

Themes and Methodologies in Pauline Missiology for a Contemporary World

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Abstract

This article explores themes and methodologies in Pauline missiology for a contemporary world. Themes include Paul's missiological concepts of conversion, redemption, sacraments, participation and methodologies include Paul's contextual and evangelistic concepts of cruciformed participation in God's apocalyptic mission. The purpose of this article is not merely to relate Paul's missiology and missionary methodologies as the kind of theory and practice to the extent that his missionary methodologies flow from his missiological theories, rather to the extent that his missiology and methodologies are indivisibly one or what Arland Hultgren calls "missionary theology" (Hultgren, 1983: 145). Seen in this way, the article begins where Paul himself began—with the Damascus event of his conversion to Christ and call of God's apocalyptic mission—and argues that his conversion and call are the foundations of his missiology.

Key Words: Paul, missiology, redemption, conversion, call, participation, contextuality

1. Introduction

In his classic book, *Transforming Mission*, as Lessie Newbigin calls "Summa Missiologica," David Bosch argues that to explore Pauline missiology, "we should begin where Paul himself began—with the Damascus event of his conversion and call" (Bosch, 2011: 127). On the other hand, we should be aware that scholars are divided on the Damascus event, asking the question: "was Paul called or converted?" (Barnett, 2008: 54). Krister Stendahl (Stendahl, 1963: 199-215) was one of the most remarkable scholars who argued both in his article in *Harvard Theological Review* (Stendahl, 1963: 199-215) and in his book *Paul among the Jews and Gentiles* (1973), that Paul was not converted. For Stendahl, Paul was not con-

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verted because Paul did not change his religion. Serving the same God, Paul instead received a special call from Christ (Stendahl, 1973: 7-23). Taking Stendahl's challenging arguments into consideration, how am I to understand Paul's Damascus event (Acts 9:1-19; 22:4-16; 26:9-20) in a contemporary world?

In making my case, I will not simply replace the word conversion with call. At the heart of my argument claims the fact that "Paul was both converted and called" (Segal, 1990: 6; Hengel and Schwemer, 1997: 24-61). I refer to Paul's encounter with Christ as *psycho-behavioral conversion* rather than as *religious conversion*. Thus, this paper first looks at Paul's call and examine how his encounter with Christ transformed him from being a persecutor of Jesus' disciples to an apostle of Jesus (Schnabel, 2012: 29). I will then explore basic themes and methodologies in Pauline missiology. Paul's mission is twofold: mission to Jews and to Gentiles (Rom. 1:16-17; Gal. 1:15-17). This paper will focus on the latter because Paul, as a Jewish Christian and his mission to Gentiles will be applied into a contemporary context where Christians need to engage with other faiths. I will finally come to the point as to how we should imitate Paul's mission methodologies.

2. Paul's Call and Conversion: Paul as an Apostle

Jesus is a Jew, and His disciples are Jews, but "Paul is best remembered as a missionary to the Gentiles" (Robert, 2009: 12). In other words, Paul is called and commissioned by Jesus as an apostle to the Gentiles. Thus, Bruce Corley standing with Stendahl contends that the Damascus event was about Paul's new vocation to be God's apostle to the Gentiles rather than about his conversion (Corley, 1997: 3). According to Barth, "Stendahl, Corley and others go too far by regarding what happened to Paul exclusively in terms of a call" (Bosch, 2011: 128). I believe Bosch is right in saying this. This is because we cannot simply replace the term conversion with call. In addition to Luke's accounts of Paul's dramatic encounter with Christ (Acts 19:1-19), Paul in his letters also refers to this event three times (Gal. 1:11-17; Phil. 3:2-11; Rom. 7:13-25). Yet, Paul does not describe explicitly his Damascus experience of Christ's call as conversion (Segal, 1990: 6). Thus, what we need to do is to re-define the meaning of conversion and examine how it relates to Paul's call. Beverly Gaventa helpfully makes a distinction between "alternation, conversion, and transformation" (Gaventa, 1986: 10-14). For her, an alternation signifies "a relatively limited form of change that develops from one's previous behavior, while conversion signifies a radical change in which past affiliations are rejected for new commitment, and transformation represents a radical change of new cognition, which reinterprets or transforms the past without totally rejecting past" (Gaventa, 1986: 10-14). As Bosch said, "Stendahl sees what happens to Paul in terms of alternation" (Bosch, 2011: 128). Reading Gal. 1:11-17, Paul's experience of divine call,

however, is more than what an alternation suggests (Bosch, 2011: 128). Stendahl's shortcoming is to simply limit conversion to a religious change. Arguing against his view, it is noted that conversion does not merely involve in a religious change, but it can involve in several aspects of psychological and behavioral changes (Green, 2015: 10-13).

To take repentance (*metanoia* in Greek, "to change's one mind and to repent") (Green, 2015: 38-39) seriously, I will refer to Paul's encounter with Christ as psycho-behavioral conversion—conversion to Christ. Paul's conversion begins with a renewal of his mind. As Paul himself expressed, "it is God who said, let light shine out of darkness, God has *shorn in our hearts* to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus," (2Cor. 4:6). However, Paul's conversion involves not only a change in his mind, but a holistic reorientation of his life committed to Christ's call to mission to the Gentiles. Paul's conversion and call were the result of God's grace, which includes the forgiveness of Paul's prior activities as a persecutor of Jesus' disciples (Acts 8:3; Gal. 1:13-14) and transforms him into an apostle of Christ for the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16) (Schnabel, 2012: 30). I will propose to use conversion and transformation quite closely.

If Paul's psycho-behavioral conversion is primarily to do with turning to Christ with renewing his mind, Christ's transformative power comes as a consequence of Paul's conversion. This means that Paul's conversion is not just an event, but it is a journey (A journey not in the sense of being converted in several times, but in the sense of being transformed pattern of life. This is what Joel Green calls a "transformation of *habitus*" Green, 2015: 62). Paul's conversion was what Paul Barnett calls "a radical *end* to the old (old behavior of Pharisees and spiritually blind) and a radical *beginning* to the new (new sighted and commitment of apostleship giving light to the Gentiles)" (Barnett, 2008: 30). By using the phrase *a radical end*, we do not mean that Paul totally rejected his old religion—Judaism. Paul did not reject his religion when he was converted to Christ who called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16). What he did was not to reject it, but to reinterpret and transform it with the grace (Morlan: 2013: 11-15). As Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher (Lapide and Stuhlmacher, 1984: 24) rightly noted;

As a consequence of his encounter with Christ, Paul proclaimed Christ as "the end of the law," for everyone who has faith (Rom. 10:4), at the same time, as "the Lord of grace" who calls into the missionary service of the gospel of justification, and whose Torah corresponds eschatologically to Jewish Torah (Gal. 6:2).

This statement sees Jesus as the fulfiller of what God has promised in the Old Testament and Paul is the apostolic bridge of Judaism and Hellenism. Paul's apostolic

bridge of two faiths began at the Damascus event, which he called “an appearance of Christ” (1Cor. 9:1; 1Cor. 15:18. Luke described it a “light from heaven” (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13). Theologically speaking, it is “Christophany” (Hultgren, 2011: 18), which opened the way for Paul to turn to Christ with renewing his mind and to become an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16). Paul’s apostleship comes from divine call that “this man is my chosen agent to carry my name before the Gentiles” (Acts 9:15) (Schnabel, 2012: 31). Thus, we should not prioritize call over conversion or the latter over the former, but to hold both.

3. A Theological Exploration of Pauline Missiology: Themes and Methodologies

The aim of this section is to explore themes in Pauline missiology from two perspectives—one is from a universal perspective and the other from an apocalyptic perspective. Both perspectives are crucial to Paul’s understanding of God’s mission.

First, Paul’s theology of God’s mission or missiology is universal. In her article “The Mission of God in Paul’s Letter to the Romans” (Gaventa, 2011: 65-75), Gaventa argues that Paul’s missiology is grounded in God’s redemption of the whole creation—the world and humanity. She states, “God’s mission is the work of rescuing from the power of Sin and Death so that a newly created—Jew and Gentile—is released for the praise of God in community” (Gaventa, 2011: 65-66). Although Gaventa’s summary of Paul’s missiology is based mainly on the Romans, it is right to affirm that the whole of Pauline concept of the mission of God is grounded in God’s sending of the Son into the world to adopt humanity as His children (Gal. 4:5-6) and to restore the world to a communion (Col. 1:20-22). Likewise, Michael Gorman argues that the God who created all things (entire cosmos and anthropos) is the “God who is on the mission to liberate” (Gorman, 2015: 24) and to restore the sinful world and humans to a divine communion of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is right to note that for Paul, the mission of God is universal in scope. The idea that God’s mission act of redemption as universal in intent was advanced by a preeminent Pauline scholar Ernst Kasemann. As Kasemann rightly stated, “God’s act of redemption is not to be seen simply as a divine gift for the individuals (Boer, 2013: 6-7) and as being exclusively to anthropology (human salvation), but as a cosmic dimension” (Kasemann, 1969: 176-180). Echoing Kasemann, Gorman proposes to read Paul’s theology of God’s mission of redemption not with a Western individualistic lens, but with a cosmic lens mainly because God’s redemption embraces the entire and holistic dimension of anthropos and cosmos (Rom. 8:18-25; Col. 1:19-20) (Gorman, 2015: 24).

Second, Paul’s theology of God’s mission is apocalyptic in nature. Many New Testament scholars read Paul as an “apocalyptic theologian” (Gaventa, 2013; 2007:

81; Beker, 1982: 30-53). The meaning of apocalypticism is broad. The Greek word “apocalypses” (revelation) can be described as the conviction that God in the death and resurrection of Christ, has supremely revealed and restored the new age in the triumph of God’s over all His enemies and death (1Cor. 15:24) (Gaventa, 2007: 80-81). The risen Christ is the beginning of new age or new creation (2Cor. 5:17). Borrowing Christiaan Beker’s word “God’s triumph” (Beker, 1982: 19), Gaventa reads Pauline apocalyptic view of God’s missional salvation as a “decisive triumph” (Gaventa, 2007: 307-327). As Beker puts it, for Paul the “new age is dawning by the resurrection of Christ” (Beker, 1982: 29). By the risen Christ, the day of salvation has already dawned and the life of future has become a present reality. This is “present eschatology” (Boer, 2013: 5).

As Gaventa makes this point clear, Paul never thinks that God’s apocalyptic view of missional salvation is “something that is anticipated in the distant future. God’s salvation is already taking place in the present,” (Gaventa, 2007: 81) although it is not yet here in its fullness. Scholars refer to this “phenomena as the overlap of two ages” (Gorman, 2015: 16; Beker, 1982: 39). According to N.T Wright, Paul’s apocalyptic view of God’s new creation is grounded in the idea of the joining of heaven and earth, of present and future (Wright, 2013: 1493-1944). Because the new age has begun, we are already in Christ. Those who are “in Christ” still experience pain, yet they have hope in God’s final redemption, which will transform our present pain (Rom. 8:17-39) (Gaventa, 2007:81-82; Beker, 1982: 34).

Paul simplifies the whole process of the joining of present and future by saying “in hope we were saved” (Rom. 8:24) (Gorman, 2015: 17). Beker is right in reading “the content of Paul’s apocalyptic gospel as the hope in the coming triumph of Christ” (Beker, 1982: 10). Paul understands himself to be living between the already (faith in Christ) and the not yet (hope for the coming One). If faith is rooted in the resurrection of Christ (1Cor. 15:14-15), “hope of the Lord” (Rom. 15:13) empowers that faith as we live in the interim time between the already and the not yet. Living in the time between, Paul sees his mission as *participating* in God’s transforming the present world and as *anticipation* in God’s consuming the world (Keck, 1979: 77-78; Gaventa, 2007: 89-90).

Paul’s understanding of mission as participation and anticipation can be combined in one phrase: “anticipatory participation” (Gorman, 2015:16). According to Gorman, “anticipatory participation means that the new creation of reconciliation with God and one another will come to expression in the present age among those who live in the crucified and risen Christ by the power of the Spirit (Gorman, 2015: 16). As Beker also notes, Pauline apocalyptic view of “God’s imminent triumph in Christ is to be translated into the church’s responsibility for the well-being of created order” (Beker, 1982: 101). For Paul, salvation is not merely to be hoped

for, but a present reality in which he participates by proclaiming the gospel and by embodying it (Gorman, 2015: 17).

3.1 Paul and Participation: Mission as Proclaiming The Gospel and Becoming the Gospel

Proclaiming the gospel (2Cor. 9:16-17) and becoming the gospel (2Cor. 5:21) lie at the heart of Paul's participatory concept of mission. If proclaiming the gospel has more to do with Paul's verbal vocation, becoming the gospel has more to do with his missional identity. These two are inseparable in Paul's apostolic ministry. In 2Cor. 9:16-17, written twenty years after his call and conversion, Paul stressed, "If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a commission" (2 Cor. 9:16-17). This means that Paul's missionary work is not a matter of his personal burden, but rather a compulsion of God's love (2Cor. 5:14) that has been laid upon him as a joyful "sense of responsibility" (Bosch, 2011: 137). In other words, joy is the motivating power of Paul's mission.

First, what does it mean to speak of proclaiming the gospel in Paul as a voluntary participation? Interpreters of Pauline missiology argue that "the languages of Baptism (Gorman, 2015: 26) and the Lord's Supper" (Keck, 1979: 75) helps us grasp the centrality of anticipatory participation to Paul's call of proclaiming the gospel of salvation. According to Keck, to be baptized (being immersed into water) and to celebrate the Lord's Supper (remembering the death and anticipating Jesus' coming) lie at the heart of Paul's apostolic mission of proclaiming the gospel of salvation and imminent reign of the Lord (Keck, 1979: 77).

Paul understands Baptism as an invitation to his dying with Christ (Gal. 2:20), rising with the new life of Christ (2Cor. 15: 24-28), and entering into Christ's mission in the world (5:18-20) (Gorman, 2015: 27). Robert Tannehill identified what is important about Paul's view of Baptism as participation: he said, "Christ's death and resurrection are not merely events, which produce benefits for believers, but also are events in which believers partake" (Tannehill, 2006: 1). For Paul, Christ-event does not remain transcendent in the past, nor does the gospel of salvation remain transcendent in the future. As Hultgren stated, the benefits of salvation and Christ's mission (Hultgren, 2011: 115-127) are intimately effective in Paul's understanding mission as participation. It is important to note that Paul's baptismal notion of dying and rising with Christ is a new experience of faith as participatory proclaiming the gospel.

On the other hand, Paul speaks of "the Lord's Supper as *koinonia* and union in Christ in His body and blood" (1Cor. 11:23-29) (Gorman, 2015: 30). Paul does

not reduce the Lord's Supper as union with Christ to ecclesiology without an external expression in society. Gorman is right when he interprets Paul's language of a sacramental *koinonia* as participation in Christ's mission by sharing the suffering love and the reconciling gospel of Christ in society (Gorman, 2015: 31). Inspired by the power of God's salvation as a gift of universal reconciliation (Rom. 1:16-17; Gal. 2:16), Paul willingly proclaims the gospel of justification and reconciliation among Jews and Gentiles (Bird, 2008: 93). In light of this, Stanley Porter summarizes Paul's mission as "proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation" (2Cor. 5:18-20) (Porter, 2011: 169-179).

Second, Paul's apostolic aim was not merely to "believe and proclaim the gospel of justification and reconciliation, but also to become the gospel" (2Cor. 5:21) (Gorman, 2015: 2). In order to deal with the latter, we need to define what Paul means by justification. Scholars interpret justification of God (*dikaiosisynē theou* in Greek) into two related aspects. One is forensic and the other transformative (Bird, 2011: 95-96). Reaching back to Paul's famous text (Rom. 1:16-17), the phrase "through faith to faith" (v. 17) suggests that God's justification is forensic. It is forensic because God justifies sinners and restores them to Himself not by their own merits, but by His gracious act through the faith of Christ (Rom. 3:20-25) (Bird, 2011: 95-96). On the other hand, Paul's gospel of justification and righteousness is transformative in the sense that God's grace continues to transform us into the likeness of Christ (Gal. 5:5) (Bird, 2007: 6-39).

By virtue of connecting between being transformed into the likeness of Christ and becoming the gospel of justification, Gorman draws Paul's missional insights from a kenotic Christology (Phil. 2:1-8). Because the cross reveals the kenotic or self-emptying Christ, Paul's notion of becoming the gospel is grounded in what Gorman calls "cruciformity or cross-shaped existence" (Gorman, 2015: 299; Gorman, 2009: 298-300). Paul's transformative participation in God's mission is shaped by the cross of Christ. In other words, the cross of Christ is not only the content of Paul's kerygmatic proclamation, but also it is a model that shapes Paul's apostolic life in the transformative process of reflecting the very nature and life of God (Gorman, 2009); 298-300).

In short, Karl Sandnes is right to propose Paul's concept of mission as "Imitatio Christi" (Sandnes, 2011: 130). Sandnes's point is that Paul imitated Christ not merely by proclaiming the gospel of salvation and of imminent Kingdom or Lordship in word, but by putting Christ's self-giving love or cross-shaped life into practice or work. In other words, Paul imitated Christ not merely by proclaiming the gospel of what Christ *did*, but by embodying how Christ *lived*. Thus, for Paul, the mission of the church is what Gorman rightly said "a Christ-like participation now and forever" (Gorman, 2015: 132).

3.2 Paul's Missionary Methodologies among the Gentiles

Most missiologists would agree that Paul used “concentration methods rather than diffusion methods” (Terry, 2012: 162; Green, 2003: 362; Allen, 1962: 12). Within his concentration methods, two mission methodologies are stated: indigenous missions and contextual missions. We find it difficult to differentiate between these two related concepts. According to John Terry, “the former focuses on the cross-cultural communication of church planting that result from the missionary works, while the latter emphasizes the accurate or intercultural communication of the gospel” (Terry, 2012: 170) or making sense of the gospel to the locals. As Dean Flemming clarifies the latter, “contextualization has more to do with a hermeneutical issue” (Flemming, 2005: 152). If Terry and Flemming are right, it is fair to see Paul as a missionary, evangelist, church planter and contextualizer of the gospel. We will first examine Paul's indigenous mission.

Using concentration methods, Paul focused on limited regions and particular peoples. As he chose to work among the Gentiles, “Paul shifted his attention from the east to the west of the Hellenistic major cities, such as Ephesus, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth” (Bird, 2008: 17; Terry, 2012: 162). The aim of Paul's concentration methods on limited regions and particular peoples was not simply to preach the gospel of justification, reconciliation, and oneness in Christ without winning the locals to Christ, but mainly to “plant churches in certain cities from which the gospel will permeate the surrounding areas” (Acts 19:10) (Terry, 2012: 161; Allen, 1962: 12). As Allen said, “Paul's concentration method of evangelism in particular places was to make the local congregations become the centers of light to the world” (Allen, 1962: 12).

Herbert Kane's description of the aim of Paul's concentration methods is also striking. He asserted “The aim of Paul's concentration method was not only to sow the seed of the gospel of salvation, but also to reap a harvest” (Kane, 1976: 75). To accomplish this, first, Paul served as an itinerant evangelist traveler, fervent gospel proclaimer and temporary church planter, rather than as a permanent church pastor. According to John Terry, Paul chose to “travel from city to city, making friends with the locals, proclaiming the gospel of salvation and redemption, and planting the local churches. In some cities, Paul stayed only few weeks or months, he never stayed more than three years in any city during his mission trips” (Terry, 2012: 161).

The second missionary method of Paul was appointing the converted local Christians to be elders of the churches he planted. In other words, Paul planted the churches, and let the locals lead. In Acts 14:23, Luke tells us that “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each local church, and with prayer and fasting, committed to the Lord.” This does not mean that Paul entrusted elders with the task of leadership without visiting them. He went to visit them occasionally. Even if he

was not able to visit them personally, he wrote them letters periodically. Paul maintained close contact with his local churches among the Gentiles (Acts 14:26-28). He intended his planted churches not to die, but to grow by the service of elders and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Terry, 2012: 160-161).

The third missionary method Paul practiced was “employing a team ministry” (Terry, 2012: 164). Paul was unique in working with a team of missionaries who felt called by Christ. Paul did this because he expected his planted churches to be both faithful and fruitful by the teaming works of his colleagues. For example, on his first missionary journey to the Antiochene church, Paul worked with Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3) (Stenschke, 2012: 76-77). On his second missionary journey to Asia Minor, Silas, Timothy and Luke accompanied Paul (18:22-23). For the third journey, Paul again set out to Jerusalem, “when he returned to Jerusalem at the end of his third journey, he was accompanied by a number of representatives from the churches of several areas he planted (20:4) (Terry, 2012: 77).

Fourth, our concern is to look at what Flemming calls “Paul’s constructive and corrective engagement” (Flemming, 2005: 76) method of contextual mission among the Gentiles in Athens (Acts. 17:22-34). Because he was concerned for the salvation of the Gentiles, Paul chose Athens as a targeted place for mission. Why? It was because Athens was where a major population of the Gentiles lived for their religiosity and education (Schnabel, 2008: 29-43) and Greek was the international language of commerce. Paul as a Greek-speaking Jew (Acts 21:39) was well acquainted with Greek language and custom, which enabled him to engage effectively with the pagans (Allen, 1962:10-37).

We will look at the content of the gospel Paul proclaimed and the way he approached to the Athenians. In his speech before the Areopagus, Paul adopted a five-point approach in initiating contact between himself and the pagans: (1) God as creator of the universe (17:24a), (2) God as the sustainer of the mortal life (17:25), (3) God as the ruler of all nations (17:24b), (4) God as Father of all humans (17:28-29); (5) God as the judge of the world (17:31) (Flemming, 2005: 78). These five points reflect God’s general revelation. Interestingly enough, Paul proved God to be an immanent revealer to His creation by saying: “God is near” (17:27).

Proclaiming the nearness of God is accompanied by his presenting of God as an “unknown God” (17:23). Realizing that the prevenient grace of the unknown God is at work among the Athenians ahead of his proclaiming the gospel, Paul entered discourse by praising, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are” (17:22). According to John Collins, Paul’s use of the term “religious or pious” describes the Gentiles as the “God-fearers. The other examples of the pious Gentiles are Cornelius (Acts 10); Titius Justus (18:17), and Lydia (16:14) (Collins, 2000:

264). This shows that the way Paul approached was constructive. Instead of condemning the worldviews of Athenians, Paul used them as the grounds for dialogue (Flemming, 2005: 83). Paul asserted that he did not introduce a foreign deity to the Athenians, rather he proclaimed the deity who is already honored at the altar with the inscription “to the unknown God.” This unknown God is the God who needs not festivals (17: 24:26), is not only present in every part of the world (17:24-28), but also commands all people to repent as the Day of Judgment is coming and the judge is appointed as Jesus (17:30-31) (Schnabel, 2012: 41). Here Paul’s corrective dialogue of proclaiming the gospel of resurrection, as Robert Tannehill observes, “is basically a call to repentance” (Tannehill, 1986: 218).

I believe Tannehill is right as Allen also asserted that the content of Paul’s preaching was the “gospel of the cross, repentance and faith” (Allen, 1962: 67). If Tannehill and Allen are right, Paul’s dialogical mission among the Athenians was not only constructive, but also corrective. By corrective approach, Paul exposed the error of idolatry (17:16) and called the Athenians for repentance. Although distressed about the idolatry of the Athenians, Paul refused to condemn them, instead he laced his message with words of passion (Flemming, 2005: 82). Paul was motivated by his divine desire to win the Gentiles as well as Jews for Christ (1Cor. 9:20-23). The focus of this paper is on the former groups—the Gentiles. Paul’s constructive way of proclaiming the gospel left some Athenian Greeks convinced and they became believers and followed Paul. The new converts included Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus Council and a woman named Damaris and other Athenians with them (17:32-34) (Schnabel, 2012: 41).

Let me conclude with two points of observation on Paul’s indigenous and contextual missions. First, Paul’s focus and the content of his the message was on God’s providential care of all creation, Christ’s salvation and God’s coming judgment in Christ. Second, in proclaiming such gospel, Paul used a two-way or contextual form of communication. He did not use a one-way traffic of proclaiming the gospel nor did he use simply an initial evangelism. He not only made sense of the gospel he proclaimed by using the indigenous languages, but also equipped the new converts for a deeper knowledge of Christ. In other words, he was concerned about the “entire conversion of the people” (Hesselgrave, 2012: 142). Paul continued to use the Greek worldviews for his writings. He believed that Gentile Christian developed in an ongoing dialogue with the local Gentiles (Johnson, 2009: 1; Sills, 2012: 202).

4. Imitating Paul in a Contemporary Pluralistic Context

Paul urges the Corinthian believers to “be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1Cor. 11:1). As we join Jesus in His apocalyptic mission, we ought to imitate Paul’s missionary examples. In what ways, should we imitate Paul? This paper suggests that

we should imitate Paul in several ways, “not mainly because he traveled an estimated 10,000 miles for his mission” (Robert, 2009: 12), but because his missionary methodologies and thoughts are basic to mission in our contemporary world. I will highlight some important points related to mission by reflecting on what has been discussed so far.

First, Paul’s dramatic encounter with Jesus and his response to Jesus’ call needs to be imitated. We have to admit that our encounter with Jesus may not be as dramatic as Paul’s, yet his response to Jesus’ call and his missional sense of motivation in God’s mission should be imitated. Paul’s missional sense of motivation comes from the inner compulsion of Jesus’ love (2Cor. 5:14). It is love that compelled Jesus Himself to come into the world to be the witness of God until He died at the cross. It is love that compelled Paul as well to be the witness of Christ until he was martyred under the reign of Nero in AD 64 (Bird, 2008: 26-28; Bruce, 1980: 5). If this is so, love is the motivating power of our participation in God’s mission. Persecution could also come as a result of our faithful participation in God’s mission. This is also what happened to the mission of Christ.

Second, Paul’s missional concept of proclaiming the gospel and becoming the gospel should be imitated. Two things are made here. One is the way Paul proclaimed the gospel simply as good news. As Karl Barth famously said, the “Church is a proclaimed Word (Barth, 1936: 88-97) by its very nature, its vocation is to proclaim the gospel as good news. Barth introduced his famous threefold form of the Word of God: “proclaimed Word (the Church), incarnate Word (Jesus), written Word (the Bible)” (Barth 1936: 88-119). Sadly, in some contexts, some conservative evangelists proclaim the gospel as bad news among people of other faiths, like Buddhists by saying that if they are not converted to Christianity, they will go to hell. This kind of preaching is what N.T. Wright called “good advice” (Wright, 2015: 1-14). Wright argues against the advice of other faiths what to do, instead of preaching the gospel to them as good news. According to Wright, “Pauline salvation is not merely about going to heaven, but about rescuing us from the power of sin and death and becoming alive (Wright, 2015: 194). Precisely because of this, the gospel is good news for everyone. The gospel is good news in a sense that we become alive through the death of Christ. As I have said, Paul proclaimed such good news of redemption. Like Paul, we must proclaim the gospel simply as good news of God’s redeeming all sinners from sin and death and restoring them into a union with God.

The other is to become the gospel of justification in the sense that salvation is to be seen not just as the gift to receive, but also as the gift to transform our lives into the likeness of Christ. As Paul reflected a transformative justification, God saved us not just *from* something but *for* something good works (Eph. 2:10). In this regard, the mission task of Christians is not merely to convert people of other faiths, but

also to be enriched by their ethical teachings. This is because mission is to be re-defined as a mutual transformation. Salvation itself is a dimension of continuing conversion. In his book, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Darrell Guder states (Guder; 2000: 206-207);

The church must be continually converted from her reconstructions of the gospel to its fullness. The Holy Spirit began the conversion of the church at Pentecost and has continued that conversion throughout the pilgrimage of God's people from the first century up to now. The conversion of the church will be the continuing work of the Spirit until God completes the work begun in Jesus.

I agree with Guder that the church must be continually converted or transformed. It is because salvation is not just a forensic sense of justification, but also it is a transformative sense of sanctification. In a pluralistic world, mutual transformation is the result of genuine engagement with people of other faiths by the power of the Spirit. Example like this can be found in the context of Peter and Cornelius engagement by the power of the Spirit (Acts 10:1-48). In our contemporary world, Peter is the analogy of a Christian and Cornelius is an analogy of non-Christian. This requires that we should not see "people of other faiths as the mere objects for conversion, but neighbors to whom hospitality must be both given and received for mutual conversion/transformation" (Yong, 2008). In a post-Christendom age, mission is to be defined not as a one way traffic, but as a two way traffic through which Christians and other faiths are to transform each other by the power of the Spirit. This does not mean that a Christian is to be converted to other faiths, but to be converted to the extent that he or she experiences Christ in a transformative manner.

Third, Paul's interpretation of salvation as reconciliation and his mission of reconciliation among Jews and Gentiles (2Cor. 5:19) becomes the model for our mission of reconciliation among Christians and people of other faiths. As noted above, "the gospel of reconciliation lies at the heart of Paul's missionary theology" (Porter, 2011: 169). In accepting God's reconciliation as a gift, our missionary vocation is to witness to this reconciliation to people of other faiths across the boundaries. Interpreting Paul's terms and examples, Robert Schreiter calls on Christians to "be bridge-builders of God's reconciliation" (Schreiter, 1998: 129) in our world. It is right to say that reconciliation is preoccupied with our mission of interreligious interactions with people of other faiths.

Fourth, Paul's dialogical mission among the Greeks in Athens attracts our attention as we find his audiences to be similar to the recipients, Buddhists and spirit-worshippers, of the gospel we proclaim in the interreligious context. Paul proved to be a contextual missionary by communicating the gospel comprehensibly to the

Greeks. He did not introduce a foreign God to the Greeks, he just made the “unknown God” known to them by using their local cultures (Acts 17:23). In this respect, I argue that the task of Christian missionaries is not to bring God to the locals, but to bring the gospel. In my article “Adoniram Judson: A Dialectical Missionary who Brought the Gospel (not God) and Gave the Bible to the Burmese” (Moe, 2017: 265-282), I argued that Judson did not bring God to Myanmar from America because God has been there prior to his coming. Rather he brought the gospel to make God known to Buddhists through their cultures.

This echoes Paul’s contextual way of proclaiming the “unknown God” to the Athenians through their worldviews (Acts 17:23). As noted, Paul proclaimed the gospel in a two-way communication with the locals. He proclaimed the gospel not only from the inside of the Greek cultures, but he also embraced their worldviews for his theological writings (Johnson, 2009: 1). Paul was not only adapted to Greek cultures as a means for proclaiming the gospel, but also adopted Greek cultures as sources for developing his missiology and theology. In other words, Greek cultures not only paved the way for Paul’s proclamation of the gospel, but also enrich his theological constructions.

Missionary scholars, such as Kosuke Koyama (Koyama, 1999: xv) read 1 Cor. 9:22-23 as a prime text for the model of contextualization in the Thai’s Buddhist context. In this text, Paul said “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it for the sake of the gospel.” Two important things are observed. The first sentence reveals the purpose of Paul’s contextual mission, while the latter reveals the limit of Paul’s contextual mission. Paul’s use of the phrase, “I have become all things to all people” does not mean that he became a drunk to win a drunk. That would only bring dishonor to Christ (Sills, 2012: 207). All what Paul did was to honor Christ. According to Flemming, Paul’s use of the first sentence (9:22) implies the boundary-breaking act of his interaction with the locals in order that they may be saved (Flemming, 2005:65).

Paul’s two-way of communication can be employed as a model for our intercultural mission. Intercultural mission stresses the need of a two-way communication in terms of sharing insights between the “communicators and the recipients of the gospel” (Pachauau, 2015: 9-10). This demands that our mission task is to see people of other faiths not simply as the objects of mission, but rather as the subjects whose religious cultures not only pave the way for the gospel, but also enrich our Christian missiology. Allow me to present my own experience. For example, my Chin ethnic cultural practice of spirit-worship (or primal religion) in Myanmar paves the way for the gospel of Jesus’ atonement and enriches the concept of ecclesiology as communal being and the ethics of ecology. It enriches the ethics of ecology when we see nature-spirits as the guardians of the forest and the role of the

first human beings as stewards of God's natural environment (Gen. 1:28) (Moe, 2015: 125-134). Christianity develops in each context as a local religion only by adopting local cultures and languages. Christianity cannot be localized apart from using the local resources. It can only be built upon the local cultures. However, when contextualizing the gospel, our task is not merely to appreciate and adopt local cultures, but to appropriate and transform them. This is what Paul did in Athens.

Finally, perhaps most importantly, we ought to imitate Paul as the model of church planting and leader-equipping. As I have noted, he planted several churches and made new converts. As Eckhard Schnabel noted, Paul did not merely preach the gospel to the unbelievers and establish new churches. He continued to be concerned about following up and training new churches for their spiritual growth, for their doctrinal authenticity, for their ethical consistency (Acts 20:20-27) (Schnabel, 2008: 236-248). Paul equipped new believers as the gathered community of faith, as the body of Christ and as the mission-minded people. "Paul's leadership development begins at the start of one's walk with Christ and one's entrance into the church and mission" (Allen, 1962: 87).

Perhaps, "Paul is best known for planting new churches and for equipping leaders" (Lawless, 2012: 202). Suffice to conclude with two points of observation on the picture of Paul as a church planter and disciple-maker. First, Paul held the interrelation between the mission of God and church. For Paul, the church exists by and for the mission of God. Related to this, Emil Brunner said, "The church exists by mission, just as the fire exists by burning" (Brunner, 1931: 108). Second, Paul described the mission of God as a long-term project. Participating in God's long-term mission, it is imperative for us to proclaim the gospel of salvation and plant the new churches and equip the present generation of the leaders those who will equip the future generation of the leaders.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that Paul's missiology and his passion for missionary works began with his dramatic encounter with Christ who called him to be a missionary to the Gentiles. Hultgren rightly stated that "Paul's theology and mission do not simply relate to each other as theory and practice in the sense that his missionary methodologies come from his theology, but rather in the sense that his theology is a missionary theology" (Hultgren, 1983: 145). It is true that Paul's missiology and his missionary methods are inseparably linked and his methods are integrally related to his missional identity.

This way of discussing Paul's missiology (the study of Paul's concept of mission) and his missionary methodologies (the imitation of Paul's missionary theories) provides us with some missiological insights of holding theology and practice together. It

is noted that Paul is a great theologian as well as a practical missionary. His practical missionary and evangelist methods, such as leading his hearers of the gospel to faith, drawing them into a deeper fellowship with Christ, and equipping new believers to reach out to the unbelievers needs to be applied in the non-Christian context. The contents of the gospel—salvation, justification, redemption, and reconciliation/peace he theologized—and the way he proclaimed them in a contextual form needs to be applied appropriately in any contemporary context. Paul's understanding of mission is nothing more or less than God's universal and apocalyptic action of redeeming the world in which we are invited to participate. As we willingly participate in God's apocalyptic mission, our missional task is not just to proclaim the gospel of salvation—"God's kingdom of justification, peace and joy (Rom. 14:17) in word—but to embody it in a very sense of "becoming the gospel of justification" (2Cor. 5:21) by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that Paul's concept of apocalyptic mission is not only about *doing* (participating in God's activity), but also about *being* (embodying the very nature of the triune God).

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