed. The challenge running through the document was for "the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world". It was affirmed that the gospel comes to those who are both spiritually and physically 'poor', and it called for an integration of word and deed faithful to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom. The biblical gospel should have inescapable social implications, even though the document affirmed the priority of an evangelism which seeks to give all people the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. There was also a new acceptance of charismatic renewal and a new recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. It was recognised that all evangelism involves spiritual warfare, and that there is a sense in which every conversion involves a 'power encounter'. There was a recognition of the challenges to the gospel from 'modernity', and the need to 'contextualise' the gospel in today's world. Again there was great openness towards other ways of looking at things, with Roman Catholic delegates present, and an Orthodox Jewish spokesman given a place on the platform.

Here is a taste of Manila:

"Evangelism is primary because our chief concern is with the gospel, that all people may have the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Yet Jesus not only proclaimed the Kingdom of God, he also demonstrated its arrival by works of mercy and power. We are called today to a similar integration of words and deeds. In a spirit of humility we are to preach and teach, minister to the sick, feed the hungry, care for prisoners, help the disadvantaged and handicapped, and deliver the oppressed... Our continuing commitment to social action is not a confusion of the Kingdom of God with a Christianised society. It is, rather, a recognition that the

biblical gospel has inescapable social dimensions. True mission should always be incarnational...We repent that the narrowness of our concerns and vision has often kept us from proclaiming the lordship of Christ over all of life, private and public, local and global. We determine to obey his command to 'seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness'." (Manila, 1989:47)

Appendix 2: The WCC and subsequent Ecumenical Conferences

2.3.1 The WCC 1948

After Edinburgh three major conferences took place at Jerusalem (1928), Madras (1938) and Whitby (1947), sponsored by the IMC, before the WCC was officially launched in 1948.

In the constitution of the WCC it describes itself as:

"a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (Fey, 1970:33)

It is interesting that the WCC began with this focus on the centrality of the Jesus Christ. The WCC Central Committee in 1950 declared:

"conversation, cooperation and common witness of the churches must be based on the common recognition that Christ is the divine head of the Body."

The aims of the WCC were: to seek ways to express the visible unity of the Church; to facilitate common witness of churches in partnership with each other; to express common concern for service, justice, peace and the reconciliation of the world; and to foster spiritual renewal in the Church towards unity, worship, mission and service.

So the WCC was set up initially with 147 member churches from 44 different countries, mostly still European and North American at the time. It was soon recognised that the IMC (concerned mainly with mission) should come together with the WCC (concerned mainly with the Church), because the unity of the Church and the mission of the Church both belong to the essence of the Church. So the merger of the IMC with the WCC was completed at a conference in New Delhi in 1961. From then on the WCC took mission into the heart of its vision for unity and the missionary agencies in their turn placed their work in an ecumenical perspective with the whole Church. A new body was formed called the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) which had responsibility for guiding the WCC in its mission theology. Their first conference was held in Mexico City in 1963.

2.3.2 Mexico 1963

The theme at Mexico was 'Mission in Six Continents' and the aim was to show that in fact there is only one mission taking place in the world and that is God's mission - the '*missio Dei*'. That is the same mission in all six continents, so that mission *in* the West (not just *from* the West) becomes significant. All Christians should participate in God's mission, and that means looking at what God is doing in the whole world and how that affects what he calls the Church to do. Mexico defined evangelism as "a commission given to the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world", a slogan that we have already met with the evangelicals and that has been picked up by many others since.

It is important to see how the world and its problems becomes the focal point in their thinking. We can see how the place of the Church at the heart of God's purposes for mission is gradually being replaced by concern for the world: it is what God is doing in the *world* that is more important than what He is doing in the *Church*. It was said that:

"Christians must discover a shape of Christian obedience being written for them by what God is already actively doing in the structures of the city's life outside the Church" (Orchard, 1963:174)

The other major theme which was destined to become significant was the relationship of Christianity to other faiths, and the call for dialogue was made, a dialogue which would reject a proselytising approach in favour of understanding and respect for those of other faiths.

2.3.3 Uppsala 1968

Following Mexico, there have been regular gatherings of the WCC and the CWME. The WCC met at Uppsala in 1968 with the theme, "Behold I make all things new", which pointed the way to renewed communities, renewed people, a renewed church and a renewed world. Renewal however was seen as much in human as in spiritual terms, with Christ's work seen as restoring our full humanity, since he is 'the true man, the head of the new humanity'. The final report of the conference spells it out in these terms:

"There is a burning relevance today in describing the mission of God, in which we participate, as the gift of a new creation which is a radical renewal of the old and an invitation to men to grow up into their full humanity in the new man, Jesus Christ" (Goodall, 1968:28)

As justice, freedom and dignity are all essential aspects of that new humanity, mission becomes focused on these social priorities. Some of the priority situations for mission include: *centres of power* ('for the sake of the new humanity the powerless must exercise power'); *revolutionary movements* ('struggling for a just society without which the new humanity cannot come'); *urbanised and industrialised society* (all workers need to see the 'interrelatedness of their role with that of others in building a just industrial society').

Two key words of the conference were *anticipation* and *participation*. Christians everywhere were called to join in 'anticipations of God's Kingdom, showing now something of the newness which Christ will complete'. The thought here is of the Church foreshadowing a renewed human community, in which 'achievements of greater justice, freedom and dignity are seen as a part of the restoration of our true manhood in Christ'. But that Kingdom vision is seen in terms of a unity of all mankind, a theme which was to become increasingly significant in future conferences. The emphasis is clearly on the 'now' rather than the 'not yet' of the Kingdom.

The other word *participation* leads out of this thought of one world community. We are all neighbours of one another and therefore we have responsibility for one another. What is needed is a sense of 'participation in a world-wide responsible society with justice for all'. We base our hope on God who makes all things new:

"In their faith in the coming Kingdom of God and in their search for his righteousness, Christians are urged to participate in the struggle of millions of people for greater social justice and for world development" (Goodall, 1968:45)

Needless to say Uppsala created quite a stir amongst evangelicals, who saw the WCC as selling out to a 'social gospel'.

2.3.4 Bangkok 1973

The next conference at Bangkok (1973) took as its theme 'Salvation Today'. It went further than Uppsala in seeing salvation as liberation, and liberation as changing both people and structures in equal measure. While it was clearly stated that our mission is to 'call all men to God's salvation in Christ' and to 'help them to grow in faith and in their knowledge of Christ', the totality of God's salvation purposes is clearly spelt out:

"The salvation which Christ brought, and in which we participate, offers a comprehensive wholeness in this divided life. We understand salvation as newness of life - the unfolding of true humanity in the fullness of God (Col 2.9). It is salvation of the soul and the body, of the individual and society, mankind and 'the groaning creation' (Rom 8.19). As evil works both in the personal life and in exploitative social structures which humiliate humankind, so God's justice manifests itself both in the justification of the sinner and in social and political justice." (Bangkok, 1973:88)

All of these aspects of salvation are so interrelated that they cannot be separated, but it may be necessary to recognise certain 'historical priorities according to which salvation is anticipated in one dimension first'. In other words what we do or say will depend on the situation and is not predetermined. Having said that, the documents from Bangkok do make clear:

"Our concentration upon the social, economic and political implications of the gospel does not in any way deny the personal and eternal dimensions of salvation" (Bangkok, 1973:87)

However, in this common search for justice there must be openness to other faiths and the willingness to work with them, in the faith that:

"God is at work among all people to make his saving love available for all in every generation and to build the Kingdom of his love, which we Christians see manifested in Jesus Christ" (Bangkok, 1973:80)

2.3.5 Other Major Conferences

The other conferences since then have been variations on the same themes. At Vancouver (1983) the emphasis was upon 'life in all its fullness'. At San Antonio (1989) a focus on the world community became a call to work for unity across social, religious and racial boundaries so as to create a new social order in line with the Kingdom of God. At Canberra (1991) the theme was "Come Holy Spirit – Renew the Whole Creation" and that talked in a radical new way of the work of the Holy Spirit in creation, in different cultures and faiths, and in bringing reconciliation in the world. The most recent conferences have been at Salvador Bahia (CWME) in 1996, Harare (WCC) in 1998, Athens (CWME) in 2005 and Porte Alegre, Brazil (WCC) in February 2006, which was the 9th Assembly of the WCC. Recognising a rapidly evolving church and social context, and faced with a decline in income, WCC decided in 2006 to focus on a limited number of core issues and resolved to "claim a clearer and stronger public profile in its witness to the world". They decided to prioritise the themes of unity, spirituality and mission, youth, global justice, and prophetic witness on issues such as globalisation. The WCC was facing a crisis before this conference, both financial and in relation to the unhappiness of the Orthodox Church with the way decisions were made. A new constitution was agreed and it remains to be seen whether they have overcome their problems. Rather than go into too much more detail on each of these conferences, I will look more generally at WCC theology and identify some of the main themes.

2.3.6 Theological developments

There was a significant shift of focus at Mexico in 1963 which was to become a feature of WCC theology. After the Second World War there had been an increasing orientation in thinking towards the world and its suffering, with the WCC churches seeing themselves in solidarity with the world rather than out to conquer it with the gospel. It was said more and more that the Church should stand alongside the world in its suffering and take issues of justice, reconciliation and peace much more seriously. At Mexico it became clear that the Church was no longer the focus of mission, but the world. The Church responds to the search in the world for justice and humanisation, so that the world and what God is doing in it sets the agenda for mission. The Church at Mexico was described as 'the Church for others', and mission became identified with programmes for urban renewal and community development.

So in our mission we look at what God is already actively doing in the life of the world outside the Church and in the light of that discover what kind of obedience is relevant to it. This meant searching for new ways of doing 'evangelism' - traditional ways called people out of the world to be separate from it, but we should be calling people into the world in participation and presence with those who suffer. The important thing is our presence, simply to be there with others, to listen and to learn in solidarity with others may be a sufficient witness. This is how one WCC theologian put it:

"Presence for us means 'engagement', involvement in the concrete structures of our society. It indicates a priority. First, we have to be there before we can see our task clearly. In one sense of the word presence precedes witness. In another sense the very presence is witness." (Payne, 1957:29)

The 'whole gospel' witnesses to every area of life, and that means being prepared to engage in the struggle for justice, reconciliation and peace. It was in fact in the 1960's that Liberation Theology was taking root in the shanty towns of Latin America, and this had a tremendous influence on WCC thinking. The goal of mission became 'humanisation'. This is how the WCC expressed it:

"We have lifted up humanisation as the goal of mission because we believe that more than others it communicates in our period of history the meaning of the messianic goal. In another time the goal of God's redemptive work might best have been described in terms of man turning to God..the fundamental question was that of the true God, and the Church responded to that question by pointing to him. It was assuming that the purpose of mission was Christianisation, bringing man to God through Christ and his church. Today, the fundamental question is much more that of *true* man, and the dominant concern of the missionary congregation must therefore be to point to the humanity in Christ as the goal of mission." (quoted by Bosch, 1991:383)

Appendix 3: Lumen Gentium and Ad Gentes

3.3.2 Lumen Gentium

The central emphasis of this document is that the whole Church is the People of God, an OT image which speaks of a pilgrim people moving in history and in the world to a goal yet to be determined. The Church should not be seen as a society ordered by a hierarchy and laws, unchanged and unmoved by the world. The Church is human as well as divine, and as such it shares the world's pain and problems. It is not perfect and it is not the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is bigger than the Church, because it is the goal which the church serves:

"The Church, equipped with her founder's gifts, in loyal observance of the charity, humility and self-denial which he commanded, accepts her mission to proclaim the Kingdom of Christ and God and to establish it among all nations; she is setting on the earth the initial shoot of this Kingdom's growth. In the meantime, as she gradually grows, she sighs for the Kingdom's full achievement; she hopes and longs with all her strength to join her King in glory." (Lumen Gentium, para 5)

This represents a fundamental shift in RC thinking on the Church. It meant that the People of God matter more than the hierarchical structures; that they share in Christ's priestly ministry and have their own calling so that they do not merely tag along with the clergy; that the Church can be seen as the Body of Christ with much more democracy, diversity and delegation; and that other Christian denominations could be recognised as part of the world-wide 'people of God' and therefore as having a valid ministry in their own right.

Dialogue and cooperation with other Christians in some aspects of mission and witness is encouraged, and the call is made for the RC Church to work with all people engaged in the struggle to build a more just and peaceful world.

This openness to other Christians also extended to other faiths. It was virtually conceded that there is salvation beyond the RC Church not only because the Kingdom is more than the Church but also because salvation is seen as universal in scope. Indeed this optimism verges on universalism at some points, and concurs with Rahner's view about 'anonymous Christians'. So Lumen Gentium looks forward to the "unity, hope and salvation of the whole human race" with the Church as the "instrument of salvation for all men" (Para 9). But the "design of salvation includes those who recognise the Creator and among them especially the Moslems"; and those who "search for God in sincerity of heart do so under the influence of divine grace - they can attain everlasting salvation" (Para 16)

Donald McGavran was happy to endorse Lumen Gentium as a significant statement of the centrality of the Church and its growth in the purposes of God for the salvation of the world (Glasser & McGavran, 1983:199):

"The Evangelical branches of the church have insisted in the strongest terms that the church is part of the immutable program of God. "One holy Church will be and remain for ever". This emphasis is not only what Vatican II lays down as eternal truth. It is what Luther, Calvin, and all other leaders of the protestant churches have said and taught. It is a correct understanding of the biblical witness. In this chapter we are simply saying that this high view of the church, clearly taught by Roman Catholics and Protestants alike, must be one of the foundations stones on which a biblical missiology is built."

As we read these documents RC theology may seem to us pretty hierarchical in its concept of church structures, but in fact the change from a monolithic, unified institution to a more flexible model of the Church as the Body of Christ, in which there is much more democratisation and responsibility for mission is given to the people themselves, was potentially revolutionary for the Catholic Church.

3.3.3 Ad Gentes

The other significant document of Vatican II for mission is called *Ad Gentes* (To the Nations) in which the conviction is expressed that "the whole Church is missionary and the work of evangelisation is the basic duty of the people of God" (Para 35). This means again that both clergy and laity share the goal and responsibility of bringing all people into full union with Christ. It is a comprehensive document, seeing mission as a combination of pastoral work amongst the faithful, primary evangelism and the planting of the Church, and the fostering of ecumenism.

It's also a practical document, addressed to western Christians in an effort to convince them that foreign missionary work is a vital function of the Church. As such it can be seen as maintaining a rather monocultural perspective on mission and thus frustrating any move towards a truly multicultural view of mission and the Church. It reflects the fact that in many Third World situations, particularly in Latin America, the Catholic Churches are still very dependent on foreign missionaries.

Some have felt that *Ad Gentes* failed to resolve certain contradictions about what mission is, especially in relation to socio-political involvement. It spoke of 'inculturation' but left that word undefined; it left the major question unresolved about salvation and whether what God is doing in the world is dependent or not on the Church as the so-called "universal sacrament of salvation".

But it no longer saw the Church in negative, exclusivist terms, and it delegated a lot of responsibility for mission to regional and local churches. Above all it released the RC Church from its previous triumphalism and exclusivism and redefined its role in relation to the modern world as a partner with it rather than a 'father' over it. The Church was finally coming to terms with the achievements of modern science and integrating modern values into Catholic thinking. There are no condemnations in these documents, but rather much regret for the attitudes of the Church in the past and a sincere desire expressed to work together with the rest of the world towards a 'universal brotherhood' in which all nations would form a single community with a common origin.

3.3.4 Some questions

Some say that Vatican II was essentially about bringing mission into the heart of the Church and seeing the Church as essentially missionary by nature. But what do they mean by 'mission'? Is it about preaching the gospel to those who have never heard? Or is it more about re-evangelising those areas of the world that are already Catholic but which have lost their commitment to the Church, for example Latin America? It often seems that 'evangelisation' is about restoring the faithfulness of those already baptised, but no longer practising, Catholics. It's not that they need to 'become Christians', they need to be made aware again of the grace of God operative in their lives.

And where do social development, and more radically, liberation, fit in? Certainly they have a place in the Vatican II documents with much shared concern for human rights, war, marriage and family life, racism etc. These documents were to pave the way for the acceptance of Liberation Theology in the Church in Latin America.

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