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Promoting Missionary Mutual Care Through Spiritual Community

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROMOTING MISSIONARY MUTUAL CARE THROUGH SPIRITUAL
COMMUNITY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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has been approved by
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ABSTRACT

Personal struggle and the stressors that catalyze them are inevitable in missionary life. When overly focusing on ministry and enculturation demands, cross-culturally based Christian workers can often neglect intra and inter-personal spiritual formation. The result of such neglect is a lack of purpose, vitality, endurance and effectiveness, and in some cases, the missionary leaves the field altogether. For missionaries to thrive and succeed requires that they place a high priority on mutual and intentional care. Therefore, I will explore the necessity and means of cultivating spiritual community among on-the-field missionaries for their mutual care and development.

Chapter 1 introduces the problem and rationale for the study with definitions of key terms used throughout the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature regarding the problem, context, solutions and mutual care among missionaries.

Chapter 3 examines a theological and biblical basis for spiritual community through Trinitarian theology as an important theological framework from which to view present day mission communities.

Chapter 4 explores church history, comparing and contrasting monasticism with modern day missions, and drawing observations from various models that can apply to cultivating spiritual community in today's mission context.

Chapter 5 offers a model for a spiritually forming community for cross-cultural missionaries.

Chapter 6 concludes by offering recommendations for further study and a brief curriculum.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As a pastor, mentor, and spiritual friend to on-the-field missionaries, I have a unique privilege of associating with deeply committed, highly motivated, men and women of God. Over the past few years I have informally been asking missionaries from around the world to describe areas of ‘unhealth’ they see or experience as missionaries within their immediate community. The push back was quite astonishing and disheartening. Some argued that none existed stating that their missionary community was relatively healthy. Others refused to answer while some felt the question was too negative asking that I put a more positive spin on the question. One group spoke of things like apathy in their high school students but were quick to explain away the situation as a “necessary crisis of faith” prior to college. However, they did express concern over the high rate of kids they knew who had fallen away from the faith altogether while in college. One individual identified the biggest area of unhealth in his community, which revolved largely around a missionary school, as the feeling of disconnection or, as another described it—a fractured community.

The clear dilemma that kept emerging in the conversations was angst over the nature of their missionary community. Functioning within a multidimensional interpersonal context that would not naturally exist apart from their mission endeavor, the average missionary is constantly pulled in a multitude of relational directions. With whom does the missionary form spiritual community? Can they? Do they? Must they?

It is not uncommon for a missionary to worship with a group they may only see on Sunday, attend Bible study with a completely different group, lead studies and mentor nationals, and also be responsible to their team who may or may not be the same people in the previously mentioned groups. Unfortunately, this dynamic tends to breed isolated self-sufficiency where areas of personal weakness and unhealth can go unnoticed for a long time or simply unaddressed. The assumption is that, “Someone else is taking care of it,” or worse, “It is none of our business; because that is what member care is for, right?”¹

For example, I know of one such case where a young missionary family seemingly had significant and close relationships within their mission’s community. Unfortunately, with all the fellowship, no one apparently pushed deeply enough into their well-being. They were not part of “heart-level”² Bible studies or personal intentional discussions that probed beneath the surface of their stated self-awareness. The wife could tell something was not quite right at home, but their community relationships were not of the quality she could fully trust her fears to them. In the end, the husband finally confessed to years of infidelity nearly wrecking his home, losing his career, and leaving their ‘community’ puzzled and feeling betrayed. The community is asking itself, “Why didn’t he seek help sooner?” The wife is wondering, “Where were our friends who could have been pursuing mine and my husband’s hearts more intentionally?”

Whether living in remote locations or within a larger concentration of missionaries from multiple agencies, research indicates that the relational well-being of

¹ I’ve heard these sentiments on a number of occasions particularly after the untimely departure of a fellow missionary from the field.

² Kenneth Williams, “A Model for Mutual Care in Missions,” in *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelism*, ed. Kelly O’Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 49.

the missionary is crucial to their ability to fulfill their mission and affects longevity in their field of service. Functioning within overlapping forged communities that would not naturally exist apart from the goal of telling others the good news of Jesus, too often the relational and spiritual conditions are more destructive than constructive to a person's sense of well-being. Can we, and if so, how do we enhance the relational and spiritual experience of missionaries on the field?

Considering a Problem

Struggle is a part of life. For the missionary, factors including cultural adjustment, financial pressure, loneliness, spiritual dryness, separation from family, unusual illnesses, and apparent limited job success contribute to a higher sense of stress than the average person.³ Using a modified Holmes/Rahe⁴ stress scale, Dodds and Dodds⁵ have illustrated that the average missionary experiences at least 600 points of stress per year and as much as 1500 in some circumstances, which is quite remarkable since scores over 300 are considered dangerous and at high risk of illness. However, they add, "the amazing fact is that most missionaries DO adapt and work effectively in spite of killing levels of stress."⁶

Maybe missionaries are able to adapt. Most I know live under enormous amounts of pressure and seem to be functioning well. Yet, other researchers raise concerns worth noting. While significant work has gone into understanding why missionaries leave the

³ Lois A. Dodds and Lawrence E. Dodds, "Stressed from Core to Cosmos: Issues and Needs Arising from Cross-Cultural Ministry," in *American Association of Christian Counselors World Congress* (Dallas, TX: 1997), 9.

⁴ TH Holmes and RH Rahe, "The Social Readjustment Rating Scale," *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 11, no. 2 (1967).

⁵ Dodds and Dodds, 9.

⁶ Ibid.

field prematurely, those remaining are only the tip of the iceberg. “There are many more workers ineffective, worn down by the continued stress of cross-cultural mission, yet without the courage to return home.”⁷ Though important, keeping missionaries in their field of service is not the overarching goal of those conducting the research. In a careful delineation of this complex issue, Taylor reminds us that the reduction of missionary attrition is not an end in itself, nor does his study “aim to increase missionary retention at all costs.”⁸ Some may not be suited for missionary service or they remain too long inadvertently hindering the national church. Williams, a counselor with Wycliffe, explains it this way, “Unfortunately, despite the magnitude of the missionaries’ dedication and the investment involved, it appears that a large number of missionaries cannot be classified as successful in their work.”⁹

McKaughan, concurring with Williams, suggests the problem facing missions today is far more multifaceted than simply attrition.¹⁰ “Perhaps,” he suggests, “the problem is not so much a problem of the individual as it is a problem with the system.”¹¹ In other words, there are a number of reasons missionaries struggle. The data suggests, as

⁷ Detlef Blöcher, “Member Care (What It Means),” in *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention*, ed. Rob Hay et al. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 184.

⁸ William D. Taylor, “Forward,” in *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention*, ed. Rob Hay et al. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), xi.

⁹ Kenneth L. Williams, “Characteristics of the More Successful and Less Successful Missionaries” (ProQuest Information & Learning, 1973), 2.

¹⁰ Paul McKaughan, “Missionary Attrition: Defining the Problem,” in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William David Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 20-24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

we shall see, that the top reasons for missionary struggle, which results in their premature departure from the field, are issues related to character and relationships.¹²

Regardless of the stressor, missionaries can easily fall prey to the overwhelming demands of their living, social, and work conditions. So, the problem is this: when overly focusing on ministry and enculturation demands, cross-culturally based Christian workers neglect their intra and inter-personal spiritual formation. The result of such neglect is a lack of purpose, vitality, endurance, effectiveness, and in some cases, the missionary leaves the field altogether. In order to thrive and succeed, on-the-field missionaries need to take responsibility in facilitating mutual growth amongst themselves—both personal and spiritual.

Rationale

My journey into this topic began in 1983 when my soon-to-be wife and I were exploring the question, “Who ministers to the minister?” Knowing we wanted to locate overseas, our question focused more specifically on missionaries. Unknown to us at the time, a new initiative in missions specifically for the care of mission personnel called member care, was just taking shape.

Initially, through conversational research with missionaries in the Philippines and Germany, the data we gathered indicated missionaries needed a friend, a coach, and a counselor. Subsequent opportunities to interview missionaries, as well as our counseling practice with Christian leaders, revealed further definition of need. Questions of

¹² William D. Taylor, “Introduction: Examining the Iceberg Called Attrition,” in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 13.

prevention and spiritual formation began to surface in our thinking leading us to wonder whether counseling, while helpful, was not the greater need.

Our observations and conversations with Christian leaders led us repeatedly to consider how best to address underlying spiritual growth matters in leaders. Without actively engaging the spiritual life, all other needs dominate and distract from the essentials—union with Christ. With this in mind, we began to wonder, what kind of impact could a spiritual formation approach to care make on both the ordinary and crisis needs of Christian leaders? In what ways does the lack of spiritual community contribute to the underlying weakness in leader development? Would a more relational model of formational development speak more deeply to personal and community formation?

After locating cross-culturally in 2000 and interfacing more closely with missionaries and their sending organizations, we began to see systemic matters begging for attention. Mission organizations struggled with how best to develop and undergird their workers' ongoing spiritual formation. Agency structure often relied on teams and their leadership to provide spiritual oversight and community. However, teams were not always the best context for spiritual growth, nor were missionaries the best model of how to be the church cross-culturally. Those we met simply were not functioning in ways that fostered ongoing, deepening, and inspiring spiritual growth in themselves or their communities. These alarming conditions and the questions mentioned above remain a concern to this day prompting this study: promoting missionary mutual care through spiritual community.

Christian identity cannot merely be seen as a personal faith. It is also “defined by who we are as a *community* of faith. Becoming Christian is more than being personally

transformed; it is also participation in a transforming fellowship.”¹³ Paul reminds Christians that as individuals they are temples of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Individual believers are part of the body of Christ or, in another analogy, collectively create a “holy temple.”¹⁵

God did not intend for Christians to be “isolated or alienated from other Christians.”¹⁶ A believer’s life in and as the church is an “extension of the Trinitarian life.”¹⁷ Only in community are believers able to fully express the reality of God and his love, which is their deepest purpose as believers.¹⁸ When individual formation does not flow in the context of community, a believer’s life weakens and he or she is no longer telling the story of God and his agenda in restoring the world to himself.

A believer’s life *is* the story God is telling. In other words, Christians are and participate in the *missio Dei*—one cannot separate God’s mission from being. “Whether [we] eat or drink or whatever [we] do, [we] do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Nowhere in scripture is there a distinction between the life one lives in Christ and the work a believer does for him. Yet, far too often, missionaries lead dualistic lives, making a distinction between their job and how they interact in community.

In my work with Christian leaders, I have not found anyone who disagrees with me. There is a general consensus among those I meet across denominations and multiple

¹³ Luther E. Smith, *Intimacy & Mission: Intentional Community as Crucible for Radical Discipleship* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 18.

¹⁴ 1 Cor. 6:19.

¹⁵ Eph. 2:19-22.

¹⁶ Richard E. Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 1, no. 1 (2008): 43. See also Heb. 10:25.

¹⁷ Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 121.

¹⁸ Eph. 5:1; Col. 2:2.

organizations that things are not working out as imagined. Something is missing. Agencies need to be allocating a higher percentage of missionary resources to maintaining their personnel. “But this cannot and should not be borne only by professionals, or even by mission leaders. All field personnel need to see this as part of their ministry.”¹⁹ It is time for missionaries to take responsibility for cultivating spiritual community among themselves in mutual care and development.

Definitions

Many of the words used in this study are generally understood. In an effort to nuance missionary jargon and some of my own assumptions, I offer the following definition of specific terms:

Spiritual Formation—An intentional communal process (note “spiritual direction group” below) of growing in a believer’s relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁰

Member Care—A common term in missions referring to “things that missionary organizations do to nurture their members, and to maintain the ongoing physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being of their constituency.”²¹

Missionary—A person sent on a religious mission, especially one sent to promote Christianity in a foreign country.

¹⁹ Williams, 46.

²⁰ James Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 23.

²¹ Dale Joseph Duhe, “Where There Is No Shepherd: Providing Member Care for Missionaries in Foreign Lands” (ProQuest Information & Learning, 1994), 1.

Proactive—Constructive action before a need born of crisis arises, thus, it initiates change rather than reacting. This does not mean all crises will be or should be avoided. It does require the community to live more intentionally rather than reactionary in the way they relate with one another.

Soul Friend—Taken from the Irish word, *anam cara*, a friend of the soul or spiritual companion is one who actively listens to a person’s story, discerns both the movement of the Spirit and their fleshly deceptions, and willing assists in their growth.

Attrition—“The departure from field service by missionaries regardless of cause.”²²

Attrition rate—Refers to the percentage, which expresses the number of departing missionaries within a specific time period.²³

Unpreventable attrition—Acceptable or understandable losses in missionary personnel due to things like retirement, completion of mission, medical leave or a legitimate call to another mission/assignment.

Preventable attrition—Unacceptable loss of personnel that could be avoided through things like a more careful selection process, more effective pre-field training and preparation, or proactive investment during the missionary’s field service.²⁴

Field—Refers to the country or region in which a missionary or missionaries serve.

Term—A designated amount of time a missionary spends on the field.

²² Taylor, “Introduction: Examining the Iceberg Called Attrition,” xvii.

²³ Taylor, “Prologue,” xvii.

²⁴ Ibid.

Culture Shock—Anxiety and feelings of loss that result from giving up all one’s familiar cues and the subsequent values clash between one’s home culture and the host culture. Reverse culture shock is the anxious feelings and unexpected difficulty in readjusting to one’s home country upon returning ‘home’.

Spiritual formation group—“A place where members of a small group can listen carefully to their own soul needs and to the needs of others.”²⁵

Mission agency or organization—Refers to a non-profit parachurch entity designed to recruit, equip, send and sustain missionaries for the furtherance of the Gospel. Mission agencies have traditionally been the sending arm of the church and maintain that status today alongside a growing number of churches who now recruit, equip, send and sustain their own missionaries for the foreign field.

Community—For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use the word to mean the feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. I will indicate any other use of the word with accompanying adjectives for clarification.

Spiritual Community—Combining the idea behind group spiritual direction and a spiritual formation group, it is an intentional communal process of listening, nurturing, and participating in God’s shaping work in the heart of others. This involves intentionally investing in others as much as it involves willingly receiving from others in their participation with God in one’s life.

Overlapping Forged Communities—A community that does not occur naturally but is held together solely on the basis of a common interest. If the common interest is

²⁵ Alice Fryling, *Seeking God Together: An Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), Kindle, loc 85.

removed, the relationship of the community goes away.²⁶ These forged communities are also overlapping by virtue of the complexity of relational structures. For example, families relating to other families within a missionary school setting of multiple mission agencies and denominations within a cross-cultural context.

Team—Characterized by a small number of people who share a common goal along with the rewards and responsibilities of reaching their goal.²⁷

Church—God's people who are in Christ Jesus.

Missional Church—“A church whose identity lies in its *participation in the triune God's mission* in all creation.”²⁸ Different than church-with-a-mission, missional churches are a product of and participants in God's mission/agenda.²⁹

Local Church—An assembly of regenerate believers who meet regularly for worship, instruction fellowship, outreach, encouragement in the faith and prayer.

²⁶ Michael C. Armour, Don Browning, *Systems-Sensitive Leadership* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000), 164.

²⁷ See Rob Hay, “Personal Care: Team Building and Functioning (What It Means),” in *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention*, ed. Rob Hay et al. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 164.

Richardson divides team into three dimensions: *First Dimension Teams* are groups of people who identify with one another on the basis of shared ministry calling and/or geographic and organizational affinity. *Second Dimension Teams* add a common ministry strategy to the mix and are independently task focused working out priorities together. *Third Dimension Teams* introduce a deeper interactive commitment and desire for ongoing mutual development and encouragement. This team functions more like a spiritual community where a deeper mutually interactive commitment exists toward each member of the team. This kind of team is able to hold in balance well the shared goals of the team (tasks) as well as value the individual members of the team. Steve Richardson, “Third Dimension Teams,” in *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention*, ed. Rob Hay et al. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 168.

²⁸ Dwight J. Zscheile, “A Missional Theology of Spiritual Formation,” in *Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation*, ed. Dwight J. Zscheile (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Sending Church—A local church that has set apart an individual or couple to serve in global missions.

Supporting Church—A local church that has embraced a vision presented them by a missionary or mission agency and has taken on a portion of the financial needs.

Overview

Getting caught up in their work for God and enculturation demands, cross-culturally based Christian workers too often neglect their inter-personal and intra-personal spiritual formation. Such neglect leads to ‘brown-out’ and potentially, the tiring missionary chooses to ‘opt-out’ of his or her assignment. For missionaries to maintain their sense of purpose and effectiveness—to actually thrive—requires that they place a high priority on mutual and intentional care of each other.³⁰ Therefore, I will explore the necessity and means of cultivating spiritual community among on-the-field missionaries for their mutual care and development.

ReMAP, the most significant and comprehensive research project on missionary attrition to date functioned to identify the reasons missionaries leave their field of service prematurely as well as best practices in retaining mission personnel.³¹ Unfortunately, research has not focused on those missionaries who remain but are ineffective due to the stress of living and working cross-culturally. This research and subsequent recommendations show that a proactive approach to the proposed problem includes mutuality and a sense of shared interest in the ongoing well-being of fellow missionaries.

³⁰ Williams, 46.

³¹ Reducing Missionary Attrition Project. The ReMAP II project focused specifically on agency best practices toward retention.

Most efforts to date have tended to focus “primarily on the team as a stand alone unit rather than as a part of the broader Great Commission community.”³² Thus, the more crucial, underlying question I will explore is, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Obligations to members of one’s team and organization, though complicated at times, are more easily defined than thinking through one’s obligation to fellow missionaries of other denominations and agencies.

Chapter 1 introduced the problem and rationale for this study. Chapter 2 will review pertinent literature in missiological thinking regarding the impetus for missions, struggles unique to missionaries, and present solutions to missionary struggles. Chapter 3 develops a biblical and theological framework for thinking about community while chapter 4 examines monastic communities throughout church history. Chapters 5 and 6 provide a model for spiritual community for cross-cultural missionaries and offer some recommendations for further study.

³² Steve Richardson, email message to author, April 25, 2013.

CHAPTER 2

Precedents in the Literature

Because stress and struggle are normative in this fallen world, research has simply sought to understand the key issues specific to missionary struggle and determine what, if anything, can be done to alleviate it. For example, knowing particular aspects of struggle in cross-cultural adjustment can help missionary trainers better design a program for pre-field preparation. It is impossible to completely remove stressors and struggle, and it is equally difficult to predict success or failure, but at least research can, and has aided in agency attempts to be more proactive in the care and support of their personnel.

However, little research exists specifically outlining the impact of mutual care among missionaries, although many have pointed to the importance and need of such a focus in models of care and suggested specific research in this area. The material reviewed below is related in varying degrees to the research topic, and I plan to show that while there is significant work being done overall, the area of focus still needs more attention.

First, I will survey the landscape of missiology related to the concept of *Missio Dei* and the Missional movement. Second, I will examine the research identifying stressors specific to cross cultural missions and missionaries. Third, I will note the fallout of the various stressors as missionaries either “work-it-out,” “brown-out,” or “opt-out.”¹

¹ Here I mean those who thrive, just survive, or eventually leave the field prematurely, which researchers refer to as, attrition.

Fourth, I will explore member care, particularly looking at the work being done in Mutual Care,² which underlines the assertion of this study.

Missions or Mission?

Using a ‘classic’ definition for Christian missions, one blog defines missions as “proclaiming the Gospel message outside [one’s] culture, as in *going to serve at a great distance*. It is taking the message of Jesus Christ where He has not been found or has not been preached before as in unreached peoples groups.”³ ‘Missions’ is often viewed as a model that characterizes the purpose and activities of the church in sending missionaries to evangelize in unevangelized areas.⁴ Reflective of this definition, Larkin and Williams further define ‘missions’ as “the divine activity of sending intermediaries whether supernatural or human to speak or do God’s will thus furthering his judgment and redemption.”⁵

² Kelly O'Donnell, “Going Global: A Member Care Model for Best Practice,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (2001): 17.

³ Richard K. Krejcir, “An Overview of Missions”, *Into Thy Word: Teaching People How to Study the Bible* <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=49186&columnid=3881> (accessed September 20, 2013).

⁴ Torrey Seland, “Resident Aliens in Mission: Missional Practices in the Emerging Church of 1 Peter,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19, no. 4 (2009): 567.

⁵ William J. Larkin Jr. and Joel F. Williams, *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 3. So, for Larkin and Williams, mission comprises six elements. (1) There is a sender, along with the sender’s purpose and authority in sending. That purpose is God’s accomplishment of salvation for humans and God’s application of it to them. (2) One must consider the act of sending, a commissioning or authorization that leads to movement. To be on mission is to respond to the sender’s call and commission and go to those to whom one is sent. (3) Further, study must be done on “those who are sent”: the various agents God employs, and about their stance: obedience. In the foreground of this study will be the church that divinely ordained agent for applying salvation blessings to humanity. (4) Another element is the particular task of those on mission, which the New Testament focuses primarily on the proclamation in word and deed of God’s saving work. Especially important in this area is what the New Testament has to say about the task’s universal scope. (5) The result of mission must be explained. How does the kingdom of God advance as the church fulfills its mission? What constitutes a

For many missiologists, the above definitions resemble Bosch's depiction of modern missions as "mission in the wake of the enlightenment."⁶ With the Enlightenment came the "obligation of the western church to take the gospel, along with the benefits of western civilization, to the rest of the unevangelized world, confident that the evident superiority of both the Christian faith and its accompanying culture would overcome all resistance and carry the day."⁷ One need only examine systematic theologies of the modern era to note scholarship's opinion of missions where it was simply relegated to a small portion of practical theology.⁸ Thus, Oborji, a Nigerian priest and professor of missiology can say, "Missiology has never gotten the needed space in theological education."⁹

Is 'missions' about crossing barriers by sending skilled laborers to reach the unreached as Brewer and Palmer suggest? They say:

Missions has to do with barriers. Barriers that must be crossed before a people can be evangelized and disciples can be made. We look for people to support as missionaries who have special abilities, enabling them to survive in radically

completion of the task, and how are those successful results accomplished? (6) Finally, there is mission's comprehensive historico-theological framework. The whole study must view mission within the framework of God's salvation history, whereby God does the covenantal work of judgment or redemption.

⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 268.

⁷ Darrell L. Guder, "From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*. 24, (2003): 39.

⁸ See *ibid.*, 36-38. and Seland, "Resident Aliens in Mission: Missional Practices in the Emerging Church of 1 Peter," 565.

⁹ Francis Anekwe Oborji, "Contemporary Missiology in Theological Education: Origins and New Perspectives," *Missiology* 34, no. 3 (2006): 383.

different cultures, because we define missions as reaching people across cultural and linguistic barriers.”¹⁰

Or, is there another paradigm available to the church?

Newbigin suggests Christian missiological efforts have been more church centric and so “exclusively founded upon the person and work of Christ”¹¹ and in so doing has not done justice to a Trinitarian doctrine of God. So, for workers in cross cultural missions today to rightly understand their task, it must be done within the broader understanding of God’s activity in the world as Father, Son and Spirit.¹² The “beginning of mission is not an action of ours, but the presence of a new reality, the presence of the Spirit of God in Power.”¹³ So, for Newbigin, the church is not the agent of mission so much as it is the locus of mission.¹⁴

Missiologist Westing, wrote, “The Bible reveals that missions is the very heart and character of God Himself. His nature makes missions inevitable. This means that ‘missions’ is no afterthought or a matter of secondary consideration with God. It is of utmost importance.”¹⁵ Barram agrees, “Mission, biblically understood, is first and

¹⁰ Monroe Brewer and Carl Palmer, “For Missions Pastors: Directing Your Missions Ministry,” in *Leadership: Obeying the Lord of the Harvest* (Wheaton, IL: Assn of Church Missions Committees, 1983), 34.

¹¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 33.

¹² *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Harold J. Westing, *I'd Love to Tell the World* (Denver, CO: Accent Books, 1977), 43.

foremost about the nature, character, and purposes of God.”¹⁶ He goes on to add that the “recent shift toward viewing the Bible as missiological in character offers a corrective to the reductionistic emphasis on a few putative ‘mission’ texts. Many are now beginning to recognize that the church’s mission hangs not on a few scattered passages, but on a much broader appeal to the activity of God as revealed in Scripture as a whole.”¹⁷ Thus, Newbigin makes the point that the center of mission is not saving or failing to save individuals from hell. Rather, the heart of mission is “simply the desire to be with [God] and to give him the service of our lives.”¹⁸

So, mission is not an enterprise, where Christians get caught up in and busy themselves with the work of ministry but rather, it is a life of thanksgiving and praise inviting others into the wonder of God. Newbigin rightly explains that Jesus did not leave behind a body of teaching or philosophical opinion, as some may seem to think and portray him. Had that been the case, Christian scriptures would be much more like the *Quran* than the living Word. “What he did was to prepare a community chosen to be the bearer of the secret of the kingdom. This community is his legacy.”¹⁹

This shift from seeing mission as church-centered to something God-centered,²⁰ beginning with divine rather than human initiative, is now commonly expressed in the

¹⁶ Michael D. Barram, “The Bible, Mission, and Social Location: Toward a Missional Hermeneutic,” *Interpretation* 61, no. 1 (2007): 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁸ Taken from 1 Cor. 9:23. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 127.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 133. Chapter 3 of this study examines the Theological impetus behind community. I highly recommend Newbigin’s thoughts on what it means to “dwell in” Christ as a “plausibility structure” over against the one in which society lives, which can only be embodied in actual community. See *ibid.*, 99-102.

²⁰ See Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 129. and Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church*

phrase, *Missio Dei*. Bosch, at this juncture of the discussion, provides a helpful distinction to consider:

Mission (singular) is different from missions (plural). Mission refers to the *Missio Dei* (God's mission), God's self revelation as loving the world, involved in and with the world, his nature and activity that embraces both the church and the world in which the church is privileged to participate. 'Missions' refers to a particular form, time, place or need when participating in the *Missio Dei*.²¹

Missio Dei Defined

The term *Missio Dei* has undergone significant definition shifts in its short history as a missiological phrase. One cannot read far without mention of the July 1952 Willingen, Germany meeting of the International Missionary Council where the concept came into being though never really used as a term until a few weeks later. Hartenstein coined the term in his report of the Willingen Council summarizing the closing statement.²² Twenty years earlier, Karl Barth argued in a paper given at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference that mission should be understood as an activity or attribute of God. For Barth, historically, 'mission' was never described apart from the inter-relations of the Trinity.²³ In other words, mission needed to be understood as flowing from the Trinitarian nature of God: the Father sends the Son; the Father and Son send the Spirit; and the Trinitarian God sends the church into the world.

in North America, Gospel and Culture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4. and Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission*, 36. and Jannie Swart et al., "Toward a Missional Theology of Participation: Ecumenical Reflections on Contributions to Trinity, Mission, and Church," *Missiology* 37, no. 1 (2009). For a concise essay on the subject, see Christopher Ducker, "Explain the Thinking Behind Mission as *Missio Dei*" <http://www.theduckers.org/media/missio%20dei.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2013).

²¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 10.

²² Wilhelm Richebächer, "Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?," *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (2003): 589.

²³ Taken from Guder, "From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology," 42.

Bosch describes the process and shift from a church centered mission to a mission centered church. “Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission... There is church because there is mission, not visa versa... To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”²⁴ Thus, by the time the mission conference at Willingen came about, there was a strong global consensus that the church must be understood as essentially missionary.

With Barth’s recovery of the doctrine of the Trinity, missional theology in the West was recast as a representation of God and no longer as a practical extension of the church. Bosch further adds:

The primary purpose of the *missiones ecclesiae* can therefore not simply be the planting of churches or the saving of souls; rather, it has to be service to the *missio Dei*, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany. In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God’s reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil.²⁵

As Perriman rightly points out, while the shift in missiological focus was necessary, it exposed a critical fork in the theological road.²⁶ Richebächer identifies the problem: “One camp saw the methodological, concerted missionary activity of the church as urgent and justified if the church is to become once again the tool of God’s missionary

²⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 390.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 391.

²⁶ Andrew Perriman, “Missio Dei’ in Historical Perspectives, Part 1” <http://www.postost.net/2011/01/missio-dei-historical-perspectives-part-1> (accessed September 20 2013). See also Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 218-219.

work.”²⁷ This is called the *salvation history ecclesiological* approach. “The other camp basically allows the missionary activity of the church to dissolve in God’s universal activity in history,”²⁸ thus seeing God’s redemption and the church’s action as detached from the other. This represents the *historical eschatological* approach.²⁹ Some clearly see an end of the church as a missionary influence, as Bosch observes quoting P.G. Aring: “We have no business in ‘articulating’ God. In the final analysis, ‘*missio Dei*’ means that God articulates himself, without any need of assisting him through our missionary efforts in this respect.”³⁰ Given the diversity and confusion over the term, it begs the question whether *missio Dei*, as a phrase and theological construct for mission is even helpful. Bosch would argue that, *missio Dei* is necessary as a safeguard in understanding that mission is “primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate.”³¹

Though some missiologists disagree on a precise definition of the *missio Dei*, there are some core assumptions that bring us back to Barth’s original intent.

²⁷ Richebächer, “Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?,” 593. See also Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 35.

²⁸ Richebächer, “Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?,” 593.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 392.

³¹ Ibid. See also Richebächer, “Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?,” 595. Despite Richebächer’s concern for the mis-use of the term, he still sees the differing interpretations as reactions or corrections against previous one-sided or marginal understandings of the term. Instead, he later calls for a “precisely defined formulation based on the original meaning and function” of *missio Dei Triunius*. Ibid., 599. John Flett has become an important voice of concern in this discussion as well. See John G. Flett, “Missio Dei: A Trinitarian Envisioning of a Non-Trinitarian Theme,” *Missiology* 37, no. 1 (2009). And John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

- 1) Mission comes from God. This makes mission God-centered rather than church-centered.³²
- 2) God is Triune and each Person of the Godhead is missional.³³
- 3) The missionary impetus comes from and reflects God's nature; so Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world³⁴.
- 4) The Christian faith is intrinsically missionary, as we have heard many times from pulpits.³⁵ So, the entire Christian existence is to be characterized as missionary.³⁶
- 5) The church-in-mission lives in creative tension as sign and sacrament. As a sign, the church points to, symbolizes and models. As a sacrament, the church mediates, represents and anticipates.³⁷
- 6) Theologically speaking, 'foreign missions' is not a separate entity.³⁸

³² Note Rms. 1:20 and Acts 17: 26-18 respectively: "God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen..." Through God's intention, "He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and *he determined the times set for them* and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'" (Emphasis mine).

³³ Jn. 16:7-11; Rms. 8:23; 2 Cor. 1:22; Heb. 1. Thompson summarizes saying, "The *ultimate basis* of mission is the triune God—the Father who created the world and sent his Son by the Holy Spirit to be our salvation. The *proximate basis of mission* is the redemption of the Son by his life, death, and resurrection, and the *immediate power* of mission is the Holy Spirit. It is, in trinitarian terms, a *missio Dei*." See John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72.

³⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

- 7) The church, a body made up of individuals, has the privilege of participating in the *missio Dei* as participants, not initiators, whether through daily activities or what can be understood as global or foreign missions.³⁹

Within these assumptions, we come back to Bosch's more balanced definition, which includes both God's activity, mission (singular), and the role of the church, missions (plural): "Mission refers to the *Missio Dei* (God's mission), God's self revelation as loving the world, involved in and with the world, his nature and activity that embraces both the church and the world in which the church is privileged to participate. 'Missions' refers to "a particular form, time, place or need when participating in the *Missio Dei*."⁴⁰

Missional Church

Just as *missio Dei* has undergone multiple definition tweaks, so the term Missional, which has emerged from the dialogue surrounding *missio Dei*. With the confusion surrounding a clear understanding of mission, many missiologists have adopted the term 'missional' as a comprehensive way to describe the role of the church in the *missio Dei*. As defined in chapter 1, a missional church is one whose "identity lies in its *participation in the triune God's mission* in all creation."⁴¹ Different from church-with-a-mission, missional churches are a product of and participants in God's

³⁹ According to De Neui, the starting place for theology and praxis is the *missio Dei*. See Paul H. De Neui, "Christian Communitas in the *Missio Dei*: Living Faithfully in the Tension between Cultural Osmosis and Alienation," *Ex Auditu* 23, (2007): 93. See also Kevin Daugherty, "Missio Dei: The Trinity and Christian Missions," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31, no. 2 (2007): 163-168.

⁴⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 10.

⁴¹ Zscheile, 6.

mission/agenda.⁴² We are still not spared the dilemma inherent in the terminology as any number of definitions on “God’s mission” abound.⁴³ However, the term does protect and flow naturally from Barth’s original intent for a Trinitarian centered understanding of mission and the church’s role in it.

Even with the emphasis on God’s mission, there has been a “rediscovery of the local church as the primary agent of missions.”⁴⁴ This rediscovery of the local church’s role in missions has obviously led to a new understanding of the purpose and role of missionaries and sending agencies. This re-envisioning has worked only to highlight the inherent tension between the two views of the church (despite one’s definition of *missio Dei*).⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the first model robs the gospel of ethical moorings while the second model robs the gospel of soteriological depth.⁴⁶ Thus, Bosch calls for the church to live in creative tension, which has rarely been done.⁴⁷

Moltmann’s missional ecclesiology provides helpful nuance at this juncture. Moltmann portrays the church as having two poles: identity and relevance. On the identity side, the church is a “contrast society, a community of mature and committed disciples that serves as a sign of the kingdom in its fellowship of equality, mutual

⁴² Ibid. See also Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 77-79.

⁴³ For a helpful discussion on the many directions this word has taken see Oberji, “Contemporary Missiology in Theological Education: Origins and New Perspectives.” Also note Richebächer, “Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?”

⁴⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 389.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 390-393. Oberji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology*. and Richebächer, “Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?,” 593.

⁴⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 391. referencing Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 80.

⁴⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 390.

acceptance, and care, its worship in joy, and its struggle to live out the Sermon on the Mount as a Kingdom ethic.”⁴⁸ In other words, the church subcultural identity as a contrast society provides alternate possibilities, which can be catalytic in bringing about change in the broader social context.⁴⁹ This also aligns with Pascal’s understanding that the church can and should provide a fixed point of disruption for society.⁵⁰

The relevance side of the church is portrayed as *kenotic*—“a community of openness, self-giving, and solidarity in its various relationships with the world.”⁵¹ According to Osmer, this side encompasses a broad spectrum of things like confronting systemic “forces of evil,” and dialogue with other religions.⁵² Thus, the church must embrace the paradox of living both as a place of gathering and up building while at the same time sending and giving themselves.⁵³ Because the church is both a contrast society and a *kenotic* society, for Osmer, the church becomes the primary place of formation especially as it (the church) lives into and out of its mission vocation.⁵⁴ “Beyond the worship of God and the proclamation of his word, the central ministry of the church is

⁴⁸ Richard R. Osmer, “Formation in the Missional Church: Building Deep Connections between Ministries of Upbuilding and Sending,” in *Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation*, ed. Dwight J. Zscheile (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 50.

⁴⁹ Osmer summarizing Moltmann in *ibid.* For another helpful read on the church’s failure and potential as a contrastive society, see James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ “The licentious tell men of orderly lives that they stray from nature's path, while they themselves follow it; as people in a ship think those move who are on the shore. On all sides the language is similar. We must have a fixed point in order to judge. The harbor decides for those who are in a ship; but where shall we find a harbor in morality?” Blaise Pascal, “Thoughts,” (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, Bartleby.com, 2001). <http://www.bartleby.com/48/1/6.html> (accessed September 19, 2013).

⁵¹ *Kenotic* is Osmer’s word, which I will pick up in chapter 3. Osmer, 50.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Note chapters 5 and 6 of this study where I further develop and illustrate gathering and building and the giving qualities of the church through a missionary culture.

⁵⁴ Osmer, 51.

one of formation; of making disciples,”⁵⁵ according to Hunter. Now we begin to see the importance of this dialogue as it relates to cultivating spiritual community among missionaries living and working cross-culturally.

Grounded in the social doctrine of the Trinity, Moltmann’s ecclesiology portrays the divine persons as existing in centered openness—*perichoresis*.⁵⁶ For Osmer, “This Trinitarian, missional ecclesiology of centered openness is the key to the relationship between formation and missional vocation” (which is how God’s people discern God’s calling for their unique place in God’s mission).⁵⁷ So, for Osmer, missional formation takes place as a congregation lives into and out of its missional vocation.⁵⁸ In other words, our formation is not isolated to the typical, individual practices normally associated with spiritual formation that can be accomplished in isolation, separate from a community of believers. Bonhoeffer had something to say on this matter as well.⁵⁹

When the church proclaims and is a sign of the reign of God—living the gospel by words and deeds as part of God’s mission in this world—it will be a contrastive

⁵⁵ Hunter, 236. See also *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, s.v. “Spiritual Formation.”

⁵⁶ I will unpack *perichoresis* in chapter 3. For now, it is simply understood as the interpenetrating and interrelating of the divine persons. Daugherty, “Missio Dei: The Trinity and Christian Missions,” 156. “Although Moltmann clearly tries to base his social Trinity in scripture, it is also clear that he sees this model as a corrective to political injustices and autocratic systems of government. Characterizing all monotheism as ‘monarchism’, he asserts, ‘the notion of a divine monarch in heaven and on earth... generally provides the justification for earthly domination...and makes it a hierarchy, a ‘holy rule’.” See note 29 in *ibid*.

⁵⁷ Osmer maintains his consistency of describing a missional church, which limits his definition to a local assembly of believers. I have broadened his thought to include God’s people in general here. Osmer, 51.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

community in the eyes of the world, thus being a missional church.⁶⁰ Maybe this is the creative tension needed to navigate these murky waters.

Missionary Stress

While missiologists work out the kinks toward a common understanding of Missions, missionaries still go, sent by denominations, local churches, mission agencies and in some cases, on their own initiative. The missionary ‘calling,’ inherent in the Christian,⁶¹ propels people beyond their personal comfort zone to share the reality of Christ’s life in them with others. For those who have stepped into global missions, choosing to live and work cross-culturally, researchers have attempted to better understand the particular stressors inherent in this life.

Areas of research and clinical concern for mental health workers providing care for missionaries include the impact of missions on families, cross-cultural adaptation, response to crisis and trauma, developing teams, and models of organizational structure. Correlations between stress, culture shock, burnout, and premature departure from the missionary’s field assignment have received the most research attention.⁶² Since most

⁶⁰ Seland, “Resident Aliens in Mission: Missional Practices in the Emerging Church of 1 Peter,” 568.

⁶¹ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 9.

⁶² G. Basil Price, “Discussion on the Causes of Invaliding from the Tropics,” *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 2759 (1913).; Dorothy Gish, “Sources of Missionary Stress,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 11, no. 3 (1983).; Marjory F. Foyle, *Overcoming Missionary Stress* (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Missions Information Service, 1987).; Dirk W. Vander Steen, “A Study of Stress Factors Related to the Attrition of Christian Reformed Church Missionary Personnel in a West African Work Environment” (ProQuest Information & Learning, 1988).; William E. Dymont, “Burnout among Missionaries: An Empirical Inquiry into the Role of Unrealistic Expectations, Job Role Ambiguity and Job Role Conflict” (Rosemead School of Psychology, Biola University, 1989).; Dodds and Dodds.; Robert W. Bagley, “Trauma and Traumatic Stress among Missionaries,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 31, no. 2 (2003).; Julie Irvine, David P. Armentrout, and Linda A. Miner, “Traumatic Stress in a Missionary Population: Dimensions and Impact,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34, no. 4 (2006).; Frauke C.

research eventually points to some form of stress, shock, and burnout the parameters of this review will be limited to these.

Even with the multiple attempts to categorize and define the particular stressors inherent in the missionary life, there still exists an internal pressure to ‘have it together’. For example, Chester’s study indicated a situation where a majority of those missionaries studied believed other missionaries were not facing as much stress as themselves, and yet, this same majority see themselves as being personally under a lot of stress. In other words, according to Chester, the missionary is saying: “Though I’m under a lot of stress I cannot let the other know. I don’t understand why they look so calm and seem to not be under much stress. I must keep up my front of calmness.”⁶³

The external pressure is just as real. For example, when an elderly gentleman made a significant monthly commitment in support of our overseas ministry, another member of his family pulled me aside telling me not to waste his investment in us. A bit shocked, I asked what he meant. He replied, “You are there to work not take vacations!” For this man, taking a break was unthinkable for a missionary. Apparently, the unspoken rule is that since the work is for God, there should be no stress and no real reason to take a break from it. Yet, as Grenz helpfully points out, “The God of the Bible doesn’t evaluate our work on the basis of what we produce. God’s standard of measurement is not

Schaefer et al., “Traumatic Events and Posttraumatic Stress in Cross-Cultural Mission Assignments,” *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 20, no. 4 (2007).; Karen Carr and Frauke C. Schaefer, “Trauma and Traumatic Stress in Cross-Cultural Missions: How to Promote Resilience,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2010).; Kate Sauter, “Culture Shock! Successfully Navigating the Transition Phase of Ministry,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (2010).; Heidi Marie Vander Pol, “Missionary Selection, Stress, and Functioning: A Review of the Literature” (Rosemead School of Psychology, Biola University, 1994).

⁶³ Raymond M. Chester, “Stress on Missionary Families Living in ‘Other Culture’ Situations,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 2, no. 4 (1983): 34-35.

productivity but faithfulness. God does not ask what we have accomplished but whether we have been faithful to the task entrusted to us.”⁶⁴

The fact is life is full of stress. Gish describes stress as “...a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. A natural by-product of all our activities, stress is thus a normal part of everyday life.”⁶⁵ Things that cause stress can be defined as “any condition which an individual [judges] as requiring some accommodation or readjustment in ongoing lifestyle or behavior.”⁶⁶ Stress, then, refers to any external pressure exerted upon an individual while anxiety is the internal tension, which normally results from attempting to live up to these external pressures and demands.⁶⁷ However, for Chester, “Missionaries are under no more stress than other helping professions. Yet, missionaries...do not seem to recognize the actual amount of stress under which they are actually living. They are under a significant amount of stress but have no way to turn to find relief.”⁶⁸

In contrast to Chester’s findings, Miersma, a Vietnam vet, missionary and therapist, has stated that in her 15 years’ experience as a missionary and mental health care worker, she has observed stress factors among missionaries similar to those seen

⁶⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, “Burnout: The Cause and the Cure for a Christian Malady,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 26, no. 6 (1999): 427. See Matt 24:45; cf. 25:21, 23

⁶⁵ Gish, “Sources of Missionary Stress,” 236.

⁶⁶ James P. Spradley and Mark Phillips, “Culture and Stress: A Quantitative Analysis,” *American Anthropologist* 74, no. 3 (1972): 521.

⁶⁷ Myron Loss, *Culture Shock: Dealing with Stress in Cross-Cultural Living* (Middleburg, PA: M. Loss, 1983), 47. See also, Kelly O'Donnell and Michele O'Donnell, “Stress Can Be Managed,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1991).

⁶⁸ Chester, “Stress on Missionary Families Living in 'Other Culture' Situations,” 37.

among combat veterans.⁶⁹ These observations reflect the Dodd's research that "Cross-cultural workers experience about 600 points of stress per year. The level may peak as high as 1500 points in some circumstances, and drop merely to "normal" for people who are in long-term, stable situations."⁷⁰ Important also to note are those studying post-traumatic stress in missionaries. "Not only are missionaries often located in places that many would be consider dangerous, they also tend to work closely with victims of trauma, making them susceptible to secondary traumatic stress."⁷¹ For example, Bagley's research revealed that missionaries were 10 times more likely to be exposed to violent crime on the field than anywhere else (measuring against life in North America). Also significant are his findings that during the most difficult period of adjustment for the missionary, 24% reported symptoms above the cutoff level for PTSD diagnosis, and 38% reported levels necessary for a diagnosis of PTSD using the symptom cluster method.⁷² Irvine's study showed that, "failure in the missionary's support system and personal crises were the most common forms of [traumatic stress] reported."⁷³ Relevant to this present study is that of those stressors experienced, "45% were relational v. 55% non-relational."⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Patricia Miersma, "Understanding Missionary Stress from the Perspective of a Combat-Related Stress Theory," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 21, no. 1 (1993): 93.

⁷⁰ Dodds and Dodds, 9. Note per the Dodd's citation: The original study revealed that 200 points of stressful life events caused 50% of people to become seriously ill (cancer, heart attack, etc.) within the subsequent two years of the stressful situation. With 300 points, 90% became ill.

⁷¹ Bagley, "Trauma and Traumatic Stress among Missionaries," 98.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷³ Irvine et al., "Traumatic Stress in a Missionary Population: Dimensions and Impact," 329.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

For the missionary, stressors come in the guise of language learning, loss of the familiar, climate changes, and family problems.⁷⁵ Whitecotton adds to Foyle's list, culture shock, discouragement, loneliness, burnout and depression as causes of stress.⁷⁶ Bagley's research includes exposure to natural disasters, childhood abuse, life endangerment, news of injury/death, and serious accident as some of the more significant stresses (trauma) in the missionary's life.⁷⁷ In an attempt to understand the stressors particular to missionaries, Cook, a prolific writer on missionary life in the late 1950s and early 1960s, identified the most common dangers (stressors) for missionaries as petty annoyances, conflict of wills, jealousy, misunderstandings, age differences between missionaries, and criticism.⁷⁸ Conducting a research project for Columbia School of Missions, Vega noted that interpersonal relationships were at the core of all problems missionaries face.⁷⁹ Collins identified nine stresses common to missionaries: Loneliness, cultural adjustment, a constant demands on one's time, inadequate medical care, overwhelming workload, pressure to be a constant witness, confusion over one's role in the local church, lack of privacy, and infrequent breaks.⁸⁰

In the early 1980s, Missionary stress and burnout gained more attention through Johnson and Penner's study on the most frequent problems of missionaries requiring

⁷⁵ Foyle, 14.

⁷⁶ Michele Whitecotton, "Causes of Stress and What to Do About Them," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1996).

⁷⁷ Bagley, "Trauma and Traumatic Stress among Missionaries," 102.

⁷⁸ Harold R. Cook, *Missionary Life and Work: A Discussion of Principles and Practices of Missions* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1959), 118-124.

⁷⁹ Cesar Vega, *The Cause and Cure of Missionary Attrition* (Columbia, SC: Columbia Graduate School of Bible and Missions, 1976), 19.

⁸⁰ Gary R. Collins, *You Can Profit from Stress* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House Publishers, 1977).

counseling.⁸¹ Ranked by severity, the top four problems missionaries sought help for were: (1) Problems with other missionaries; (2) Cultural adjustment; (3) Managing stress; and (4) Raising children cross-culturally. Significantly lower ranked problems were difficulties in marriage, financial pressure, loneliness, non-specific problems, and finding God's will.

Under less formal conditions, Elmer, a noted spokesman and missionary trainer, reports that having provided multiple workshops for mission agency executives and furloughed missionaries, the consistent feedback given is that missionaries don't get along well with each other.⁸² He suggests that the missionary's greatest strengths and character qualities that help get them to their field of service often become their greatest weaknesses on the field, hindering their ability to relate to others.⁸³

Gish came out with a ground breaking study on the sources of missionary stress that lead to burnout regardless of age, sex, or marital status.⁸⁴ In order of the most stressful, her study indicated the greatest stressors are: confrontation, cross-cultural communication, donor relations, and amount of work. Gish also points out that each of the stressors topping the list could easily have been addressed through better training, conflict resolution and organizational management. However, many agencies do provide this kind of training leading her to conclude that pre-field training is insufficient in addressing the unique nature of missionary stress. Ten years later, Carter reproduced

⁸¹ Cedric B. Johnson and David R. Penner, "The Current Status of the Provision of Psychological Services in Missionary Agencies in North America," *Bulletin of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies* 7, no. 4 (1981): 26.

⁸² Duane Elmer, "Interpersonal Relationships: Their Impact on Missions Work," in *Local Church*, ed. John C. Bennett (Monrovia, CA: Assoc of Church Missions Committees, 1982), 139.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁸⁴ Gish, "Sources of Missionary Stress."

Gish's findings in an independent study concluding that the same themes identified by Gish ten years earlier were still stressful if not more so.⁸⁵

Stress has also been linked to hostility and anger but for the missionary, there may be theological hindrances to full expression of one's emotions.⁸⁶ Taylor and Malony's study on preferred means of hostility among missionaries revealed lower levels of hostility in missionaries than the norms, which has raised more questions than providing answers. Are missionaries less hostile than the norm? Or, are they under more pressure as Christian leaders to perform a certain way?⁸⁷ The study further showed that the most preferred or acceptable means of hostility are indirect ones: "roundabout or indirect aggression, and negativism as oppositional behavior, such as passive noncompliance."⁸⁸ Such indirect means of dealing with and facing one's anger damages relationships, which may contribute to the relational struggles reported in the literature.

Commenting on Vega's study covering 53,000 missionaries, Loss states, "Interpersonal relationship problems count for about fifty percent of all avoidable causes for leaving missionary work."⁸⁹ For Loss, while attrition is a significant concern, effective service is a far more important concern. "I estimate that only about one of four missionaries function at a level near to that which was normal in their home culture. The same factors which drive about one out of four to terminate before finishing tens years of

⁸⁵ Joan Carter, "Missionary Stressors and Implications for Care," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 27, no. 2 (1999): 179.

⁸⁶ Beth Corey Taylor and H. Newton Malony, "Preferred Means of Hostility Expression among Missionaries: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 11, no. 3 (1983): 218-219.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Loss, 8.

service, also cause an additional two out of four to limp along at a reduced efficiency. If this is true, then only the remaining twenty-five percent manage to function at a level which would be their norm at home.”⁹⁰ This certainly raises the question whether research hasn’t focused on the wrong group? Only recently has thought been given to examining those who remain in their field of service, whether they are actually flourishing or floundering.⁹¹ At the same time, researchers like Bagley still believe the present data is far too anecdotal to suit them.⁹²

Geared more toward the church, missionary psychiatrist, Marjory Foyle echoes previous research by drawing attention to several factors she viewed as causing poor relationships among missionaries: Fatigue and compensatory over-rigidity, professional inferiority, poor job description, and conflict between spiritual and secular work.⁹³ While diverse in their findings, research in the area of missionary stress points to relational struggle as a key component of preventable struggle.⁹⁴

O’Donnell and O’Donnell provide a helpful summary of the stresses missionaries face in the form of a stress assessment model:

1. Cultural stress: language learning, adjusting to the new culture, getting needs met in new ways, and repatriation.
2. Human stress: conflicts with colleagues, opposition within the host culture, family responsibilities and strains.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁹¹ William D. Taylor, “Revisiting a Provocative Theme: The Attrition of Longer-Term Missionaries,” *Missiology* 30, no. 1 (2002): 79.

⁹² Bagley, “Trauma and Traumatic Stress among Missionaries,” 98.

⁹³ Marjory Foyle, “Why It’s Tough to Get Along with Each Other,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (1985).

⁹⁴ Here I am referring to interpersonal struggle with spouse, family, co-workers, locals, etc. While studies have sought to isolate the categories of relational stress, the fact remains that relational struggle is key to understanding missionary stress.

3. Organizational stress: job satisfaction, red tape, mission policies, leadership styles, and work pressures.
4. Physical stress: illness, aging, adjustments to a new climate and environment.
5. Psychological stress: unresolved past hurts, inner conflicts, depression, boredom, and mid-life transitions.
6. Support stress: raising money, housing needs, retirement issues, and limited clerical and secretarial help.
7. Spiritual stress: maintaining one's devotional life, spiritual warfare, and subtle temptations.⁹⁵

These normal-to-the-missionary conditions under which a missionary struggles is not a lack of spirituality, according to Foyle.⁹⁶ Her caution is well taken. The church (comprised of sending, supporting and co-working structures) must be careful not to overburden the missionary with unnecessary guilt when struggling with things that simply assault the psyche. Even Jesus told his followers to expect trouble (stress).⁹⁷ Wouldn't it stand to reason that regardless of the struggle, all believers experience the groan of creation waiting for the day of redemption?⁹⁸ For Paul, not only had the Lord delivered him from trouble, he expected more.⁹⁹ Simply put, struggle is a common fact of life this side of eternity living in a fallen world.

Culture Shock

Adjusting one's lifestyle and thought patterns to fit a new culture requires a vulnerability to disorientation and emotional upheaval. This process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment through sudden immersion into a nonspecific state of

⁹⁵ O'Donnell and O'Donnell, "Stress Can Be Managed," 40-45.

⁹⁶ Foyle, 14.

⁹⁷ Jn. 16:33.

⁹⁸ Rms. 8:18-25. Even though the present suffering cannot compare to the glory to come, we who have the first fruits of the Spirit still groan inwardly eager for the day of our adoption.

⁹⁹ 2 Cor. 1:10; cf. 2 Cor. 4:8-9.

uncertainty where the individual is not sure of what is expected from them or what they can expect from others is called culture shock.¹⁰⁰ A long-term cross-cultural assignment characterized by on-going adjustment challenges such as poverty, disease, social instability, and isolation contribute to chronic stress.¹⁰¹ Thus, many researchers agree that culture shock accounts for the majority of stress one experiences living cross-culturally.¹⁰² This kind of culture stress, as Loss calls it, reflects the influence of a radical new way of life where a foreigner must learn appropriate behavior, adapt to a new language, change routines, and even learn new ways of cultivating relationships.¹⁰³

Oberg is credited with popularizing the phrase ‘culture shock’, understanding it to be an occupational disease “precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.”¹⁰⁴ Foster further elaborated on Oberg’s work stating: “The malady of culture shock is caused in part by communication problems and in part by gnawing feelings of inadequacy which grow stronger...”¹⁰⁵ According to Meintel, “culture shock has been referred to variously as: a “malady” (Foster 1962:188);

¹⁰⁰ Paul B. Pedersen, *The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents around the World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 1.

¹⁰¹ Schaefer et al., “Traumatic Events and Posttraumatic Stress in Cross-Cultural Mission Assignments,” 530.

¹⁰² Kalvero Oberg, “Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments,” *Practical Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (1960): 142.; Williams.; Peter S. Adler, “The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 15, no. 4 (1975).; Foyle.

¹⁰³ Loss, 49-55.

¹⁰⁴ Oberg, “Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments,” 142.

¹⁰⁵ George McClelland Foster, *Traditional Cultures and the Impact of Technological Change* (New York: Harper Collins, 1962), 188.

“personality maladjustment” (Lundstedt 1963:3); a “temporary attitude” (Arensberg and Niehoff 1965:199); and “psychological malfunctioning” (Wintrob 1969:62).”¹⁰⁶

More recent work in the field may be backing away from seeing culture shock as a disease or illness. “Any sort of mental or physical distress experienced in a foreign location could be a symptom of culture shock.”¹⁰⁷ Pedersen considers culture shock to be a psychological concern characterized by symptoms of anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, fatigue, irritability, loneliness, forgetfulness, difficulty concentrating, sentimentality, and feeling like they do not fit in.¹⁰⁸ However, he does not see culture shock as a disease nor believes there is any real way to measure the phenomenon.¹⁰⁹ For Pedersen, culture shock is an interpersonal experience—it is not something experienced apart from human interaction. Rather, it is a response to interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict resulting in learning.¹¹⁰ Meintel would agree. Her concern is that a disease understanding of cross-cultural struggle only tends to “focus on the newcomer’s problems with a foreign language, strange customs and uncomfortable living conditions” rather than more “enduring aspects of [his or her] experience as a stranger.”¹¹¹ So

¹⁰⁶ Deirdre A. Meintel, “Strangers, Homecomers and Ordinary Men,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1973): 48.

¹⁰⁷ Rachel Irwin, “Culture Shock: Negotiating Feelings in the Field,” *Anthropology Matters Journal* 9, no. 1 (2007): 2.

¹⁰⁸ Paul B. Pedersen, *110 Experiences for Multicultural Learning* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004), 53.

¹⁰⁹ Pedersen, *The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents around the World*, 12.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Meintel, “Strangers, Homecomers and Ordinary Men,” 49. See also, Frauke C. Schaefer, Dan G. Blazer, and Harold G. Koenig, “Religious and Spiritual Factors and the Consequences of Trauma: A Review and Model of the Interrelationship,” *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 38, no. 4 (2008): 508.; Kenneth H. David, “Culture Shock and the Development of Self-Awareness,” *Journal of*

Spradley and Phillips' research, which examined culture shock from the perspective of a stress model, indicating "there are universal stressors encountered by those who experience culture shock which result from the nature of the cultural subsystem, human learning processes, or other variables."¹¹²

Aside from attempting to define and describe the symptomatology of culture shock, researchers have also attempted to identify the process of culture shock. Oberg is most noted for his four stages of culture shock—honeymoon, crisis, recovery, adjustment, which Foster described as incubation, crisis, initial recovery, and near or full recovery.¹¹³ Wagner, reflecting on the efforts of cross-cultural workers, described culture shock as a downhill road: tourist stage, rejecting strange values, craving familiar values, depression.¹¹⁴ "One may experience multiple stages at one time or may 'revert' to an earlier stage during a time of crisis. Also, each individual reacts differently and some may not progress to the final stage before returning home."¹¹⁵

Adler attempted to provide an alternative view to culture shock. Still based upon Oberg and Foster's work, he suggests culture shock is what he termed a "transitional experience."¹¹⁶ This experience is a "movement from a state of low self and cultural awareness to a state of high self and cultural awareness."¹¹⁷ Adler's stages consist of:

Contemporary Psychotherapy 4, no. 1 (1971).; William Allen Smalley, "Culture Shock, Language Shock, and the Shock of Self-Discovery," *Practical Anthropology* 10, no. 2 (1963).

¹¹² Spradley and Phillips, "Culture and Stress: A Quantitative Analysis," 527.

¹¹³ Oberg, "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments," 142-143.; Foster.

¹¹⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1971).

¹¹⁵ Irwin, "Culture Shock: Negotiating Feelings in the Field," 2.

¹¹⁶ Adler, "The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock," 15.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Autonomy, and Independence. For Adler, this “transitional process” is a depth experience marking the growth and development of a person’s personality dynamically.¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, the weakness of the stage model of culture shock remains. Whether a process or movement through stages of change, the assumption is that life is linear.¹¹⁹

Too many variables exist in attempting to understand the dynamics of culture shock. Various studies indicate there are multiple factors that influence or cause culture shock. “Personality traits such as cultural flexibility, ethnocentricity, stress reactions, interpersonal and relational skills are most likely to affect the individual.”¹²⁰ According to Williams, for those living and working in tribal settings, the lack of privacy, poor housing, filthy living conditions, which may expose them to various diseases or even the physical challenges like traveling two weeks in a dugout canoe to reach various tribal locales, all make adjusting to the host culture difficult.¹²¹

Unfortunately, the reliability of predicting who will succeed under certain circumstances still remains questionable. Williams was able to identify certain negative characteristics as differentiating between successful and unsuccessful missionaries: motivation, interpersonal skills, psychological problems, and family problems.¹²² Those with difficulties in these four areas are apparently unable to cope with the stresses of

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁹ Pedersen, *The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents around the World*, 4.

¹²⁰ James Rajasekar and Franck Renand, “Culture Shock in a Global World: Factors Affecting Culture Shock Experienced by Expatriates in Oman and Omani Expatriates Abroad,” *International Journal of Business and Management* 8, no. 13 (2013): 145.

¹²¹ Williams, 4-6.

¹²² Ibid., 139.

living and working cross-culturally. Still, for Williams' study, a significant question remains: "Why does one person view such stressors as a threat to his well-being and thus reacts with defensive but relatively non-adaptive tactics; while another person, viewing the same stressors as a challenge, meets them in a constructive manner and grows through the experience?"¹²³

Given the data and my own experience of culture shock, I am inclined to agree with Meintel's thesis. Culture shock is not a malady to cope with or recover from but an appropriate disruption of one's closely held assumptions about life. Thus, it is an opportunity for deeper reflection and personal growth through the process (shock) of self-discovery. This process of learning through culture shock and the shock of self-discovery requires a community of those on the journey with the one struggling, as we shall see throughout this study.

Burnout

While the inability to communicate, lack of support, loneliness, a sense of not belonging, and others are considered universal stressors that lead to culture shock, the prolonged influence of stress can eventually lead to burnout. According to Maslach, an early researcher in the field, "Burnout involves loss of concern for the people with whom one is working...[and] is characterized by an emotional exhaustion in which the staff person no longer has any positive feelings, sympathy, or respect for clients."¹²⁴ The occurrence of burnout is associated with physical symptoms of feeling exhausted and

¹²³ Ibid., 141.

¹²⁴ Christina Maslach, "The Client Role in Staff Burnout," *Journal of Social Issues* 34, no. 4 (1978): 113.

fatigued, frequent headaches, stomach problems, weight loss, sleeplessness, depression and shortness of breath. The emotional components include anger, blunt affect, mood swings, easily frustrated, suspicion, rigidity, unable to relax, and feeling isolated.¹²⁵ This physical and emotional exhaustion due to continual exposure to interpersonal relationships produces negative job attitudes, a poor work-related sense of self, and a loss of concern for others.¹²⁶ More specific to the missionary, Wadell defines burnout as a condition of having nothing more to offer, impairing one's ability to work and maintain healthy relationships, from being spiritually, emotionally and physically spent.¹²⁷

“A person who is placed in unusually frustrating and unpredictable circumstances where [their] goals are not met easily, will experience anxiety, fear and hostility.”¹²⁸

Scientist Hans Selye correlated exhaustion with stress and linked a stress response with adrenocortical activity. He introduced the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) model to describe his understanding of the body's short-term and long-term reaction to stress.¹²⁹ Basically, Selye's thesis is that the body resists alarming stimuli that are perceived as a threat by shifting into an adaptive mode. If a person continues to feel threatened, their ability to resist is eventually depleted, leaving them in a state of physical and emotional

¹²⁵ Stephen Daniel and Martha L. Rogers, “Burn-out and the Pastorate: A Critical Review with Implications for Pastors,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 9, no. 3 (1981): 232.

¹²⁶ Richard Walter Meyers, “Conflict Management Style and Burnout of Missionaries” (ProQuest Information & Learning, 1994), 37.

¹²⁷ Gregory S. Waddell, “Missionary Burnout: 'Who Is Adequate for These Things?'," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2008): 306.

¹²⁸ Sally Folger Dye, “Decreasing Fatigue and Illness in Field-Work,” *Missiology* 2, no. 1 (1974): 79.

¹²⁹ Hans Selye, “Stress and the General Adaptation Syndrome,” *The British Medical Journal* 1, no. 4667 (1950).

exhaustion, unable to resist further threat. This long-term exhaustion can result in various diseases of adaptation like cardiovascular disease, cancer, and kidney disease.¹³⁰

Dye provides a helpful list of common “unconscious adjustment mechanisms” used by “normal people everywhere to deal with unpleasant or unacceptable emotions and painful experiences.”¹³¹ (1) Denial; (2) Suppression; (3) Reaction formation—by acting the opposite of how one feels; (4) Displacement—bleeding off emotions through other means; (5) Projection—attributing to others emotions one cannot accept in themselves; (6) Rationalizing; (7) Compensating for a sense of failure; (8) Insulation—avoiding certain activities that bring the person into contact with people they find stressful; (9) Regression—overly romanticizing the past.¹³² For Dye, the majority of people make these common adjustments without overloading their automatic defense systems. However, within a stress-filled environment like cross-cultural living, the adjustment may be more difficult and the mind begins to over use these mechanisms as a means of self-preservation.¹³³

Pines, Aronson and Kafry make an important distinction between tedium and burnout. “Tedium and burnout are similar in terms of symptomatology but are different in origin. Both are clusters of exhaustion reactions. Tedium can be the result of any prolonged chronic pressures (mental, physical, or emotional); burnout is the result of a

¹³⁰ Meyers, 37. See also, O'Donnell and O'Donnell, “Stress Can Be Managed.”

¹³¹ Dye, “Decreasing Fatigue and Illness in Field-Work,” 80.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 80-84.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 85.

constant or repeated emotional pressure associated with an intense involvement with people over long periods of time.”¹³⁴

More recent work in the field has termed the symptoms leading up to burnout as ‘compassion fatigue’ where those working particularly in helping professions such as doctors, nurses, counselors, social workers, and clergy (including missionaries) are exposed to the traumatic suffering of others show signs of vicarious trauma or secondary traumatic stress. If left untreated, symptoms can worsen and the condition can turn into burnout leading to eventual job termination.¹³⁵ The difficulty in fully understanding the situation is that the symptoms of compassion fatigue mimic the symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome.

It is important to realize that, “Nearly everyone who performs emotionally intense charitable work can be susceptible to compassion fatigue.”¹³⁶ The clergy, and in this case, missionaries, may be particularly vulnerable since they carry an especially heavy load during times of crisis.¹³⁷ Whether in crisis or facing the normal stresses of international living, missionaries face isolation, loneliness, and pain, which correlate strongly to key elements of burnout such as feeling helpless, hopeless, and trapped.¹³⁸ These struggles do not reflect upon the personality or fault of the missionary. Rather, as Daniel and Rogers

¹³⁴ Ayala Malakh-Pines, Elliot Aronson, and Ditsa Kafry, *Burnout: From Tedium to Personal Growth* (New York: Free Press, 1981), 15.

¹³⁵ Heather Joslyn, “Defeating Compassion Fatigue,” *Chronicle of Philanthropy* 14, no. 12 (2002): 37-38.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹³⁸ Chester, “Stress on Missionary Families Living in 'Other Culture' Situations,” 35.

concluded from their research, “it is the social, interpersonal pressures of the job” that lead to burnout.¹³⁹

Summary of Research about Stressors and Missionaries

Taken together, these studies reflect some of the common challenges facing missionaries today: cross-cultural adjustment, work pressures, spiritual resiliency, family life, finances, and relationships with colleagues. Individual responses to these stressors will vary for different missionaries and across different mission settings. Duhe explains:

The physical, emotional, and cultural stress of the missionary’s working environment wear him and his coping abilities down to a frazzle, and beyond. Often, remoteness does not allow missionaries to attend church to hear uplifting sermons from their pastor. Or, they are in only small struggling churches of which they are the pastor-teacher. Fellowship too, is minimal because there are few of no real believers, and conversations are all in a foreign language they struggle to speak.¹⁴⁰

While much of the stress experienced living cross-culturally is endemic to the conditions, measures can be taken to reduce relational stress. A support system is considered essential to help the person adjust well to their new culture.¹⁴¹ Loss suggests a better educational process of letting missionaries know about cultural stresses they might encounter and the potential blow to their ego.¹⁴² Joslyn’s suggestions are similar: Tell the new or prospect [missionary] what to expect, establish support systems, encourage

¹³⁹ Daniel and Rogers, “Burn-out and the Pastorate: A Critical Review with Implications for Pastors,” 233. Daniel and Rogers urge denominations to provide “peer support systems to reduce the isolation” ministers experience, which reflects the suggested direction of this study. See *ibid.*, 246.

¹⁴⁰ Duhe, 8.

¹⁴¹ Pedersen, *The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents around the World*, 10.

¹⁴² Loss, 3.

workers to talk about their feelings, consider seeking outside help when needed, and look out for your own needs while encouraging team members to do the same.¹⁴³

“The amazing fact is that most missionaries DO adapt and work effectively in spite of killing levels of stress. Most cross-cultural workers adapt and cope, becoming used to and remaining effective under loads of stress that would land most “regular” people in the hospital.”¹⁴⁴ Yet, it is estimated that quite a few do not thrive but only survive their experience as missionaries. No study exists that I could find to measure this populace. Of those who ‘opt out’ the most significant study on why missionaries leave the field prematurely is called ReMAP, the ‘Reducing Missionary Attrition Project’. We will examine this and other research in the next section.

Opting Out

Significant work has been done to determine why missionaries leave their field of service prematurely.¹⁴⁵ Obviously, certain kinds of departure are unavoidable, like death or significant health reasons. Of the avoidable reasons, researchers have broken the category into pre-field causes, on-field causes, and post-field service and reentry matters. One key figure in the field has suggested five very different categories: Acceptable attrition, preventable attrition, attrition that should happen, attrition that is applied for the good of all, and those vulnerable to attrition.¹⁴⁶ Given the parameters of the present study,

¹⁴³ Joslyn, “Defeating Compassion Fatigue,” 39.

¹⁴⁴ Dodds and Dodds, 9.

¹⁴⁵ The term “attrition” refers to the departure from field service by missionaries, regardless of cause. See Taylor, “Revisiting a Provocative Theme: The Attrition of Longer-Term Missionaries,” 69.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

we will primarily examine the research surrounding preventable, on-field causes of attrition.

The dilemma and concern of attrition has been around for some time.¹⁴⁷ The loss is far more than the financial investment. It is best measured in the adverse effect on the family itself, the team left behind, the missionary's sending church and agency, as well as the tacit message it sends to nationals. Vega refers to the costliness of the problem of attrition, the critical nature of the problem and the complexity.¹⁴⁸ Further studies have shown the nuance of the complexity, cost and critical nature of the problem.¹⁴⁹ Williams expresses his concern saying, "One of the most significant problems which faces the missionary enterprise of the American church today is the relatively large proportion of missionary personnel who end their cross-cultural missionary careers prematurely."¹⁵⁰ Duhe echoes his concerns. "The attrition rate for missionaries is considered by most authorities to be far too high."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Williams.; Vega.; Elmer.; Donald E. Williams, "Assessment of Cross-Cultural Adjustability in Missionary Candidates: Theoretical, Biblical, and Practical Perspectives," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 2, no. 4 (1983).; Franklin Allen, "Why Do They Leave? Reflections on Attrition," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1986).; Foyle.; Duhe.; Carl S. Christian McGarvey, *A Study of Missionary Appointment and Attrition in the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1984-1993* (Colorado Springs, CO: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1996).; Taylor, "Introduction: Examining the Iceberg Called Attrition."; Deseree Whittle, "Missionary Attrition: Its Relationship to the Spiritual Dynamics of the Late Twentieth Century," *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* 3, (1999).; Allan D. Stirling, "Missionary Attrition among Missionaries Serving in Asia and Europe" (Trinity International University, 2002).; Jaein Chong, "Preventing Missionary Attrition through Spiritual Formation" (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003).; Blöcher, "ReMAP I."; Hudson Deane, *Good and Faithful--New Zealand Missionaries and Their Experience of Attrition* (Mairangi Bay, North Shore, NZ: Daystar Publications Trust, 2008).; Daniel K. Linscott, "Attrition, Member Care, and Positive Emotions" (ProQuest Information & Learning, 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Vega.

¹⁴⁹ See Taylor, "Introduction: Examining the Iceberg Called Attrition."

¹⁵⁰ Williams, "Assessment of Cross-Cultural Adjustability in Missionary Candidates: Theoretical, Biblical, and Practical Perspectives," 18.

¹⁵¹ Duhe, 4.

In the most recent study on attrition, researchers attempted to more carefully isolate the fact and causes of attrition to better understand preventable and non-preventable field departures. By isolating preventable and non-preventable attrition, the numbers now change quite drastically from previous studies. Now, rather than a 50% loss rate, the numbers are lower than 20%.¹⁵² Taylor, the editor of the ReMAP study, estimates that 1 career missionary in 20 (5.1% of the global mission force) quits missions annually. “Of those who leave, 71% leave for *preventable* reasons.”¹⁵³ He further clarifies the implications of the numbers:

In terms of the global missions force, measured from 1992 through 1994 (the period studied in the attrition research), about 50 out of a thousand (5.1%) leave the field to return home every year. Of these who leave field service, approximately 36 (71%) do so for what might be called preventable or painful reasons. If we were to estimate the global evangelical long-term missions force at 150,000 strong—a conservative number—then an annual loss of 5.1 percent would be 7,650 adult missionaries leaving each year. Over a four-year term, this figure jumps to 30,600. The preventable percentage of that number (71%) is 21,726. The statistics are serious, the financial implications are dramatic and calculable, but the human and emotional implications are staggering and incalculable.¹⁵⁴

Concern is warranted. However, as Taylor indicates, their primary concern is for the reasons behind these premature and painful departures.¹⁵⁵ Citing results from as far back as the early 1900s, Vega’s research provides a helpful backdrop to the more recent ReMAP study. For example, in the 1900s, 53% of the missionaries surveyed left due to

¹⁵² For a review of the literature delineating this remarkable change see Stirling, 22.

¹⁵³ Taylor, “Introduction: Examining the Iceberg Called Attrition,” 13.

¹⁵⁴ Taylor, “Revisiting a Provocative Theme: The Attrition of Longer-Term Missionaries,” 71.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

health reasons. By 1975, that number had drastically reduced to 19%.¹⁵⁶ Twenty years later, in the ReMAP study, that number has dropped to 7%.¹⁵⁷ Relational struggles as a cause for attrition remained consistent across the 75 years with 10.12% as the lowest and 34% being the highest.¹⁵⁸ It was not as easy to get a concise picture of relational struggle from the ReMAP study, though. Some terms and phrases have not been consistently defined across the various studies. For example, ‘personal problems’ is such a broad category to include mental health and relational struggle, which may or may not be mutually exclusive. The same is true for relational struggle. A missionary may get along with members of their team and nationals yet butt heads with their supervisor or visa versa.

Looking for a more accurate understanding of the particular relational struggles missionaries face, researchers broke the category down into subcategories: Child(ren), problems with peers, marriage/family conflict, ageing parents, problems with local leaders, disagreements with sending agency, and inadequate supervision. So, while a far more accurate picture of attrition causes, this could also work against the researchers. Some may take the lower numbers as an indication the problem is turning around and remain blind to the needs right in front of them.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Vega, 55.

¹⁵⁷ Peter W. Brierley, “Missionary Attrition: The ReMAP Research Report,” in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 92.

¹⁵⁸ Vega, 55.

¹⁵⁹ I should not have been surprised, though disheartening, to read Taylor’s experience of one mission president who told him none of their missionaries needed pastoral care. This reflects my experience of working along side missionaries and agencies since 1988. Taylor, “Revisiting a Provocative Theme: The Attrition of Longer-Term Missionaries,” 76.

For years, as can be seen from Vega's review, relational struggle was considered the number one preventable cause for early departure. Elmer's call for concern that interpersonal relationships are of utmost importance seemed clearly warranted at the time.¹⁶⁰ Only a few years later however, Allen, a veteran missionary and agency leader, decries the idea that missionaries leave the field primarily because of poor interpersonal relationships. "Some left for natural reasons: marriage, health, retirement, and death, to name the most common ones."¹⁶¹ He goes on to agree that poor relationships do exist but are not the major cause of missionary attrition, rather, these poor relationships "indicate deeper problems," which calls for more research.¹⁶² Or, maybe it calls for more relational concern from all involved.

Stirling has identified three seminal studies that specifically examined factors contributing to on-field attrition.¹⁶³ I will briefly examine those here. First, Williams noted that one in four left for reasons such as "poor mental health, inability to adapt to field conditions, interpersonal conflicts, and marital difficulties."¹⁶⁴ The largest category of those leaving was for personal problems accounting for 28%. He also noted that 41% left for preventable reasons: personal problems, dissatisfaction with the mission, changed their mind and personal problems of their spouse.

The second seminal study in on-field attrition is McGarvey's work identifying missionary appointment and attrition for the Christian and Missionary Alliance between

¹⁶⁰ Elmer, 138. For a clear chart of the research indicating the alarming loss of missionaries due to relational struggle see Vega, 55.

¹⁶¹ Allen, "Why Do They Leave? Reflections on Attrition," 118.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶³ Stirling, 26.

¹⁶⁴ Williams, 51.

1984 and 1992. According to McGarvey, 6.3% left the field between 1984 and 1992. Of those that left, 18% were for unacceptable reasons. The top cause for departure was problems adjusting to the job (3.9%) with the second reason being conflict with mission leadership (2.8%).¹⁶⁵

Moon's study came in conjunction with the ReMAP project attempting to identify the Korean missionary attrition problem. His study revealed that 34% left for unpreventable reasons leaving a significant 66% leaving for preventable reasons. Of those leaving for preventable reasons, Moon had this to say, "At least 49.2% of the attrition cases were caused by relational problems, including intrapersonal relationship, interpersonal relationships, and relationship with God."¹⁶⁶

Referencing significant research in attrition studies conducted in New Zealand, Donovan and Myors raise an important question. Deane "lists 16 avoidable factors [for attrition] including work, personal and family problems, difficulties having to do with location, and relationships. The interesting thing is that a good many of these factors were just as real in 1966—but people didn't leave. So what lies behind this change?"¹⁶⁷ Offering a generational perspective on attrition, they point to the unique differences between the Boosters, Boomers and Busters in the missionary work force. Their theory is

¹⁶⁵ McGarvey, 42.

¹⁶⁶ Steve Sang-Cheol Moon, "Missionary Attrition in Korea: Opinions of Agency Executives," in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 138.

¹⁶⁷ Kath Donovan and Ruth Myors, "Reflections on Attrition in Career Missionaries: A Generational Perspective into the Future," in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 41.

worth noting and helpful in thinking through a proactive response to missionary attrition.¹⁶⁸

Though built on a statistically small population, Deane's research of returning missionaries in New Zealand provides crucial data in understanding the reasons for premature departure from the field.¹⁶⁹ As seen in most of the data listed so far, many have referred to interpersonal conflict as the primary reason for leaving the field. However, Deane's study indicates that family needs (14%) and work-related matters (13%) top the list. Conflict with peers (3%) was only 13th on the list. He also looked at the different age group reasons for departure. Boomers¹⁷⁰ were facing health issues as well as feeling a lack of participation in decisions made and emotional stress. Boomers¹⁷¹ were most concerned about their children's education, emotional stress, caring for ageing parents and too much work. Busters¹⁷² were more concerned with culture fatigue, physical health, loneliness, and a lack of job satisfaction.

Follow up research to Donovan & Myers' proposal, Trimble studied attrition from an organizational commitment and job satisfaction perspective. His study determined that "job satisfaction predicted affective organizational commitment, which in turn explained

¹⁶⁸ For an insightful look at the way generations think and suggestions for how leaders can speak into the world view of each generation under their care see Armour.

¹⁶⁹ Deane.

¹⁷⁰ People born before 1946.

¹⁷¹ People born between 1946 and 1964.

¹⁷² People born between 1965 and 1983 have also been referred to as Gen X.

turnover intention.”¹⁷³ His conclusion is that longevity, not age, is the more important factor to consider in commitment, satisfaction and attrition.¹⁷⁴

Stirling summarized the top reasons for preventable attrition as: “relational struggle, stress, cross-cultural shock or adjustment, family and marital problems, and mental health difficulties.”¹⁷⁵ The review above clearly indicates the same. Yet, organizational leaders are still left with a dilemma. Agencies have added more member care personnel along with on-field training. This has been a trend for some time now. Still, the number of those leaving prematurely persists.

Keeping missionaries in their field of service is important but not the overarching goal of those conducting the studies. In a careful delineation of this complex issue, Taylor reminds us that the reduction of missionary attrition is not an end in itself, nor does his study “aim to increase missionary retention at all costs.”¹⁷⁶ Some may not be suited for missionary service or they remain too long inadvertently hindering the national church. The problem is far more multifaceted than the individual as research has hoped to understand. So, McKaughan is correct in saying, “It is a problem with the system.”¹⁷⁷

Taking a completely reverse run at the issues in question, the ReMAP II sponsored by the Mission Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, highlighted

¹⁷³ Douglas E. Trimble, “Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention of Missionaries,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34, no. 4 (2006): 349.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 358.

¹⁷⁵ Stirling, 27.

¹⁷⁶ Taylor, “Forward,” xi.

¹⁷⁷ McKaughan, 20-24.

organizational practices and services that contributed to retaining mission personnel.¹⁷⁸ For both Old Sending Country Agencies (OSC) and New Sending Country Agencies (NSC), a clear sense of missionary call topped the list followed closely by maintenance of spiritual life and good relationships with co-missionaries depending upon how the data was isolated for study.¹⁷⁹

Specifically, for OSC, a “strong spiritual life was highly correlated with retention.”¹⁸⁰ Yet, while a strong spiritual life was rated highly for NSC, no real correlation was found. Regarding relationships with co-missionaries, the categories are not as cut and dried. The generational differences between OSC and NSC make it more difficult to generalize the data at this point. Those in the OSC tend to be “fiercely independent and reluctant to rely on others” while in NSC, “relational values often dictate that a prerequisite to being able to work and function with someone to achieve a goal is the establishment of a meaningful personal relationship.”¹⁸¹

Looking more closely at the data, the ReMAP II contributors attempted to isolate the key factors needing attention. Related to the missionary’s spiritual life, for Ketelaar, “Busyness and the pressure of ministry are a serious danger and threaten to weaken the strength of missionaries and their ministry.”¹⁸² Williamson, evaluating his own sending

¹⁷⁸ Valerie Lim, “ReMAP II Project Methodology,” in *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention*, ed. Rob Hay et al. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 24-25.

¹⁷⁹ Blöcher, “ReMAP I,” 14-15.

¹⁸⁰ Jaap Ketelaar, “Spiritual Life,” in *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention*, ed. Rob Hay et al. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 132.

¹⁸¹ Hay, 165.

¹⁸² Ketelaar, 134.

agency, concurs.¹⁸³ Still, one might question, aren't these issues normal to any ministry? "The harsh truth is that," according to Williamson, "in spite of all our efforts to reduce commitments and schedules, missionary life can only be slowed down so much."¹⁸⁴ This obviously begs the question, "What can be done, if anything?"

Ketelaar and Williamson highlight the necessity of discipline in maintaining one's spiritual life reflecting present thinking in leadership development literature. For example, George and Sims go so far as to say that, self-awareness is "central to becoming an authentic leader,"¹⁸⁵ Kouzes encouraged readers to "find [their] voice,"¹⁸⁶ while Rath and Conchie aid leaders in discovering and leading from their strengths.¹⁸⁷ "What transpires in a leader's mental skill-sets or personal character, affects the leader's behavior, practice, and interaction with other people and vice versa."¹⁸⁸ So, for Williamson, "A first step in self leadership is a commitment to self care or soul care."¹⁸⁹ Caring for one's soul (soul care) almost goes without saying. "It is a foundational pillar to the spiritual life, without which there is little hope for growth and success as followers

¹⁸³ Keegan Williamson, "The Soul Care of Missionary Personnel in Cam International: A Manual for Developing and Leading a Soul Care Training Conference" (Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 2009), 6.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Bill George and Peter Sims, *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*, 1st ed., The Warren Bennis Signature Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 67.

¹⁸⁶ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 47.

¹⁸⁷ Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow* (New York: Gallup Press, 2008).

¹⁸⁸ Christopher P. Meade, *Leadership Alive: Leadership Practice in the Emerging Twenty First Century Culture: A Research Based Study* (Boise, ID: LeadershipAlive.com, 2008), (kindle ed) loc. 1087.

¹⁸⁹ Williamson, 6.

and servants of God.”¹⁹⁰ Yet, the present study is showing that focusing on one’s spiritual life addresses only one facet of the problem.

Specific data regarding co-missionary relationships in ReMAP II revolved around team building, conflict management and leader development. Note Hay’s insights:

The missionary team is considered an operating norm for much of the mission world, and yet we find that the effectiveness of those teams is questionable. OSC demonstrates individualism and less regard for mutual support and conflict resolution than NSC, and effectiveness in teams is not strongly linked to retention; in NSC, effectiveness in teams is linked much more strongly.¹⁹¹

Trimble concurs, indicating in his study that retention has more to do with longevity.¹⁹² Simply said, both OSC and NSC have the same challenges and struggles in team building and functioning. Creating a context for missionaries to get along seems to be more difficult than one would initially imagine.

Member Care

Member care is the term adopted to “reflect a holistic perspective to the support of missionary personnel.”¹⁹³ It involves spiritual, emotional, relational and physical nurture provided to missionaries by those who love and support them.¹⁹⁴ According to Blöcher, member care implies a full range of services, including pastoral care, personal

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹¹ Hay, 163.

¹⁹² Trimble, “Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention of Missionaries,” 358.

¹⁹³ Cynthia B. Eriksson, “Practical Integration in Cross-Cultural Member Care,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 40, no. 2 (2012): 112.

¹⁹⁴ Dorris M. Schulz and Dale Hawley, “Past, Present and Future Trends in Missionary Care,” *Leaven* 21, no. 1 (2013): 37.

encouragement, team building spiritual refreshment, professional counseling in critical incidents and has a major impact on missionary health and longevity.¹⁹⁵

O'Donnell defines member care as, “the ongoing investment of resources by mission agencies, churches, and mission service organizations for the nurture and development of missionary personnel.”¹⁹⁶ The goal of member care is the overall nurture and development of missionary personnel and is the responsibility of everyone in missions to participate in cultivating godly character, inner strength, and necessary skills for the missionary to remain effective in their work.¹⁹⁷

In another work, O'Donnell expands his definition of Member Care to include staff development, life span, proactive intervention, development of resources, and mutual care. He writes:

Member care seeks to promote both the adjustment and development of staff. Adjustment implies being able to cope with the various challenges of missionary life. Development goes a step further to include the personal growth of missionaries through character formation, spiritual maturation, skill acquisition, and competence in cross-cultural living.¹⁹⁸

Related to life span, “Member care is a commitment to the long-term care of staff over the course of their lives.”¹⁹⁹ Member care is proactive, which actively “attempts to prevent problems and enthusiastically advocates missionary care.”²⁰⁰ Member care is also

¹⁹⁵ Blöcher, “Member Care (What It Means),” 182.

¹⁹⁶ Kelly O'Donnell, “Member Care on the Field: Taking the Longer Road,” in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William David Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 287.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Kelly O'Donnell, *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 14.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 15.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

about creative ways to allocate and develop needed resources to meet the needs of staff.²⁰¹ O'Donnell rightly considers member care to be the responsibility of everyone; it is a “mutual and inclusive process, which ultimately affects and is affected by every member of the mission.”²⁰²

Just twenty years ago, missionaries only had a few options available to them when faced with a “real problem.”²⁰³ As this study has illustrated, relational struggle, in its many forms, accounts for the majority of preventable attrition. Gladly, there has been significant effort made to address the attrition through member care. The need of missionaries to receive mental health care has grown and so agencies have begun to involve mental health care givers in their candidate selection as well as the ongoing care of their career personnel.²⁰⁴ Consequently, there is a growing body of information and research in the field of missionary need and care.

Key areas of research have included: the impact of missions on children and families,²⁰⁵ the process of cross-cultural adaptation,²⁰⁶ response to crisis,²⁰⁷ development

²⁰¹ Ibid., 16.

²⁰² Ibid., 17. While O'Donnell is speaking in an agency-centric context, I think it is appropriate to apply his thinking to a 'Christian missionary-centric' context.

²⁰³ Duhe, 18.

²⁰⁴ William F. Hunter and Marvin K. Mayers, “Psychology and Missions: Reflections on Status and Need,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 15, no. 4 (1987): 322.

²⁰⁵ Joyce M. Bowers, *Raising Resilient MK's: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers* (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 1998).; Rosalind Kalb and Penelope A. Welch, *Moving Your Family Overseas* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1992).; Janet R. Blomberg and David F. Brooks, “Fitted Pieces,” *St. Clair Shores: SHARE Education Services*, (2001).; Linda Bell, *Hidden Immigrants: Legacies of Growing up Abroad* (Cross Cultural Publications, CrossRoads Books, 1997).; Leslie A. Andrews, “Spiritual, Family, and Ministry Satisfaction among Missionaries,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 27, no. 2 (1999).; David S. Dodd, “Missionary Family Life: Resources and Strategies for Dealing with Stress” (ProQuest Information & Learning, 1998).; Chester, “Stress on Missionary Families Living in 'Other Culture' Situations.”

of teams,²⁰⁸ and re-entry.²⁰⁹ For Hall & Schram, much of this groundwork has provided a foundation for three trends they see in mental health and missions: networking, a focus on prevention, and mobilizing resources for crisis intervention.²¹⁰ Kelly and Michelle O'Donnell have added a significant body of information on the theory and practice of Member Care providing a guideline for understanding the multifaceted needs mission agencies face in caring for their personnel.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Judith M. Blohm, *Where in the World Are You Going?* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1996).; Kalb and Welch.; L. Robert Kohls, *Survival Kit for Overseas Living: For Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad* (London: Nicholas Brealey Pub, 2001).; Robin Pascoe, *A Moveable Marriage: Relocate Your Relationship without Breaking It* (Vancouver, BC: Expatriate Press, 2003).; Richard W. Brislin, *Cross-Cultural Encounters, Face-to-Face Interaction* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981).; Loss.; Carr and Schaefer, "Trauma and Traumatic Stress in Cross-Cultural Missions: How to Promote Resilience."; M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall, Keith J. Edwards, and Todd W. Hall, "The Role of Spiritual and Psychological Development in the Cross-Cultural Adjustment of Missionaries," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 9, no. 2 (2006).; Williams, "Assessment of Cross-Cultural Adjustability in Missionary Candidates: Theoretical, Biblical, and Practical Perspectives."

²⁰⁷ Irvine et al., "Traumatic Stress in a Missionary Population: Dimensions and Impact."; Carr and Schaefer, "Trauma and Traumatic Stress in Cross-Cultural Missions: How to Promote Resilience."; Bagley, "Trauma and Traumatic Stress among Missionaries."; For significant work on the spiritual and religious implications of trauma, see Schaefer et al., "Religious and Spiritual Factors and the Consequences of Trauma: A Review and Model of the Interrelationship."; Schaefer et al., "Traumatic Events and Posttraumatic Stress in Cross-Cultural Mission Assignments."

²⁰⁸ Damaris Zehner, "Building Teams, Building Walls," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2005).; Richardson.; Micah Irvin, "Intra-Team Conflict in Cross-Cultural Missionary Teams: A Study of the Role of Temperament in Team Conflict" (Masters Thesis, Crown College, 2010).; David R. Dunaetz, "Good Teams, Bad Teams: Under What Conditions Do Missionary Teams Function Effectively?," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2010).; Hay.; A.L. Cairns, "Missionary Team Formation, Building and Maintenance within Cross-Cultural, International Settings" (Master's Thesis, Bethel College, 2001).

²⁰⁹ Clyde N. Austin, *Cross-Cultural Reentry: A Book of Readings* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 1986).; Peter Jordan, *Re-Entry: Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home* (Seattle: YWAM Pub, 1992).; Robin Pascoe, *Homeward Bound: A Spouse's Guide to Repatriation* (Vancouver, BC: Expatriate Press, 2000).; Craig Storti, *The Art of Coming Home* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997).; Laura Mae Gardner, "A Practical Approach to Transitions in Missionary Living," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 15, no. 4 (1987).; Thomas R. Kimber, "The Role of Spiritual Development in the Cross-Cultural Reentry Adjustment of Missionaries," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 40, no. 3 (2012).

²¹⁰ M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall and Judith L. Schram, "Psychology and Missions: The Role of the Mental Health Professional in Member Care," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 27, no. 2 (1999): 84.

²¹¹ Kelly O'Donnell, "Going Global: A Member Care Model for Best Practice," in *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from around the World*, ed. Kelly S. O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA:

What the ReMAP I study clearly revealed is that agencies with minimal investment in member care suffer a high attrition of personnel. Conversely, the attrition rate begins to decline with the increase in care for missionaries.²¹² According to Keckler, Moriarty and Blagen, much has been written to describe member care but the field still lacks sufficient research, meaning, they see a lack of sufficient empirical data toward a comprehensive approach to missionary wellness. While there has been rapid growth in mental health provision and the practice of psychology, they feel that research lags behind the practice of care.²¹³ Schwandt agrees, “It has taken time for the mental health field to begin conducting essential research on the characteristics and needs of missionaries.”²¹⁴

Eriksson points out the growing attention Member Care is gaining through conferences such as Mental Health and Missions and the global network of member care providers established by Kelly O’Donnell.²¹⁵ Yet, with the attention, she still calls for integrative research and teaching in self and mutual care, which she sees as one of the areas lacking sufficient consideration.²¹⁶ Drawing attention to the importance of this category, Eriksson goes on to say, “Transformation in an individual, and within the

William Carey Library, 2002).; O’Donnell, *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization.*; Kelly O’Donnell, *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from around the World* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002).

²¹² See Blöcher, “Member Care (What It Means),” 183.

²¹³ Wade T. Keckler, Glen Moriarty, and Mark Blagen, “A Qualitative Study on Comprehensive Missionary Wellness,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 27, no. 3 (2008): 212.

²¹⁴ Joanne R. Schwandt and Glendon Moriarty, “What Have the Past 25 Years of Member Care Research Taught Us? An Overview of Missionary Mental Health and Member Care Services,” *Missiology* 36, no. 3 (2008): 323.

²¹⁵ Eriksson, “Practical Integration in Cross-Cultural Member Care,” 113.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 114. Eriksson outlines O’Donnell’s tiered model of member care to discuss areas needing more attention. I mention only the category specific to the present study.

context of team relationships, can create a powerful witness to Christ's work. Yet, the converse is also true. Betrayal and relational conflict in religious teams or groups may create devastating disruption and questioning for the mission worker."²¹⁷ Unfortunately, there is little empirical investigation into relational spiritual conflict in missions.²¹⁸

Blöcher, one of the main researchers from the ReMAP project, shows that Old Sending Country Agencies (OSC) invest 7% of their total time in member care but only 4.3% of their total budget to member care. New Sending Country Agencies (NSC) allocate 14.4% of their time to member care and only 9.8% of their budget to it.²¹⁹ More important to note is that the majority of the member care resources are dedicated to curative and "crisis intervention (69% in OSC and 79% in NSC), whereas only 31% in OSC and 21% in NSC are allocated to prevention, i.e. strengthening the missionary's personality and spiritual life."²²⁰ Obviously, "member care is still considered primarily a reactive emergency service for wounded missionaries and prevention remains underdeveloped."²²¹

What the ReMAP II study confirmed is the importance of caring for mission personnel showing that both reactive crisis and preventive intervention are important.²²² This study has also discovered that, "preventable attrition is reduced particularly by

²¹⁷ Ibid., 115.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ See Blöcher, "Member Care (What It Means)," 183.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., 181.

preventive member care.”²²³ Blöcher goes on to state the importance of missionary teams providing mutual support, effective pastoral care on the field, and resolving interpersonal conflict.²²⁴ A proactive, preventive and mutual approach to missionary care is imperative. Thus, the purpose for this dissertation is to promote missionary mutual care through spiritual community.

Categories

O’Donnell envisions a model of member care that has become a standard for most writing in the field. Consisting of five permeable spheres that flow into and influence each other, the core of this model are two foundational spheres he calls, Master Care and self/mutual care.²²⁵ The next concentric sphere is called, Sender Care, which is then surrounded by two more outer spheres of Specialist Care and Network Care.²²⁶ Sadly, ‘mutual care’ enjoys the least amount of research to date.²²⁷

Since member care implies an ongoing commitment of resources by agencies in the development of their personnel, agencies play a “key role in helping their people to

²²³ Ibid., 186.

²²⁴ Ibid., 187.

²²⁵ O’Donnell, “Going Global: A Member Care Model for Best Practice,” 15.

²²⁶ Ibid., 16.

²²⁷ See Williams. A quick perusal of the table of contents illustrates my point. The bulk is written on team development (see Part Three in O’Donnell, *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization*. and Agency Best Practices (Part Four of the same). Good work is also being done to increase Sending Church involvement. See Stirling, 63-68.

prepare for, reduce, and handle stress.”²²⁸ Therefore, O’Donnell suggests four basic approaches to member care that agencies can provide:

1. **Prevention.** Prevention seeks to decrease the incidence of potential stressors. The goal is to eliminate problems before they arise. For example, making sure of a good fit between the person and his or her field assignment is likely to decrease work frustrations.
2. **Development.** Development helps missionaries to acquire and improve certain essential skills so they can better cope with the demands of missionary life. For instance, training in conflict resolution will help team members to work through the inevitable tensions that arise from working together. Or, pre-field training in language-learning techniques will help them more readily to master the new language and thus reduce their stress.
3. **Support.** Support means direct involvement with people undergoing stress. One example is the group discussion we had with our Amsterdam team. They talked about their straggles and some of their strategies for managing stress. This mutual care giving helped them to affirm each other and to know that they were not alone.
4. **Restoration.** Restoration reduces the effects of stress and consequent problems. This would mean, for example, sending a crisis intervention team to places where missionaries need immediate care. The team may not be able to undo damage already done, but it could limit the effects of any remaining problems.²²⁹

Mutual Care

All four approaches to member care that O’Donnell mentions above are addressed through Mutual Care.²³⁰ “Member care is a multifaceted, team effort, requiring the participation of everyone. Nonetheless, it is my belief that the backbone of any effective member care program is found in the ongoing mutual care that occurs among mission

²²⁸ O’Donnell and O’Donnell, “Stress Can Be Managed,” 42.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ For a fairly comprehensive discussion and illustrations of how mutual care is reflected in Prevention, Development, Support, and Restoration, see Williams.

staff.”²³¹ Schulz, the director of member care for Missions Resource Network, concurs saying:

I have a personal belief about mutual care. I believe that teams who learn to be community to each other, who become transparent and confessional before leaving for the field, will have less difficulty with conflict and stress on the field. I believe this kind of community can only happen when teams learn not just to study God’s word together, but learn how to listen to hear God’s word together and who pray openly and transparently with each other. Those teams who go to the field who have learned to be community to each other place that same DNA into the church plant.²³²

When a missionary struggles to the point of burnout and opting out, the missionary community tends to view the fallout as the missionary’s failure alone.²³³ Williams aptly suggests that we are actually looking at a failure of the body of Christ on the field.²³⁴ For Duhe, the problem is clear: “Everyone around the one needing help is so busy in his or her own particular ministry that few will take time out from their busy schedule to talk to him for an extended period of time.”²³⁵ “Good Member Care,” he goes on to say, “is necessary to prevent missionary disillusionment, burn-out, and eventual drop-out. Missionaries need to provide mutual support and help for themselves. Practically speaking, the needed level of support and help is not going to come from outside sources, so it must come from within their own community of colleagues.”²³⁶

²³¹ Ibid., 47.

²³² Dorris Schulz, “Why Do Missionary Care?,” (Bedford, TX: Missions Resources Network, 2012), 13, note 39. Schulz’ thinking is equally reflected in Richardson’s delineation of team dynamics in Richardson, 168.

²³³ Williams, 46.

²³⁴ Ibid. See also Harry G. Coiner, “Living toward One Another with the Word of God,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 36, no. 9 (1965): 615-616.

²³⁵ Duhe, 17.

²³⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

Busyness aside, many missionaries I meet are reluctant not only to get caught in another's struggle, but they also believe themselves lacking the necessary training to provide adequate counsel. Tidwell's point is well taken here. What is needed is a relational attitude that promotes "self-care and hardiness and encourages fellow missionaries to rely on God and develop strength within their close relationships."²³⁷

Scheurman's work on using email as a tool for member care also lends weight to the need for mutual care. "In exploring the respondents' perceived sources of member care, it became clear that they see their care coming from those in closest proximity to them."²³⁸ Family members ranked highest at 28.4% followed by team leadership at 12.5%, which came in slightly higher than agency member care (12.2%) and then team members (11.4%).²³⁹ When asked which source was actually most helpful, "the results were quite similar to what they had previously chosen as their perceived primary source of care."²⁴⁰ Family members once again ranked highest at 32.2% while team members and team leader scored 14.8% and 11.1% respectively.²⁴¹

Blöcher's report equally reinforces the need for mutuality of care.²⁴² With more mission resources going toward crisis than prevention, it seems reasonable for agencies to

²³⁷ Charlie Faye Tidwell, "Training Care Facilitators to Nurture Relationships among Missionaries" (ProQuest Information & Learning, 2005), 3. NOTE: Duhe, along with Tidwell, provides a helpful training model in how to nurture relationships and provide mutual care. See Duhe.

²³⁸ Edward A. Scheurman, "E-Care: Using E-Mail as a Tool for Effective Member Care" (Biola University, 2007), 124.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Blöcher, "Member Care (What It Means)," 183.

begin cultivating mutual care resources and attitudes to help offset the disparity.²⁴³ While missionaries do seek help for both crisis and preventive care, studies indicate they are reluctant to seek help within the formal structure of their mission agency.²⁴⁴ Further study is required to determine the nature of this reluctance; though one could speculate from existing studies that avoiding conflict²⁴⁵ and passive approaches to handling stress²⁴⁶ may influence the missionary's decision in many situations. Still, as mentioned above, the ReMAP II study confirmed the importance of mutual support among missionaries coupled with effective pastoral care on the field.²⁴⁷ On a practical note, Jones asks, "Considering the time, energy, money, personnel, and prayer invested in new missionaries before they go to the field, should we not invest just as much of each in helping them through their problems after they reach the field?"²⁴⁸

O'Donnell reminds us of the exhortation to encourage one another daily lest we be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.²⁴⁹ "Such mutual care is the essence and the medium

²⁴³ 31% in OSC and 21% in NSC of mission resources are allocated to prevention over against 69% in OSC and 79% in NSC of the resources going toward crisis intervention.

²⁴⁴ Christopher H. Rosik, "Mission-Affiliated Versus Non-Affiliated Counselors: A Brief Research Report on Missionary Preferences with Implications for Member Care," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 12, no. 2 (1993): 159. If Member Care is primarily viewed as a crisis service for the wounded, it is no wonder missionaries are reluctant to seek help for anything they deem less important than a crisis. Also inherent in the reluctance is the perception of being in a bad way that counseling is even required in the first place.

²⁴⁵ Gish, "Sources of Missionary Stress."

²⁴⁶ Taylor and Malony, "Preferred Means of Hostility Expression among Missionaries: An Exploratory Study."

²⁴⁷ Blöcher, "Member Care (What It Means)," 187.

²⁴⁸ Marge Jones, "First-Year Counseling: A Key Ingredient to Success," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (1993): 197.

²⁴⁹ Heb. 3:13.

of member care,”²⁵⁰ he says. “Member Care is a mutual and inclusive process which ultimately affects and is affected by every member of the mission.”²⁵¹ We see this in Barnett’s study where psychological and spiritual vulnerabilities are mutually related.²⁵² Struggle in one area affects the other and without adequate help, sets the missionary up for difficulty adjusting to overseas living and problems in their ministry.²⁵³ Missionaries must heed Paul’s words to the Corinthian believers not to allow division in the body, but rather, have mutual concern for one another. In this way, if one member suffers, everyone suffers with it and if a member is honored, all rejoice.²⁵⁴

Mutual care is a form of soul care or spiritual befriending.²⁵⁵ Benner describes it:

The English phrase, “care of souls,” has its origins in the Latin “cura animarum.” While “cura” is most commonly translated as care, it actually contains the idea of both care and cure. “Care” refers to actions, which are designed to support the well-being of something or someone. “Cure” refers to actions, which are designed to restore well-being, which has been lost. The Christian church has historically embraced both meanings of “cura” and has understood soul care to involve nurture and support as well as healing and restoration.²⁵⁶

He also points out the six characteristics of soul care pertinent to this discussion.

First, Christian soul care is others-centered. It also happens through dialogue within the context of relationship. Third, This dialogue addresses the whole person not just

²⁵⁰ O'Donnell, *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization*, 17.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Keri L. Barnett et al., “Psychological and Spiritual Predictors of Domains of Functioning and Effectiveness of Short-Term Missionaries,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 33, no. 1 (2005): 37.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ 1 Cor. 12:25-26.

²⁵⁵ Stirling, 59.

²⁵⁶ David G. Benner, “Care of Souls: Nurture, Support, Healing, Restoration,” *Christian Counseling Today* 7, no. 24 (1999): 9.

psychological or spiritual matters. Christian soul care also provides moral inquiry into the heart. Fifth, Christian soul care happens within community, and finally, it is too important for only counselors to provide.²⁵⁷

Summarizing, Benner adds, “The core Christian ministry is soul care.”²⁵⁸ Whether counselor, fellow church planting missionary, administrator, schoolteacher, leadership trainer, spouse, et al., the primary task of each is the embodiment of the Gospel in the way they love one another.²⁵⁹ Andrews illustrates this concept in her research where a clear correlation between practicing spiritual disciplines, and close supportive relationships contribute significantly to a sense of spiritual satisfaction and overall well-being, which is crucial for the missionary to fulfill their vocational commitment.²⁶⁰ If spiritual formation is a “process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ *for the sake of others*,”²⁶¹ as Mulholland defines it, then mutuality of care seems to be foundational to the missionary life and calling. Hence, the missionary community of faith, with its constellation of supporting relationships, must become the locus of spiritual formation for missionaries.²⁶² This level of influence on the well-being of the missionary is equally illustrated in Bergaas’ findings where those scoring higher in spiritual maturity

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 10-11.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 11.

²⁵⁹ Jn. 13:34; 14:21-23; Lev. 19:18.

²⁶⁰ Andrews, “Spiritual, Family, and Ministry Satisfaction among Missionaries,” 107.

²⁶¹ Emphasis mine. M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 12.

²⁶² Andrews, “Spiritual, Family, and Ministry Satisfaction among Missionaries,” 108.

report lower levels of stress and symptoms of burnout.²⁶³ Unfortunately, as Williamson aptly explains, “some [missionaries] see the discipline of soul care [whether personal or interpersonal] as a distraction to their call to serve.”²⁶⁴

It is imperative that mission agencies and missionaries alike re-examine the impetus for their cross-cultural endeavors, which must be firmly rooted in the *missio Dei*. Certainly, significant research has gone into the unique struggles facing cross-cultural Christian workers today and the fallout inherent in that life. Yet, for the message that missionaries bear to have any real impact, it must accompany a lifestyle reflective of the relational God they claim to serve. Thus, mutuality in supportive relationships not only contribute to the missionary’s sense of well-being, it also becomes the clear proof of the message given, which is what I will examine in the next chapter.

²⁶³ Unndis Bergaas, “The Relationship of Spirituality to Burnout and Coping among Norwegian Missionaries” (ProQuest Information & Learning, 2003).

²⁶⁴ Williamson, 4.

CHAPTER 3

Biblical and Theological Considerations

Whether missionaries opt-out, brown-out, or work-it-out, mutual care among missionaries as soul care is essential to their longevity. Additionally, mutual care is an expression of one's life in Christ. Everyone is made in the image of a relational God, which implies that the "mission of the church is not only to take a message to a people; it is to live a message among them so as to make God visible again."¹ Wesley and Fletcher, for example, believed that "if the nations were going to be impacted by the Gospel, it would be because they saw it lived out and could observe the *glory* of God among Christian people."² This means that involvement in the *missio Dei* is nothing short of continuing the "embodiment of God in Christ among the people of the world."³

The purpose of this chapter is to examine a biblical and theological framework from which to develop a model of mutual 'soul care' among missionaries through spiritual community. As the body of Christ, each individual part influences growth of the whole.⁴ This body, the church, is a "social reality that continually engages in the practices that cultivate a people of truth, peace, wholeness, and holiness. The forming of Christian community is therefore not an option but the very lifestyle and vocation of the church,"⁵

¹ Daugherty, "Missio Dei: The Trinity and Christian Missions," 165.

² Matt Friedman, "A Macarian-Wesleyan Theology of Mission," *The Asbury Journal* 67, no. 1 (2012): 102.

³ Daugherty, "Missio Dei: The Trinity and Christian Missions," 165.

⁴ Eph. 4:16.

⁵ Guder, 153.

which missionaries represent. I will draw some implications of love as a backdrop to examining Trinity as the impetus for mutual soul care through spiritual community.

Biblical Foundations

Love Encapsulates

One might wonder what his or her purpose is in life and even wonder, “What does it all mean?” A teacher of Jewish law decided to ask Jesus just such a question. “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?” the expert asked.⁶ Quoting from Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5, Jesus’ response was simple and direct. “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”⁷ We find similar occasions in Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:25-28. In Mark’s account, the law professor appears less antagonistic and even commends Jesus for his answer saying: “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”⁸ In Luke’s account, the expert asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. On this occasion, Jesus puts the question back on the expert, inviting his personal interpretation. The man

⁶ Mt. 22:36.

⁷ Mt. 22:37-40.

⁸ Mk. 12:32b-33.

answers, ‘love God and love others.’⁹ Again, putting the question back on the expert, Jesus replies, “You are correct, do this and you will live.”¹⁰ Everything in life finds its fulfillment in love.

Love Validates

In what has been called, the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus gives his disciples a new command.¹¹ Recalling previous encounters with experts in the law where Jesus refers to Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, one might wonder why Jesus would call this command, new.¹² “‘New’ (*kainen*) actually implies freshness, or the opposite of ‘outworn’ rather than simply ‘recent’ or ‘different.’”¹³ So, while the content may not have been different from something they already knew, what was new or different was Jesus’ qualifying statement: “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”¹⁴

Jesus’ life now becomes the defining characteristic of loving—the fulfillment (or embodiment) of the law. According to Mullens, “Most definitions of love are self-

⁹ Paraphrase mine. Lk. 10:27. He answered: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

¹⁰ Paraphrase mine. Lk. 10:28.

¹¹ Jn. 13:34-35.

¹² Most scholars understand the Luke 10:25-28 account as separate from the ones mentioned in Matthew and Mark.

¹³ Merrill C. Tenney, “John,” in *Expositor's Bible Commentary. Accordance electronic ed.*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

¹⁴ Jn. 13:34b.

referenced. The love Jesus calls for is other-referenced or, rather, God-referenced.”¹⁵

More specific to the way Jesus loved, he had just given them an illustration a few moments before. Jesus was dining with his closest friends. Though they did not know it at the time, one was about to betray Jesus and the others would abandon him in fear. Rather than brace himself for the relational pain, holding himself aloof, “He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”¹⁶ “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. *By this all men will know that you are my disciples*, if you love one another.”¹⁷ Love validates one’s discipleship.

Love Reveals

Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.¹⁸

¹⁵ David Mullens, “Missional Spirituality: Invitation to Listen” (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2011), 20. I have maintained Mullen’s terms in quoting him but prefer to use self-centered or others-centered in other parts of this study.

¹⁶ Jn. 13:4-5.

¹⁷ Jn. 13:34-35. Emphasis mine.

¹⁸ 1 Jn. 4:7-12.

Love reveals two things according to John. First, it reveals God. So, not only does love come from God, God is love. Second, love reveals one's connection with God. Those who love have been born of God and know him. The opposite is equally true. Those who do not love do not know God.

Herein lies the crux of this theological framework. God loved the world by sending his only begotten Son to redeem the world back to himself.¹⁹ In Jesus' high priestly prayer, we discover an even more central reason Jesus was sent to earth. He says:

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me *because you loved me before the creation of the world*. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known *in order that the love you have for me may be in them* and that I myself may be in them.²⁰

Jesus' purpose in going out from the Father was to share the Father's love for the Son with humankind.²¹ God's very nature is about going and sharing his own fullness.²²

Thus with the Orthodox tradition, we can say, "the Holy Trinity is the structure of supreme love," which is "the source of all."²³ Equally, we understand that the "love of the holy Trinity" is the source of interpersonal relationships because humans are made in

¹⁹ Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 3:16, 4:8-10.

²⁰ Jn. 17:24-26. See also Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), Kindle ed. loc. 482-566.

²¹ Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 43.

²² *Ibid.*, 47.

²³ Costel Ciulinaru, "The Basis of Love in Orthodox Christianity," *Scientific Journal of Humanistic Studies* 3, no. 4 (2011): 197.

God's image and are called into mutual relationship within the Godhead.²⁴ Note Jesus' prayer:

I pray...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. *May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*²⁵

Theological Framework

The Trinity is “the vibrant heart of Christian faith and the very life of the church.”²⁶ Sadly, too few appreciate this truth. It is my intent in this section to show that the Trinity is more than a doctrinal concept and a proper understanding of Trinity will form us as much as it informs us. Unfortunately, “in the Western church, the Trinity has been a theological proposition, not a foundation of discipleship”²⁷ or, I might add, Christian formation. The dilemma here is the tendency to separate the proposition from the practice and in doing so, nearly eliminating the Trinity from the discussion of God.²⁸

Note Karl Rahner's strong opinion:

The Trinity occupies a rather isolated position in the total dogmatic system. To put it crassly...when the treatise is concluded, its subject is never brought up again... It is as though this mystery has been revealed for its own sake, and that even after it has been made known to us, it remains, as a reality, locked up within

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Jn. 17:20-23. Emphasis mine.

²⁶ J.A. Breon, “Christian Doctrine as a Means of Christian Spiritual Formation” (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2008), 28.

²⁷ Jeffrey D. Imbach, *The River Within: Loving God, Living Passionately* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 66.

²⁸ Carl E. Braaten, “The Triune God: The Source and Model of Christian Unity and Mission,” *Missiology* 18, no. 4 (1990): 417.

itself. We can make statements about it, but as a reality it has nothing to do with us at all.²⁹

A quick survey of a Bible Dictionary³⁰ and Bible Encyclopedia,³¹ as well as a famous systematic theologian,³² bears witness to Rahner's lament. It seems that once the mystery of One God, yet three, is described, not much else need be said.

The recovery of Trinitarian theology in recent decades is not merely a "revival of interest in this part of Christian doctrine. It is, rather, a new conception of theology that makes the Trinity into the key to the whole of Christian theology and requires every topic of theology to be restructured in Trinitarian terms."³³ For many, the concern has been over "an inadequate view of the God whom we believe and confess."³⁴ Probably more influential in the recovery of Trinitarian theology, aside from addressing the church's connection with the world and the dichotomy between church and mission, is the move away from individualism toward a sense of belonging.³⁵ This revival of Trinitarian theology "has sparked a rethinking of the idea of person," which has more to do with "relationality than with substantiality," standing closer to "the idea of communion or

²⁹ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 71. quoted in Braaten, "The Triune God: The Source and Model of Christian Unity and Mission," 417.

³⁰ *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Trinity."

³¹ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Trinity."

³² Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 276-280.

³³ Marcel Sarot, "Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of the Christian Community," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12, no. 1 (2010): 37.

³⁴ Gary M. Simpson, "No Trinity, No Mission: The Apostolic Difference of Revisioning the Trinity," *Word & World* 18, no. 3 (1998): 264.

³⁵ I examine the literature of *missio Dei* and the missional church in chapter 2.

community than to the conception of the individual in isolation or abstracted from communal embeddedness.”³⁶ Note Scirghi’s opening paragraph:

In a speech to the World Economic Forum, British Prime Minister Tony Blair declared: “The opening of the 21st century has seen a move away from a very narrow, perhaps selfish individualism towards the idea of belonging, of community, of a self-interest that is mutual.” His words, coming unexpected from this secular source, appear to echo those of liberation theologian Leonardo Boff who observes within contemporary society a strong desire for *belonging*, that is, a cry for greater democracy aimed at forming a more participatory and family-spirited society. Moreover, he claims that this desire is in tune with a theology of the Trinity: the three divine persons in communion is a transcendent model of the human striving for a society that encourages participation and welcomes diversity.³⁷

Foundations of the Triune God

Christian theology declares that God is One, revealed in the flesh as Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father, now present to the church by the Holy Spirit.³⁸ While some may see God’s revelation as successive manifestations not equally bound up in one God, an error of *modalism*, others have argued for the distinctiveness of God in three persons though not all equally divine, an error of *subordinationism*. A third error emerges when affirming the threeness of God without affirming the oneness of God (*tri-theism*).³⁹ Note Ware’s succinct summary:

³⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 4.

³⁷ Thomas J. Scirghi, “The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society,” *Ecumenical Review* 54, no. 3 (2002): 333. Tony Blair quote can be located in *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Feb. 2000. For Boff, see Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), xiii.

³⁸ Chan, 41. See Deut. 6:4-5; Jn. 1:1; Rms. 9:5; Jn. 14:15-17.

³⁹ Darrell W. Johnson, *Experiencing the Trinity* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent University, 2002), 42-44.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each possesses the divine nature *equally*, so as to avoid Arianism; *eternally*, so as to avoid thinking of God's nature as created; *simultaneously*, so as to avoid modalism; and *fully*, so as to avoid any tripartite understanding of the Trinity (e.g., like a pie divided into three equal pieces). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not each one-third God, but each is fully God, equally God, and this is true eternally and simultaneously.⁴⁰

Probably the most helpful understanding of Trinity comes from the Cappadocians who sought to wrestle with the mystery of One God in three Persons.⁴¹ Coining the term *perichoresis*, the Cappadocians describe the movement, reciprocity, interpenetration or permeation without confusion of God to describe the dynamic interchange within the Godhead. The visual image is of a dance where any action of one involves the action of the other two. *Perichoresis*, as understood by the Cappadocian fathers, helps us understand who each member is in relation to the other and still protects the Oneness of God.

Grenz summarizes the contents of a Trinitarian understanding of God: God is one; God is three; God is a diversity; God is a unity.⁴² Christians are not polytheists. We worship one God. Yet, this one God is eternally three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Within the Trinity is diversity. “The Father, Son and, Spirit are eternally different from each other. And the three carry out different tasks in the one divine program for

⁴⁰ Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 41.

⁴¹ See Chan, 49.; Johnson, 45-47.; Scirghi, “The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society,” 334. and Mark J. Cartledge, “Trinitarian Theology and Spirituality: An Empirical Study of Charismatic Christians,” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 17, no. 1 (2004): 78.

⁴² Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 44.

creation as well.”⁴³ “Finally, the doctrine of the Trinity affirms that the three Trinitarian persons comprise a unity.”⁴⁴

The complexity of God’s “Oneness is revealed in three, yet eternally profound words: God is love.”⁴⁵ Often taken to describe God’s relational attention to man, this defining phrase provides a glimpse of who he is before time began. God is love prior to creation. More profoundly, “the most foundational thing in God is not some abstract quality, but the fact that he is Father.”⁴⁶ Consider, again, 1 John 4:7-8: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

God’s presence profoundly affects people. Those who know God and are born of God, love: because God is love. It is impossible to know him without becoming loving. According to Reeves, this is what it means to be Father.⁴⁷ John, referring to God as Father, writes, “God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”⁴⁸ “The God who is love is the Father who sends his Son. To be the Father, then, means to

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁵ Enoch Wan and Kevin P. Penman, “The Trinity: A Model for Partnership in Christian Missions,” *Global Missiology* 3, no. 7 (2010): 2.

⁴⁶ Reeves, 22.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁸ 1 Jn. 4:8b-10.

love, to give out life, to beget the Son. Before anything else, for all eternity, this God was loving, giving life to and delighting in his Son.”⁴⁹

God did not create out of loneliness or out of a need to love—as if he needed to express his love. He did not create in order to be who he is. Were that the case, God would need us to complete and define him, which is heresy.⁵⁰ The Father loved the Son before creation.⁵¹ The Son is “before all things”⁵² and through whom “all things were created.”⁵³ The author of Hebrews calls him the exact representation of God’s being, the radiance of his glory. The Son is “Lord” and “God,” the One who “laid the foundations of the earth.”⁵⁴ “The Father, then, is the Father of the eternal Son, and he finds his very identity, his Fatherhood, in loving and giving out of his life and being to the Son.”⁵⁵

So, God is not a solitary Being, alone and infinite. “He is communion.”⁵⁶ As Scirghi puts it, “The Trinity depicts a relationship of mutual self-giving: the Father gives himself completely to the Son and the Son gives himself completely to the Father. The Spirit proceeding from both is the bond of love between them: God is the lover, the beloved, and the love between them. Thus God is not a person, that is, one entity of the

⁴⁹ Reeves, 25.

⁵⁰ For a helpful distinction made on this point, see Daugherty, “Missio Dei: The Trinity and Christian Missions,” 162.

⁵¹ Jn. 17:24.

⁵² Col. 1:17.

⁵³ Col. 1:16.

⁵⁴ Heb. 1:3-14.

⁵⁵ Reeves, 26.

⁵⁶ John D. Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution” http://home.comcast.net/~t.r.valentine/orthodoxy/filioque/zizioulas_cappadocians.html (accessed November 10, 2011). See also Reeves, 17-37.

relationship, but the fullness of relatedness.”⁵⁷ Summarizing, Johnson put it this way: “The deepest mystery of his being God is an intimate relationship, a fellowship, a community of love.”⁵⁸ So, love describes God’s nature throughout eternity and characterizes the manner in which he responds to his creation. For, at the heart of the Christian message is the good news that the Triune God desires to bring us into fellowship with himself, with each other, and with all creation.⁵⁹

Implications of Trinitarian Theology

Trinitarian theology clearly declares God’s relationality expressed through the incarnation and God’s nature. The implications are many, but as Kruger summarizes, they boil down to three things:

1. The Trinity is a great dance of life shared by the Father, Son and Spirit.
2. The incarnation is an act of the Father, Son and Spirit reaching down to extend this great dance of life to us.
3. Our humanity is the theatre in which the great dance is played out through the Spirit.⁶⁰

Reflective of Kruger’s summation, Chan underscores three implications of Trinitarian theology that provide the categories from which I will suggest a model of spiritual community.⁶¹ First, God is a personal being making it possible for man not only

⁵⁷ Scirghi, “The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society,” 336.

⁵⁸ Johnson, 51.

⁵⁹ Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, 12.

⁶⁰ C. Baxter Kruger, *The Great Dance* (Jackson, MS: Perichoresis Press, 2000), Kindle ed. loc. 79-100.

⁶¹ Chan, 52-55.

to live with him in eternity but also to participate in his life. A believer's "salvation is essentially union with God."⁶² "The living God who speaks of himself as *us*, draws near to us in such a way as to draw us near to the *us* within the circle of the *us*."⁶³ This is Paul's point on Mars Hill in Acts 17:27-30; "...he is not far from each one of us. 'For *in him* we live and move and have our being.'"⁶⁴ Thus, life is found *in* God.⁶⁵

Within the Trinity there is a unity which "presupposes and gives ultimate value to relationship, reciprocity, and mutuality among members in a loving communion of equals."⁶⁶ Therefore, secondly, the "spiritual life is essentially relational without ceasing to be particular. Far from being a model, *perichoresis* is the effective means by which the life of particularity-in-relationality can be realized."⁶⁷ This *perichoretic* dance of life and love holds the union and uniqueness of the Godhead in perfect tension. As image bearers who are 'in him' the same paradox exists for humanity. "The individual and community are inter-related."⁶⁸ Further implications exist here as one ponders that as a church, we are the body of Christ. One cannot only speak of the body as individual parts, but rather as a whole made up of individual parts that cannot exist outside of their relationship to the other parts. Consequently, "when the church [the body of Christ] is incorporated into Christ, it does not merely echo the Trinitarian relationship, but is given to participate in

⁶² Ibid., 52.

⁶³ Johnson, 74. See also Jn. 17: 24-26.

⁶⁴ Emphasis mine.

⁶⁵ Jn. 1:4, 6:40, 15:5; Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:19.

⁶⁶ Braaten, "The Triune God: The Source and Model of Christian Unity and Mission," 425.

⁶⁷ Chan, 53.

⁶⁸ Scirghi, "The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society," 341.

them.”⁶⁹ It is possible then, to see Christian formation as synergistic requiring a worshipping *community* made up of *individuals* mutually pursuing more of what it means to live ‘in him’.

Chan’s third implication is that, “life and work are inseparable.”⁷⁰ By work, Chan means, alongside both Western and Eastern traditions, “the mission of the church.”⁷¹ It is inconceivable to think of being the body of Christ one day and not the next or to even take on the stance of “whether or not I feel like it.” Mission is not separate from ‘being’, if you will. Christians now live “hidden with Christ in God.”⁷² And, whether eating or drinking or whatever one does, it is all for the glory of God.⁷³ Nowhere in scripture is there a distinction between the life one lives in Christ and the work done for him. This life mission of the church is best summed up in the word love. Where God loves the world,⁷⁴ believers too, taking on his life, love the world.⁷⁵ This is the Gospel—a Christian’s life mission: “The God who is love draws near to *me*, a sinful, mere mortal, to

⁶⁹ Sarot, “Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of the Christian Community,” 44.

⁷⁰ Chan, 54.

⁷¹ I think this is a better way of envisioning *missio Dei* and our participation in it. For a clear articulation of the concerns around the idea of *missio Dei*, see Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*. and Richebächer, “Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?”

⁷² Col. 3:3.

⁷³ See 1 Cor. 10:31.

⁷⁴ Jn. 3:16.

⁷⁵ I envision something more dynamic than static here. While we can say that we love, we also discover how poorly we do so in our broken relationships and excursions into sin. The point here is simply that life and ministry are bound up completely in the One who is love, drawing the world to join in the dance.

draw *me* near to himself, in order to draw *me* within the circle of Lover, Beloved and Love itself. I become a co-lover with God. It is the very reason for [our] existence.”⁷⁶

In sum, our life in God is reflected in three clear categories: Union, Communion, and Mission. A truly Trinitarian missionary spirituality will focus on (1) our personal relationship with God (*Theosis*), (2) our relationship with other believers (*Henosis*), and (3) the way we involve ourselves in God’s mission (*Kenosis*).⁷⁷ I will examine each briefly after looking at the implications of Trinitarian theology for spiritual formation.

Implications for Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation in Protestantism is often framed in terms of Christian education or missiology.⁷⁸ In the Catholic and Eastern traditions, spiritual formation is a soteriological concern.⁷⁹ Formation is about entering into partnership with God,⁸⁰ of “becoming fellow workers with him for the sake of bringing the divine economy to its ultimate fulfillment.”⁸¹ Trinitarian theology brings a necessary corrective to the Western

⁷⁶ Johnson, 63.

⁷⁷ Writing specifically for cross-cultural mission workers, Teague organizes his thoughts under these three categories, without initially tying his thinking to Trinitarian theology. He does pick up the importance of Trinity in chapter 10 while addressing the need for community. David Teague, *Godly Servants: Discipleship and Spiritual Formation for Missionaries* (Mission Imprints, 2012).

⁷⁸ Jane Rogers Vann, “Liturgical Spiritual Formation across the Generations,” *Liturgy* 24, no. 3 (2009): 55.

⁷⁹ By soteriology, Catholics and eastern Orthodox mean justification, sanctification and glorification as a whole. We see the influence of Orthodoxy and Catholicism in the present day discussion of *missio Dei* and the missional church movement, which emphasizes God’s activity and a believer’s participation in it.

⁸⁰ Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” 28.

⁸¹ Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 36.

tradition of limiting God's action through Jesus' incarnation to "law and order, crime and punishment, blind and cold justice."⁸² Stated differently, the Protestant distinction between justification and sanctification, for example, "might cause one to omit or underemphasize the direct connection between the holiness or righteousness a believer gains through sanctification and the person of Christ."⁸³

The gospel in the Western model begins with the statement that God is holy (holy in the legal sense). The human race fell into sin and is liable to punishment. Jesus Christ, against this backdrop, comes to satisfy the holiness and justice of God. On the cross, the guilt of the human race is placed upon Jesus Christ, and God's punishment for sin is poured out upon him. God's justice is satisfied and we are forgiven—legally clean.⁸⁴

In Kruger's mind, four things went terribly wrong with the Western gospel:

1. The overall picture of the astonishing vision of the Father, Son and Spirit reaching out to share their life and glory with mankind has been lost.
2. The cross replaces Jesus himself as the point of eternal significance.
3. Justification is over-emphasized to the point of replacing adoption as the heart of the Christian message.
4. With the over-emphasis on justification and virtual silence on our adoption, we are left in the dark about our true identity. The union that Jesus forged between the Trinity and humanity is eclipsed.⁸⁵

Union with Christ results in Justification. "The reason God imputes or credits the righteousness of Christ to us is that we have become united to Christ who is the righteous one. Since we are in him, his righteousness is counted as our righteousness."⁸⁶ Edwards offers a more popular version of what happens as a result of our union with Christ

⁸² Kruger, Kindle ed. loc. 360.

⁸³ Fairbairn, Kindle ed. loc. 3521.

⁸⁴ Kruger, Kindle ed. loc. 381.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Kindle ed. loc. 380-402.

⁸⁶ Fairbairn, Kindle ed. loc. 3549. See also Rms. 5:17, 8:10, 10:4; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:21; Phil. 1:11, 3:9.

through God's New Covenant with mankind.⁸⁷ Here is a brief summary of his contribution:

1. Believers are given a new purity. Through one's union with Christ (Justification), they are forgiven the penalty of sin,⁸⁸ cleansed of guilt,⁸⁹ and are now clothed in the righteousness of Christ.⁹⁰
2. Believers are given a new identity.⁹¹ In other words, they are no longer who they used to be.
3. Believers are given a new disposition. God's righteous standards are now placed in the heart of every believer.⁹²
4. Believers are given a new power. In other words, they are not left to their own resources. God's Spirit now indwells every believer.⁹³

In Christ believers are righteous, justified through union with him. Believers also become more of who they already are by remaining in him and, by doing so, begin to reflect his character more and more.⁹⁴ One's ability to live a godly life is solely based upon the indwelling righteousness of Christ through the movement of his Holy Spirit who moves within believers to actually want what God wants.⁹⁵

Thus, "Christian spirituality...cannot be understood apart from the Trinity."⁹⁶

More importantly, since the Trinity is revealed in the church (Christ's body), where

⁸⁷ Dwight Edwards, *Revolution Within: A Fresh Look at Supernatural Living* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001).

⁸⁸ Col. 2:13-14.

⁸⁹ Heb. 10:22.

⁹⁰ Is. 61:10.

⁹¹ 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1-5.

⁹² See Jer. 24:7; Ez. 36:26; Rm. 7:22.

⁹³ Ez. 36:27; Gal. 5:16-25.

⁹⁴ Jn. 15.

⁹⁵ Phil. 2:12-13.

⁹⁶ Sarot, "Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of the Christian Community," 37.

believers are adopted sons into the life of the Godhead, Trinitarian theology brings one to a place of envisioning a more personal spirituality in which we are not left alone to somehow figure it all out but rather drawn into the actual life of Father, Son and Spirit within the context of Christian community.⁹⁷ Whereas this is becoming a more adopted view of formation, there still remain a few challenges to the subject of Christian formation and understanding it within the framework of Trinitarian theology.

The most obvious criticism is whether or not spiritual formation is even in the Bible. While properly concerned that theology not become a function of high level philosophy, “typical patterns of evangelical engagement with scripture can easily devolve into an information-oriented rationalism wherein the Bible is word-processed in a mechanical way, rather than being absorbed and digested in a more deeply transformational manner.”⁹⁸

A second objection comes in asserting the centrality of the cross. “A clear benefit from this mindset is that it provides an objective, Christ-centered basis for personal piety.”⁹⁹ Yet, without realizing it, making the cross central creates a ‘Jesus only’ religion lending itself to the error of modalism. Another challenge Greenman mentions is the evangelical push for conversions. “For the Evangelical, conversion is understood as a powerful, life-changing encounter with God involving intense commitment.”¹⁰⁰ The strength of this emphasis lies in seeing the spiritual life as an intentional relationship with

⁹⁷ Zizioulas. See also Eph. 1:5. Some may contend with Zizioulas on the point of whether Trinity is *only revealed* in the church, since the heavens also declare the glory of God. Broadly speaking, however, his point is well taken in that the church is the ongoing incarnation of Christ in the world.

⁹⁸ Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 28-29.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

God. The break down emerges with an over emphasis on making converts while the growth of disciples over time is left off, which creates a culture of pressure to get more people saved or somehow live up to a set of ‘biblical’ standards to validate ones conversion experience.¹⁰¹ This danger, more than any of the others Greenman mentions, shows up often within cross-cultural missions.

The fourth objection Greenman lists is Evangelical activism.¹⁰² Addressing the fact that Christian leaders get so caught up in their work for God they too often lose sight of their life in God, Greenman argues that, “Evangelical spirituality is rarely jeopardized by inert faith. If anything, [activism] poses a threat to spiritual formation when energetic service is emphasized at the expense of prayer, solitude and meditation.”¹⁰³

These, and many other, misunderstandings of Trinity and subsequent concerns regarding spiritual formation lend themselves to a model oriented approach to addressing the problem, which ends up trivializing both the Trinity and the concerns themselves. Trinity must be seen as the believer’s source and truest context of life before these concerns fall into perspective. One key component in the dilemma is the Western church’s attempt to define the spiritual life in purely individualized terms. Speaking of ‘our growth’ or even participation in the spiritual disciplines, one is led to believe this is largely an individual pursuit—a pursuit that would better fit with certain personality types.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰⁴ For a comprehensive treatment of how personality types gravitate toward certain kinds of spiritual practices, check out Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001). For another careful study of the subject I also

In part, the fault lies with the present definition of spiritual formation. Different from discipleship, spiritual growth and even sanctification, spiritual formation focuses more on the dynamics of how the Spirit works in, among and through believers. To be spiritually formed is to come under the shaping influence of the Spirit according to the will of God for the purpose of conforming believers to the image of Christ.¹⁰⁵ In other words, believers do not do spiritual formation; they *are* spiritually formed by the Spirit of God,¹⁰⁶ which places them right in the center of Trinitarian activity both in their lives and in the body of Christ.¹⁰⁷ Thus, “a well-rounded understanding of ‘spiritual formation’ will be ‘Trinitarian.’”¹⁰⁸

“All aspects of Christian life, from beginning to end, revolve around our union with the Son and our reflection of his relationship to his Father.”¹⁰⁹ Because believers also comprise the body of Christ, one’s formation cannot be properly understood apart from the work of God both within the individual and within the community of Christ. This is why I believe missionaries need a Trinitarian model of formation that addresses connectivity with God, others and the world.

According to Paul, one’s spiritual formation is set against the backdrop of God’s work in the heart. “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” he tells all believers, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good

recommend, Roy M. Oswald, Otto Kroeger, and Alban Institute., *Personality Type and Religious Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1988).

¹⁰⁵ Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” 28.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ See Rms. 8:27-29, 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18.

¹⁰⁸ Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” 28.

¹⁰⁹ Fairbairn, Kindle ed. loc. 3549.

purpose” (Phil. 2:12-13). Since, formation is acted upon believers in which they also participate, working out one’s salvation with fear and trembling throws believers into the middle of divine action.

God implants his life in believers. Through unifying love, these believers display the life of Christ within community, which flows out into the world through self-emptying love. I will examine these categories more closely next.

Our Life in God: Theosis

Attempting to avoid the problem of divorcing doctrine from Christian living, the early church understood “all of Christian life in direct connection to God’s life.”¹¹⁰ Through one’s union with Christ, believers are now justified and enter into partnership with God as fellow workers with him, to bring about the ultimate fulfillment of the divine economy.¹¹¹ The church fathers spoke of salvation as *theosis*, a word that emphasizes the believer’s participation in the life of God. Believers are given this participation at the onset of faith and grow in it through what Western theologians call sanctification. Therefore, one may not speak of the righteousness that comes from sanctification as being one’s own. Instead, believers come to life by union with Christ, and they grow in the Christian life by remaining united with Christ, by fostering their relationship with him through the action of the Holy Spirit.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Kindle ed. loc. 347.

¹¹¹ Russell, 36.

¹¹² Fairbairn, Kindle ed. loc. 3549.

The concept of *theosis* is rooted in the ante-Nicene period of church history. Most noted for the development of this theology is Athanasius, whose writings were primarily a defense against Arianism, which understood Christ as being created not begotten of the Father, equal in essence with the Father and Spirit.¹¹³ Just a brief walk through church history lets one know, *theosis*, “is not an antiquated historical curiosity,”¹¹⁴ and nor is it cloistered behind the walls of Orthodoxy or Catholicism.¹¹⁵ “The idea of...redeemed human nature somehow participating in the very life of God, is found to a surprising extent throughout Christian history, although it is practically unknown to the majority of Christians (and even many theologians) in the west.”¹¹⁶ Echoing Rakestraw’s wake up call, Murphy declares, “It is baffling to me that such a central concept has been so ill pursued in Western theology—especially within the Reformed context. This is a soteriology that is entirely God-centered, focused on the unilateral purpose and plan of God’s becoming realized among his creation. It focuses on what God is doing, as opposed to the autonomous powers of humanity.”¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Athanasius’ famous statements, “For He has become Man, that He might deify us in himself;” “For he was made man that we might be made God,” can be found in: Athanasius, “Letter LX: To Adelphius, Bishop and Confessor: Against the Arians”, Christian Classics Ethereal Library http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204/Page_576.html. and Athanasius, “On the Incarnation”, Christian Classics Ethereal Library <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation.ix.html>. Vladimir Lossky, a preeminent Eastern Theotic theologian of the twentieth century, believes the writings of Athanasius and the Cappadocians to be “the very essence of Christianity.” Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary, 1974), 97. quoted in Gannon Murphy, “Reformed Theosis?,” *Theology Today* 65, no. 2 (2008): 203.

¹¹⁴ Robert V. Rakestraw, “Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 2 (1997): 257.

¹¹⁵ For a truly brief glimpse of *theosis* in pre and post Reformation church history, see Murphy, “Reformed Theosis?,” 200-202.

¹¹⁶ Rakestraw, “Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis,” 257.

¹¹⁷ Murphy, “Reformed Theosis?,” 203.

Simply defined, “*Theosis* is the development of the living presence of Christ within a believer.”¹¹⁸ A more eastern definition would define it as, “deification”, which is the goal and purpose of human life and the final goal at which every Christian must aim.¹¹⁹ Gorman defines *theosis* as “transformative participation in the *kenotic*, cruciform character of God through Spirit-enabled conformity to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected/glorified Christ.”¹²⁰ Patristic scholar, Norman Russell defines *theosis* as a believer’s:

Restoration as [person] to integrity and wholeness by participation in Christ through the Holy Spirit, in a process which is initiated in this world through our life of ecclesial communion and moral striving and finds ultimate fulfillment in our union with the Father—all within the broad context of the divine economy.”¹²¹

That said, *theosis*, as I understand it and intend it in this study is simply Christ’s life incarnated through believers, which is the reality of one’s union with God.

The theological rub has come in both the language and emphasis of soteriology and anthropology in both Eastern and Western theologies. Using such words as ‘deification’ or ‘being engodded’ are a bit shocking for most Protestant evangelicals and even sounds heretical. Consequently, in church history, “the West has focused its soteriology on issues of guilt and punishment. The East, however, has focused more on

¹¹⁸ David Teague, “Spiritual Warfare in the Orthodox Tradition Applied to Mission Partners,” *St. Francis Magazine* III, no. 2 (2007): 1.

¹¹⁹ See Bernie Van de Walle, ““How High of a Christian Life?” A. B. Simpson and the Classic Doctrine of Theosis,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (2008): 137.

¹²⁰ Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 162. quoted in Michael J. Gorman, “Romans: The First Christian Treatise on Theosis,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5, no. 1 (2011): 18.

¹²¹ Russell, 21.

the themes of alienation and death.”¹²² This theological watershed may be flattening, though, as many protestant evangelical scholars re-examine patristic thinking. For example, evangelical theologian, Clark Pinnock speaks of the Spirit indwelling believers and drawing them toward participation in the life of the Triune God. “The goal is union with God... We are not just being pardoned but are being transformed and divinized.”¹²³ Similar to Kruger’s concerns mentioned above, Willard argues against a salvation that is just a matter of heaven and hell reducing salvation to only a legal or forensic condition.¹²⁴ Reformed theologian Murphy sees large overlaps in Eastern and Western thinking suggesting *theosis* summarizes the subjective, relational aspects of salvation.¹²⁵ He says:

Whereas justification and satisfaction refer to the forensic appeasement of God such that created humans might be positionally “clean” in God's eyes, *theosis* encompasses the subjective aspects of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*)—regeneration, sanctification, and glorification—and explains each of them as the sole work of God. Each of these I construe as subspecies of *theosis* such that we might even rename them, respectively: inaugural *theosis*, progressive *theosis*, and consummative *theosis*.¹²⁶

Another important point is the distinction in the Eastern mind of what was lost at the fall. “The Greek fathers taught that, in the fall, humanity lost the likeness [of God] but retained the image.”¹²⁷ Historian G. L. Bray, explains:

The Christian life is best conceived as the restoration of the lost likeness to those who have been redeemed in Christ. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, who

¹²² Walle, ““How High of a Christian Life?” A. B. Simpson and the Classic Doctrine of Theosis,” 137.

¹²³ Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 150-151.

¹²⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 47.

¹²⁵ Murphy, “Reformed Theosis?,” 206.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Rakestraw, “Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis,” 258.

communicates to us the energies of God himself, so that we may become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The energies of God radiate from his essence and share its nature, but it must be understood that the deified person retains his personal identity and is not absorbed into the essence of God.¹²⁸

Whether focusing on the *imago Dei* or the likeness of God restored in man, or whether one sees these terms as synonymous, the result is still the same: a Christian's reintegration into the life of God remains central to every understanding of *theosis*.¹²⁹

Consider for a moment key Scripture passages that speak of believers being 'in Christ' and Christ 'in' believers. For example, "If anyone is in Christ [*en Christo*], he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). In a rather startling statement, Jesus says, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me [*en moi*], and I in him [*en autos*]" (Jn. 6:56). Paul, to the Ephesian church declares, "He chose us in him [*en autos*] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Eph. 1:4). Paul goes on to say that, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [*en Chistos Iesou*] to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10). To the Colossians, Paul speaks of a mystery (*mysterion*, literally meaning, "secret") that has been hidden but is now revealed: "Christ in you [*Christos en humin*], the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26-27). Having been crucified with Christ, Paul declares, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me [*en moi*]" (Gal. 2:20). Many other passages give us a glimpse of this marvelous truth; God indwelling his people through Christ in the form of his Spirit.¹³⁰

To summarize, God is a personal being making it possible for mankind not only to live with him in eternity but also to participate in his life. "Salvation is essentially

¹²⁸ *New Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Deification."

¹²⁹ Rakestraw, "Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis," 258.

¹³⁰ See Eph. 1:22-23, 4:12-16; Phil. 2:12-13; Jn. 14:23, 15: 4-8.

union with God.”¹³¹ “The living God who speaks of himself as *us*, draws near to us in such a way as to draw us near to the *us* within the circle of the *us*.”¹³² This is Paul’s point on Mars Hill found in Acts 17:27-30; “...he is not far from each one of us. ‘For *in him* we live and move and have our being.’”¹³³ Therefore, we can say with Jesus, in his high priestly prayer, life is found *in God*.¹³⁴

Our Communion with God: Henosis

God does not just want humans to know that he is relational; he wants to have relationship with them.¹³⁵ Note Jesus’ prayer: “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. *May they also be in us* so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). God wants mankind in the Triune ‘us’. The obvious reason is that the world will believe and realize they are loved. Note what Jesus says in verse 23: “to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

The obvious basis from which Jesus prays is the interrelatedness he has with his Father and the Spirit. “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:22). This unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not to be seen merely as a model for the church to somehow follow. Jesus prays that believers be

¹³¹ Chan, 52.

¹³² Johnson, 74. See also Jn. 17: 24-26.

¹³³ Emphasis mine.

¹³⁴ Jn. 17:3. See also Jn. 1:4, 6:40, 15:5; Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:19.

¹³⁵ Daugherty, “Missio Dei: The Trinity and Christian Missions,” 163.

one in the Triune ‘us’, so that the world will believe the Father sent him.¹³⁶ The unity found in the Trinity that Jesus wants believers to display (and enjoy) is more about identity than God just wanting the kids to get along. It is a unity that expresses a believer’s life in God and a unity that will clearly have an effect on an unbelieving world. Tenney points out that the unity Jesus prays about for believer’s is not an institutional unity. Rather, it is personal in the same way the Son and Father interrelate.¹³⁷

Realizing the tension and debate in the already-not-yet elements of faith, it seems important to hold the reality of unity and becoming unified with an open hand. For example, Paul’s use of the body as a metaphor speaks primarily as a present reality that he frequently encourages his readers to become. In Ephesians 4, he urges his reader to ‘walk worthy’ of their calling, which he outlined in the first three chapters—mainly, one’s in-Christness. For those wondering “how?” he then adds, “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”¹³⁸ One might also hear echoes of Philippians 2 in this list, which will be examined in the next section. Paul calls his reader to a relational holiness that looks more like others-centered relating than ascetic spiritual disciplines. He does so within the context of unity: “There is one body and one Spirit—

¹³⁶ Jn. 17:21.

¹³⁷ Tenney. For further implications of God’s interrelatedness (*perichoresis*) expressed in community see Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei.*; Kruger.; C. Baxter Kruger, “Participation in Self-Knowledge of God: The Nature and Means of Our Knowledge of God in the Theology of T.F. Torrance” (1989).; Johnson.

¹³⁸ Eph. 4:2-3.

just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”¹³⁹

So, the unity within the Trinity “presupposes and gives ultimate value to relationship, reciprocity, and mutuality among members in a loving communion of equals.”¹⁴⁰ This is why for the Orthodox, “the church is part of the message it proclaims.”¹⁴¹ Taken a step further, mission for the Orthodox is a manifestation of the life and worship of the church, meaning, mission and unity go together and cannot be regarded as separate or successive stages one after another.¹⁴²

Another helpful example of unified reciprocity, as members of one body, is found in 1 John 1: 3. “*We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*”¹⁴³ The Greek word translated, “fellowship” is *koinonia*, meaning:

“Fellowship,” “communion,” “participation,” “share a common life,” and “partnership”; its root meaning is “common” or “shared” as opposed to “one’s own.” *Koinonia*, with its derivatives, occurs over sixty times in the NT in reference to the supernatural life that Christians share. This supernatural life is disclosed in the incarnate Christ. It is the eternal life that comes from the Father and becomes the life shared individually and corporately by the company of believers. It is what causes the oneness of faith.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Eph. 4:4-6.

¹⁴⁰ Braaten, “The Triune God: The Source and Model of Christian Unity and Mission,” 425.

¹⁴¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 212.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁴³ Emphasis mine.

¹⁴⁴ Glenn W. Barker, “1 John,” in *Vol. 12 of Expositor's Bible Commentary. Accordance Electronic Ed.*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J.D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981).

So, *koinonia* is the effective means by which believers live in unity, as the body of Christ. This has implications for how the gospel is perceived by a lost world, and reflects the reality of a believing community's mutual life in Christ.

Our Work Through God: Kenosis

God exists in eternal communion; never alone, never static. God's Triune name is an expression of the intimate unity of the Three-in-One and also concerns God's life with believers. Trinity also implies a mutual life together as fellow believers. In attempting to comprehend the Triune communion, one finds more than a model for human community; one also finds the means of community through life in Christ. As Chan put it, a believer's life in Christian community is relational without ceasing to be particular.¹⁴⁵ Scirghi adds, "Community emerges through Communion and mutual self-surrender, a self surrender which is the meaning of *kenosis*."¹⁴⁶

Summarizing the points made up to this point, Paul wrote:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Chan, 53.

¹⁴⁶ Scirghi, "The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society," 335.

¹⁴⁷ Phil. 2:1-4.

Kenosis is always others-centered, which reflects a believer's union with God in Christ and subsequent unity as members of Christ's body.¹⁴⁸ So, believers concern themselves with the interests of others above their own.

It may be easy at this juncture to assume that since Paul is speaking directly to the church in Philippi, he is only speaking to the church about their attitude within the local body. However, his illustration of Jesus' attitude broadens the application. A person's self-emptying (*kenosis*) affects all in the same way Jesus' self-emptying was for everyone. According to Frederiks, then, "*Kenosis* calls for shedding one's once acquired status, flexibility, and adjustment, [emphasizing the importance of] the other human being and his/her *shalom*."¹⁴⁹ Thus, "*Kenosis* is a relational model of being in communion and in interaction with the other."¹⁵⁰

For Neely, "Christ's self emptying is meant to be the subject of contemplation—faith, reflection, prayer, meditation, and worship; and it is meant to be a model for imitation—replication, renewal, and praxis—and not a proposition designed to provoke theological or philosophical debate."¹⁵¹ *Kenosis* then, according to Raguin, "places [believers] in a state of receptivity. We develop an instinctive attitude of listening, trying to understand, letting ourselves be permeated with the atmosphere of our surroundings,

¹⁴⁸ The word Paul uses for "fellowship" is *koinonia*, which some scholars think needs to be translated "participation" in this case. Either way, unity within the body is in view. This reminds us that *kenosis* is a relational calling for missionaries toward radical self-emptying both in the context of those they hope to win for Christ and with fellow servants in the journey. For an insightful look at the need for *kenosis* as a missionary model for cross-cultural engagement, see Doris Gomez, "The Global Church: A Journey toward the Other," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2013).

¹⁴⁹ Martha Frederiks, "Kenosis as a Model for Interreligious Dialogue," *Missiology: An International Review* 33, no. 2 (2005): 217.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Alan Neely, "Mission as Kenosis: Implications for Our Times," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 10, no. 3 (1989): 213.

passing beyond what is merely heard and seen to reach the personality of the people with whom we live, or those we meet.”¹⁵²

Neely describes Christ’s self-emptying as involving 5 things that have direct application to missionaries: (1) the renunciation of divine prerogative; (2) the necessity of developing in knowledge and understanding; (3) a refusal to presume upon and use others toward one’s own ends; (4) a willingness to risk failure; (5) the necessity to exercise faith in God and maintain that relationship through prayer, dependence, and devotion.¹⁵³ This level of humility requires openness to other denominations and organizations as having something to offer the host culture and one’s self. This also calls the missionary to confront a spirit of competition within him or herself and actually rejoice when others get the credit. Humility willingly accepts the way God chooses to use a person in his over-riding plan.

Raguin rightly reminds his readers that, “*Kenosis* reveals the divine.”¹⁵⁴ The self-limiting action of God through Christ’s incarnation is not a unique event in the life of God, according to Dawe. “It is a basic quality of his life. *Kenosis* is not something that just happened once in Christ; it is something that has marked the whole history of God’s dealing with men. *Kenosis* in Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s *kenotic* love for man, but it is not an example isolated from the rest.”¹⁵⁵ Now this discussion comes full circle. “We can be like Christ; we can take the “form of a servant” and obey Christ’s

¹⁵² Yves S. J. Raguin, *I Am Sending You...(John 22: 21) Spirituality of the Missioner* (Manila: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1973), 111-112.

¹⁵³ Neely, “Mission as Kenosis: Implications for Our Times,” 213, note 11.

¹⁵⁴ Raguin, 110.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Neely, “Mission as Kenosis: Implications for Our Times,” 217, note 21.

commands only when he himself is formed in us. We must live *by* him if we would act *like* him and *for* him.”¹⁵⁶

The life Christians live *by* Christ is implanted within every believer through faith in him. In him, believers are interconnected one with another, and when expressed, validate the reality of God’s love and interconnectedness. Finally, by living as Christ lived, believers participate in the *missio Dei*, revealing God to a lost world.

¹⁵⁶ John Alexander Mackay, “The Form of a Servant,” *Theology Today* 15, no. 3 (1958): 306.

CHAPTER 4

Spiritual Communities in Church History

Little has been written about the spiritual formation of Christian cross-cultural workers we call ‘missionaries’.¹ There could be a lot of obvious reasons for this apparent oversight. The first of which is the plethora of information on Christian spiritual formation and discipleship that exists in Christian literature today. Another, more hidden reason, is the tacit assumption that Christian leaders—missionaries in particular—are either already spiritually formed or by virtue of their vocation have little need of a systematized model of formation. Whatever the case, this chapter will examine missionary spiritual formation and communities from the early church to the Reformation making observations that can apply to cultivating spiritual community in today’s mission context.

At the risk of suggesting a specialized understanding of Christian growth and maturity (spiritual formation) for Christian leaders that differs from lay spirituality (Ephesians 4:11–12) the intent here is to focus on the uniqueness of the missionary endeavor and apply Christian formation to it. Living cross culturally does have a unique set of challenges and stressors that undermine the best intentions. Because of the kind of circumstances natural to cross-cultural mission, my assumption here is that intentional living requires intentional spiritual formation and community. What I am discovering is

¹ Teague, *Godly Servants: Discipleship and Spiritual Formation for Missionaries*, Kindle ed. loc. 127.

that little work has been done to offer a systematic spirituality for missionaries living and working cross culturally.²

Broadly speaking, Christian spiritual formation has as its focus the work of the Spirit in, among and through his people. To be spiritually formed is to come under the shaping influence of the Spirit according to the will of God for the purpose of conforming believers to the image of Christ.³ Spiritual formation then, is something that happens to a person. Christians do not do spiritual formation; the spirit of God, placing both the individual and the Christian community in the center of Trinitarian activity, forms believers. So, to talk about a missionary spirituality and spiritual community, is to talk about “all the personal elements involved in the way [missionaries] live out their Christian faith,” which is the impetus behind world mission.⁴ The *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* has this to say on the subject:

Spiritual formation is the driving force for world mission. Cross-cultural mission is the task of helping people in other cultures come to Christ and be formed in his image. Spiritual formation is far more than mere behavioral change... Neither is spiritual formation the mere transmission of biblical or theological information. People with advanced degrees in theology have not necessarily made any progress in spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is a process that takes place inside a person, and it's not something that can be easily measured, controlled, or predicted.⁵

The church fathers' spirituality was far from flawless, yet, at the same time, the church today (and missions) has much to learn from their fervent desire to love God and others. These are Christianity's roots, for better or worse. I will only examine a few.

² *Ibid.*, Kindle loc. 112.

³ Averbeck, “Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation,” 28.

⁴ Lawrence Nemer, “Spirituality and the Missionary Vocation,” *Missiology* 11, no. 4 (1983): 421.

⁵ *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*.

The Early Church

“The Christian faith is intrinsically incarnational; therefore, unless the church chooses to remain a foreign entity, it will always enter into the context in which it happens to find itself.”⁶ Yet, there is some debate over the missional intention of the early church and subsequent institutionalizing of Christianity under Constantine. Some have claimed that with the death of the apostles came the death of the missionary enterprise for many centuries.⁷ However, while minimal, Bosch points out that there were charismatic-healer missionaries, miracle workers, and itinerate preachers within the early church expansion.⁸

With growth and struggle came the need to organize. Unfortunately, what “began as a movement had, long before the end of the first century, irrevocably turned into an institution.”⁹ With this organization came a creative tension between the “mobile ministry of apostles, prophets, and evangelists” and the more “settled ministry of bishops (elders) and deacons.”¹⁰ Eventually, this tension collapsed in favor of the institution and mobile ministry subsided—establishing the church became the greater focus in the ‘Period of the Apologists’.¹¹

⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 195-196.

⁷ See *ibid.*, 196.

⁸ *Ibid.* See also Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 74-97.

⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 196.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹¹ With the establishment of the church came the need to defend true doctrine against various heresies such as Gnosticism, Arianism, and Donatists. A quick glance through any church history anthology will lead one to assume missions was either gone completely from the life of the church or was

Suspicious of the institution, some believers fled to the deserts of Egypt and the Middle East to pursue a ‘purer’ spirituality.¹² These Desert Fathers and Mothers, as they eventually came to be called, became hermits to practice ascetical spiritual disciplines like, prayer, silence and solitude, detachment, celibacy, poverty, fasting, and contemplation. As these monastics grew in wisdom, so did their following. Consequently, “the real bearer of the missionary ideal and practice was the monastic movement,” which was born out of the passion and austerity of these committed followers of Christ.¹³

While present day Protestants may see the Desert Fathers’ chosen style of living a bit odd and austere, their desire and passion for a life fully and completely turned to God is something worth emulating. The ultimate aim of such self-denial was not asceticism for the sake of asceticism. Rather, these early monastics wished to connect more deeply with God. According to Ward, “This pattern of being moved by the action of God first, of leaving the familiar place, going away and giving oneself over to the action of God in silence and solitude is the gateway in the desert to prayer and conversion of heart.”¹⁴ The essence of their spirituality was a life of prayer: a life of deeper connection with God that could not be “taught but caught; it was a whole way of life.”¹⁵ So for these desert

so deeply embedded it need not be mentioned. Frend documents what he calls “a revived sense of mission” during this period of church history. Still, even his examples are sparse, and may indicate less concern for mission than seeing mission in the establishment of sound doctrine against heresies. See W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 285-293.

¹² See Richard H. Schmidt, *God Seekers: Twenty Centuries of Christian Spiritualities* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), Kindle ed. loc. 405.; also see Jordan Aumann, *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 35.

¹³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 207.

¹⁴ Benedicta Ward, “Spiritual Direction in the Desert Fathers,” *The Way* 24, no. 1 (1984). http://ldysinger.stjohnsem.edu/@texts2/1990_ben-ward/Ward-Spir_dir_des_Fathers-reformatted.doc.

¹⁵ Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1975), xxi.

monastic missionaries, “prayer was not an activity undertaken for a few hours a day, it was a life continually turned toward God.”¹⁶

In addition to desert spirituality, Bosch suggests that due to the battles with Gnosticism, extreme persecution, and Hellenistic religions, the missionary paradigm of the Eastern Church came to be bound up in the liturgy.¹⁷ Translating and quoting Karl Rose, Bosch explains:

As church of the Easter light and liturgy it sees its main task in enlightening the pagans who are to receive God’s light through the liturgy. The major manifestation of the missionary activity of the Orthodox Church lies in its celebration of the liturgy. The light of mercy that shines in the liturgy should act as center of attraction to those who still live in the darkness of paganism.¹⁸

So, for the Orthodox, the worship event was the missional proclamation of the gospel just as much as the life of the church was considered part of the message it proclaims. Bosch also observes that for the Orthodox no “mission should take place without reference to its spiritual and sacramental existence.”¹⁹ Thus, the “witnessing community is the community in worship; in fact, the worshipping community is in and of itself an act of witness.”²⁰ This also means that for the Orthodox Church, mission and unity go hand in hand. Translating and quoting Nissiotis, Bosch adds: “Mission and unity mean that no missionary can proclaim the one gospel without being profoundly aware of the fact that he is bringing the historical community of the church and without feeling

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 213.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

driven to this witness by the Holy Spirit, on the basis of his personal membership in the one apostolic church.”²¹

Yet, another liturgical theologian suggests otherwise. Dix observes:

The apostolic and primitive church regarded all Christian worship, and especially the Eucharist, as a highly private activity, and rigidly excluded all strangers from taking any part in it whatsoever, and even from attendance at the Eucharist. Christian worship was intensely corporate, but it was not public... It was a highly exclusive thing, whose original setting is entirely domestic and private.²²

Regardless, one can appreciate Bosch’s point. Because mission and unity are inseparable for the Orthodox, it makes sense that they would see mission as an involvement in society through the witness of worship. Granted, compared to Western activism, the Orthodox appear far less involved in society, remaining hidden in religious matters.²³ This could also be a reflection of the dilemma the Orthodox face as a result of the Great Schism.

Because Christian unity held so much importance in Orthodox theology, the Great Schism of 1054 had far reaching consequences for them.²⁴ Mission continued for the Catholic Church without interruption; not so for the Orthodox Church. “When unity was broken, the Orthodox saw their mission shift from evangelism to a search for Christian

²¹ Ibid.

²² Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster, London: Dacre Press, 1945), 16, 35. Quoted in Alan Kreider, “Beyond Bosch: The Early Church and the Christendom Shift,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, no. 2 (2005): 60.

²³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 215.

²⁴ One can appreciate the Orthodox desire and dilemma in mission from a brief study of *Theosis*. See chapter 3 of this thesis.

unity.”²⁵ Which is most important? Win the lost or live in unity? For the Orthodox, the call to mission is not simply to know Christ and gather around him or even submit to his will; “[believers] are called to participate in his glory.”²⁶ It would seem the gospel is more than a message in the Orthodox mind; it is a life lived in union with God.²⁷ Bosch also points out that in its “deepest sense mission, in the Orthodox perspective, is founded on *the love of God*.”²⁸ And, if the basis of mission is love, “then the *goal of missions is life*.”²⁹

The Orthodox emphasis on God’s love, as motivation for his redemption, may prove a better guide in missional motivation than Western theology, which emphasizes God’s justice.³⁰ Since *kenosis* is the means by which mankind experiences God’s love expressed in Jesus, this same love needs to find expression in his messengers. And with love as the basis for mission, *theosis* becomes the goal: life bound up in union with God.³¹

²⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 213.

²⁶ Bosch quoting Anastasios. *Ibid.*, 214. See also Jn. 17. Anastasios’ theology is highly relational at this point calling believers into the relational holiness of God through *theosis* (union), *henosis* (communion or unity), and *kenosis* (mission).

²⁷ I am only recently beginning to appreciate a Trinitarian understanding of God’s glory as relational and the implications for *theosis* and community as more than a witness to a lost world but as the primary message expressed in a believer’s life.

²⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 214.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ See *ibid.* Chapter 3 makes this watershed point as well. See also Kruger, *The Great Dance*, 380-402.; Pinnock, 150-151.; Willard, 47.; Murphy, “Reformed Theosis?” 206.

³¹ I appreciate Bosch’s definition of *theosis*: “a continuing state of adoration, prayer, thanksgiving, worship, and intercession, as well as meditation and contemplation of the triune God and God’s infinite love.” See Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 214.

The Monastic Period

Long before the Great Schism, the early church went from being a movement to becoming an institution under Constantine. Constantine's church defined a faith system consisting of truths and dogma, and salvation was now something given to the individual by the church primarily through the sacraments.³² Therefore, the gospel was reduced to an organizational structure where religious meaning was administrated in society.³³

Undergoing the drastic change into a state administered religion; scholars seem a bit ambivalent at this point in the discussion. Winter wisely points out that:

What the average Protestant knows about monasteries may be correct for certain situations; but the popular Protestant stereotype surely cannot describe correctly all that happened during the 1000 years! During those centuries there were many different eras and epochs and a wide variety of monastic movements, radically different from each other, and any generalization about so vast a phenomenon is bound to be simply an unreliable and no doubt prejudiced caricature.³⁴

According to Bosch, from a human perspective, Christianity today has monasticism to thank for the way “authentic Christianity evolved in the course of Europe's ‘dark ages’ and beyond.”³⁵ Monasticism provided a balance over against the institutionalized insistence of a state run church. Presbyterian theologian, Henry suggests that, “the genius of monasticism is its refusal to propose a neat, no-loose-ends answer to

³² Knud Jørgensen, “The Emergence and Challenge of the Missional Church Concept in the West,” *Swedish Missiological Themes* 92, no. 4 (2004): 554. See also Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 196.

³³ Jørgensen, “The Emergence and Challenge of the Missional Church Concept in the West,” 554.

³⁴ Ralph D. Winter, “The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission,” (Pasadena, CA: Presbyterian Center for Mission Studies, 1974), 4.

³⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 235.

the puzzle of injustice and disunity in the church and the world.”³⁶ Rather than organizing an answer to the questions society begged, monasticism lived into the question, which makes one wonder whether there was much distinction between the Orthodox mind and the mind of the Catholic monastic.³⁷ Ward provides a helpful explanation of monasticism’s early beginnings:

In the fourth century, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Arabia were the forcing ground for monasticism in its Christian expression; every form of monastic life was tried, every kind of experiment, every kind of extreme. Monasticism is of course older than Christianity, but this was the flowering of it in its Christian expression and in many ways it has never been surpassed. The roots of Western monasticism are in the East, and the wisdom of the desert, the understanding of this way of life, has formed a central, though often unidentified, source for Christian living through the centuries. The great center was Egypt. By AD 400 Egypt was a land of hermits and monks.³⁸

What began as a flight into the desert to pursue a purer expression of faith slowly shifted from a solitary life into something more communal and monasteries began to form. Although monasticism eventually became a distinct state of life in the church, at its roots, it was a manner of life available to any Christian wanting to lead a more authentic witness to the teaching of Christ.³⁹ Latourette’s insightful comments are worth noting here:

³⁶ Patrick Henry, “Monastic Mission: The Monastic Tradition as Source for Unity and Renewal Today,” *Ecumenical Review* 39, no. 3 (1987): 275.

³⁷ Bosch points out that monasticism has its origins in the Eastern Church, particularly in Egypt, where it flourished long before it took root in the West. When it did evolve in the West, it differed from Eastern monasticism in that Eastern monasticism was more individualistic. Western monasticism, in contrast, was basically communal. See Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 236.

³⁸ Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, xvii.

³⁹ Aumann, 35.

By the end of the fifth century monasticism had become firmly established in the Catholic Church in both East and West and had begun to take on the forms, which were to characterize it through the centuries. It was to undergo many modifications, but in its numerous ramifications it was to be the main channel through which bursts of new life were to find expression in the various churches, which conserved the traditions of the Catholic Church of the Roman Empire. Here was effort after effort to create communities which would completely realize the Christian ideal and also, in the case of the increasing numbers of variations of the monastic patterns, dream after dream of making these communities centers from which the Christian faith would irradiate and transform the non-Christian world about them.⁴⁰

Eventually becoming more institutionalized, monastic communities began establishing a 'rule' or expression of spirituality whereby life in community was clearly outlined and conducted. The remainder of this section will outline a few of the more pertinent spiritualities.

Pachomius, the founder of communal monasticism, developed the first monastic rule involving submission of the monks to the guidance of a spiritual father and incorporating it into the structure of communal life, along with manual labor, prayer, and the struggle against all the vices.⁴¹ Gribormont goes on to say of Pachomius's influence:

For the simple people who had remained closely attached to nature, a life of strict discipline completely devoted to the well-being of one's neighbour and to hard work for the community was the best possible path to becoming a true monk. The great attraction of this life can be measured by the innumerable eager candidates, often still catechumens, who flocked to Pachomius for *communion* (*koinonia*) in the truest sense of the word.⁴²

⁴⁰ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1500* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1975), 233.

⁴¹ Jean Gribormont, "Monasticism and Acetiscis: I: Eastern Christianity," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (*World Spirituality, Vol. 16*), ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 96.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 97-98. Pachomius founded Cenobitic monasticism, which stressed community life versus monasticism as a hermit. The English words "cenobite" and "cenobitic" are derived, via Latin, from the Greek words *koinos* (κοινός), "common", and *bios* (βίος), "life". See Wikipedia, "Cenobitic Monasticism" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cenobitic_monasticism (accessed December 4, 2013).

Not long after the Edict of Milan in 313, when Christianity was legalized, a more learned and liturgical monasticism began to emerge in Cappadocia through the work of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzon, and Gregory of Nyssa. Each of these so-called Cappadocian Fathers made significant contributions to theology, particularly in the language of God as Trinity. Specific to this study, Basil's contribution to Eastern monasticism was his insistence that a monk's life should be spent in community rather than solitude.⁴³ When asked whether monks in community should retire to the solitary life of the desert, he replied: "This is nothing but a mark of self-will and remains foreign to those who honor God."⁴⁴ He fully believed that "association with others was necessary to the full Christian life, such as the practice of the law of love to one's neighbour."⁴⁵

Theologian and philosopher, Augustine of Hippo also developed monastic communities where both asceticism and service were stressed. His *Rule of St. Augustine* emphasized deep personal reflection, renunciation of private property, and charitable service as well as directing and admonishing attention on the weaknesses of the flesh.⁴⁶ His rule also underlined a restriction of freedom best exercised within community life.⁴⁷ Spiritual formation, for Augustine, involved both knowing God and self. "Let me know

⁴³ Aumann, 43-44.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁵ Latourette, 229.

⁴⁶ Zachary Grant, *Paths to Renewal: The Spiritualities of Six Religious Founders: Augustine of Hippo, Benedict of Nursia, Dominic Guzman, Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila* (New York: Alba House, 1998), 3-4.

⁴⁷ Aumann, 63-64.

Thee, O Lord, who knowest me: let me know Thee, as I am known.”⁴⁸ In Augustine’s thinking, knowing God and knowing self explain the other: “One cannot know God without reference to oneself and one cannot know oneself without reference to God.”⁴⁹ We hear this call to self-knowledge again in Calvin who outlines how the knowledge of God and knowing self are inextricably bound together.⁵⁰

A more controversial topic, especially in contemporary spirituality, is the emergence of Celtic spirituality and monasteries through the evangelistic work of St. Patrick.⁵¹ Whether this particular form of spirituality can be rightly called Celtic is not the purpose of this examination. What scholars do agree upon is that the work of Patrick included a different kind of monasticism from much of its Roman counterparts in the East. Like all monastic communities of the time, there was a commitment to prayer, study and manual labor. The study aspect, above all, focused on God’s word.⁵² One of the most distinctive qualities of Irish/Celtic monastic communities was their prominence in the village. These flourishing communities were built near tribal centers in harmony with the

⁴⁸ Augustine and E. B. Pusey, “The Confessions of St. Augustine”, Sacred-texts.com <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/augconf/aug10.htm> (accessed December 3 2013).; Fr. Joseph Fredette, “The Art of Discernment According to Saint Augustine”, Augnet <http://www.augnet.org/?ipageid=1515> (accessed December 3, 2013). We also see a similar appeal in the desert Father, Antony’s writings. “Truly, I write to you as to reasonable men, my beloved, as men capable of knowing yourselves. Anyone who knows himself knows God, and anyone who knows God is worthy to worship him in the right way. My beloved in the Lord, know yourselves. Those who know themselves know their time, and those who know their time can stand firm and not be bandied about by various tongues.” Schmidt, Kindle ed. loc. 503.

⁴⁹ Fredette.

⁵⁰ John Calvin, “The Institutes of the Christian Religion,” ed. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846). <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/535/218382> (accessed December 3, 2013).

⁵¹ *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), s.v. “Celtic Spirituality.” O’Loughlin has written extensively on the subject calling into question the broad claims about Celtic spirituality and Celtic Christianity especially since these “claims about the past are rejected by historians whether in Celtic studies or theology.”

⁵² Diarmuid O’Laoghaire, “Celtic Spirituality,” in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 218-219.

local village so that both the monastery and village grew together.⁵³ “A Visitor from Rome,” suggests Hunter, “would have observed more of a movement than an institution...featuring laity more than clergy. This movement was more imaginative and less cerebral, closer to nature and its creatures, and emphasized the immanence and providence of the triune God more than his transcendence.”⁵⁴

This proximity with the community of faith created a clear departure from the accepted means of doing missions, according to Finney. He argues that the Roman approach followed a three-step plan: (1) proclaim the gospel, (2) invite people to commit to the church, and (3) if they accept, welcome them and establish community with them.⁵⁵ In contrast, Patrick and followers: (1) established community with the people or, brought them into the community of faith, (2) within the fellowship, engaged the people in conversation, ministry, prayer, and worship, and (3) over time, as the people discovered they believed, they were invited to commit.⁵⁶ Note Johnson’s keen observation:

⁵³ John Musther, “Irish Monasticism”, The Antiochian Orthodox Church of St. Ignatius in Belfast http://www.earlychristianireland.org/special_pages/irish_monasticism.html (accessed December 3, 2013). See also George G. Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 8-10. and Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Atheneum, 1976), 143-145.

⁵⁴ Hunter, 14. This point of discussion is important to note. By focusing on God’s immanence, an incarnational approach to mission made more sense than an ecclesial approach. God was not treated as far off and distant but up close and personal through the *koinonia* and physical presence of the monks and fellow believers.

⁵⁵ John Finney, *Recovering the Past: Celtic and Roman Mission* (London: Longman & Todd, 1996), 46-48. Hunter adds: “The Roman model seems very logical to us because most American Christians are scripted by it. We explain the gospel, they accept Christ, and we welcome them into the church. Presentation, decision, assimilation—what could be more logical than that?” See Hunter, 43.

⁵⁶ Finney, 46-48. This may be an unfair dichotomy but it is a helpful distinction seen even in today’s missional and emergent church literature. Rather than “Proclaim, Decide, Commit,” the emergent church of today would say, “Belong, Believe, Become.” Another important distinction Hunter points out is that Eastern monasteries formed as a protest and escape from the materialism of the Roman Empire. In

While many monastic movements of the time in other areas of the world were designed to separate men and women of God from the regular people, the Irish movement of Patrick and his followers was designed to bring men and women of God into contact with regular people in order to make those people men and women of God.⁵⁷

Mission, for these Celtic/Irish Christians, occurred as a team (or community) who invested in the settlement through identification with the people, conversing with them and making friends.⁵⁸ Once a church was established, their mission did not end there. The emerging monastic community “prepared the new believers to live with depth.”⁵⁹ According to Hunter, the preparation came through a fivefold structure or experiences: (1) voluntary periods of silence and solitude, (2) time spent with a “soul friend” (*anam cara*), (3) time spent in a small group, (4) participating in the common life, and finally, (5) observing and gaining experience in ministry.⁶⁰

Bosch points out another missional aspect of Celtic/Irish monasticism beyond work as a team, establishing themselves near settlements, and investing directly in the well-being of the local community. The Irish love of roaming, which expressed itself as pilgrimage in Christian circles, became the context for cross-cultural missions. While the

other words, “Eastern monks often withdrew to save and cultivate their own souls; Celtic leaders [on the other hand] often organized monastic communities to save other people’s souls.” See Hunter, 16. and Latourette, 222.

⁵⁷ Donald Johnson, “St. Patrick and the Evangelistic Success of Celtic Monasticism” <http://www.runawayplanet.com/files/st.-patrick-and-the-evangelistic-success-of-celtic-christian-monasticism.pdf> (accessed December 3, 2013).

⁵⁸ See Hunter, 36.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* While this list does not appear all that different from modern day discipleship training programs, and may not be, the core emphasis or spiritual theology is far more relational than programs I’ve experienced to date. For example, as Hunter points out, the spiritual friend was someone with whom you were voluntarily vulnerable and accountable; to whom you made confession; and who both supported and challenged you. Even participating in the common life of eating together, working together, learning, prayer, ministry, and worship is something that has fallen away in modern approaches to disciple making in missions.

pilgrimage may have initiated as an act of penance, the pilgrim was obligated to help all those he or she met on their journey, so the concept of pilgrimage often merged with mission.⁶¹

Considered far more widely influential than Irish/Celtic monasticism, “Benedictine monasticism shared with its Celtic counterpart a strong eschatological emphasis, a pronounced moral seriousness, and profound interest in spiritual perfection.”⁶² Benedict, regarded as the “father and legislator of western monasticism,” is best known for his *Rule of St. Benedict*.⁶³ Incorporating the insights of both Basil and John Cassian, the *Rule* is a relatively brief and practical incarnational theology emphasizing community, obedience, and humility.⁶⁴ In his opening chapter, Benedict mentions four types of monks:

The *cenobites*, who live in community under a rule of an abbot; the *hermits* or anchorites, who have lived in the monastery for a long time and are now sufficiently strong to live a life of solitude in the desert; the *sarabaites*, self-willed monks who followed their own inclinations instead of living according to a monastic rule; and the *gyrovagues*, who are constantly on the move, drifting from one monastery to another and never settling down in one place.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 238. According to Riche, the Celtic pilgrimage (*peregrinatio*) was related to their desire to evangelize the pagans. Even though the Celtic monk may have sought a desert experience, he “could not refrain from converting the peasants to Christianity, and became a missionary in spite of himself.” Pierre Riche, “Spirituality in Celtic and Germanic Society,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century: World Spirituality*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and Jean Leclercq (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 170.

⁶² Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 238. See also Latourette, 333.

⁶³ Aumann, 69.

⁶⁴ Rowan Williams, *Christian Spirituality: A Theological History from the New Testament to Luther and St. John of the Cross* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1980), 102.

⁶⁵ Aumann, 70. Benedict’s opinion of the *Sarabaites* is quite clear, calling them a “vile class of monks who have been tried by no rule under the hand of a master.” They are “soft as lead, and still [keep] faith with the world by their works, they are known to belie God by their tonsure. Living in two’s and three’s, or even singly, without a shepherd, enclosed, not in the Lord’s sheepfold, but in their own, the

Rather than focusing on the sin and wretched life of the monks who showed no interest in personal growth, he rather wrote to encourage and lay down a rule for those who would benefit most from his work.⁶⁶ Always moving the heart and mind of the monk to the presence of God, Benedict's *Rule* stressed moderation in all things. As Leclercq points out, there was a:

Balance between prayer and work, submission and personal conscience, solitude with God and communal life, renunciation and the use of anything necessary to live cheerfully, generosity and prudence in austerity, silence and charity in interpersonal relations, the authority of the abbot and the right of the brothers to give their opinions.⁶⁷

By the seventh century, several monastic traditions and monastic foundations had grown considerably.⁶⁸ With the growth came decadence and decline in the monastic ideal. To facilitate certain necessary reforms, Benedict of Aniane produced a commentary on the *Rule of St. Benedict*, which was imposed upon many erring monasteries of the

gratification of their desires is law unto them; because what they choose to do they call holy, but what they dislike they hold to be unlawful. But the fourth class of monks is that called Landlopers [or *gyrovagues*], who keep going their whole life long from one province to another, staying three or four days at a time in different cells as guests. Always roving and never settled, they indulge their passions and the cravings of their appetite, and are in every way worse than the *Sarabaites*. It is better to pass all these over in silence than to speak of their most wretched life.

Therefore, passing these over, let us go on with the help of God to lay down a rule for that most valiant kind of monks, the Cenobites." St. Benedict and Trans by Rev. Boniface Verheyen, "The Holy Rule of St. Benedict", St. Benedict's Abbey <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/benedict/rule2/files/rule2.html#ch1> (accessed December 6, 2013). I find it curious that these four types adequately describe missionaries who easily fall into any one of these categories.

⁶⁶ The opposite is reflected in many present day approaches to 'sin management' where disciples are taught how to avoid sin rather than teaching people to love God. See Willard, 41.

⁶⁷ Jean Leclercq, "Monasticism and Asceticism: II: Western Christianity," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century (World Spirituality, Vol. 16)*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 118.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

time.⁶⁹ So, for a time, “the quest for union with God through prayer and asceticism had preserved its priority.”⁷⁰ Yet, as is often the case, political power eventually took control of the monasteries bringing with it degeneration of institutional decadence and in some cases, almost a total loss of this form of spirituality.⁷¹

In the tradition of Antony and Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury emerged emphasizing knowing self and knowing God.⁷² He saw no conflict between faith and reason and worked to show the depth of a person’s sin in contrast to God’s love and faithfulness.⁷³ “Make time for God,” he wrote, “and rest a while in Him. Enter into the inner chamber of your mind; shut out everything except God and what is of aid to you in seeking Him; after closing the chamber door, seek Him out.”⁷⁴ For Anselm, the spiritual life was wholly dependent upon the movement of God. Note a prayer most attributed to him:

O my God teach my heart where and how to seek you,
 where and how to find you...
 You are my God and you are my All and I have never seen you.
 You have made me and remade me,
 You have bestowed on me all the good things I possess,
 Still I do not know you...
 I have not yet done that for which I was made....

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 124.

⁷¹ Ibid., 124-125. Christianity suffered deep decline between 500 and 950 in Western Europe. Any recovery Christianity enjoyed came through the monastic movement. See Latourette, 416-446.

⁷² Benedicta Ward, “The Religious World of the Twelfth Century: II: Anselm of Canterbury and His Influence,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century (World Spirituality, Vol. 16)*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 202.

⁷³ Latourette, 500.

⁷⁴ Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, “Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury”, The Arthur J. Banning Press <http://jasper-hopkins.info/proslogion.pdf> (accessed December 7, 2013).

Teach me to seek you...
 I cannot seek you unless you teach me
 or find you unless you show yourself to me.
 Let me seek you in my desire, let me desire you in my seeking.
 Let me find you by loving you, let me love you when I find you.⁷⁵

“In his writings, Anselm stands primarily within the tradition of ascetic theology, but his experience of prayer, joined to the clarity of his expression of what he had understood, set in motion much of the mystical analysis of the soul that was to come.”⁷⁶

Jumping ahead a bit, the twelfth century witnessed the ‘discovery of the individual’.⁷⁷ Built upon the work of the Cappadocian’s understanding of Trinity and man created in God’s image (*imago Dei*), monastic writings began to emphasize self-examination, intention and motivation, and concern for interpersonal relationships.⁷⁸ One of the more influential writers at the time, Bernard of Clairvaux, building upon Augustine and Anselm’s thinking, believed self-knowledge consisted of knowing what one has done, what he or she deserves, and what has been lost.⁷⁹ However, any self-knowing that did not directly increase an individual’s sense of sinfulness and need for humility and repentance in community was to be avoided.⁸⁰ In his most famous writings, *On the Love*

⁷⁵ Jim Manney, “Anselm’s Prayer” <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/8361/anselms-prayer/> (accessed December 7, 2013). For this prayer in context, see Hopkins and Richardson.

⁷⁶ Ward, “The Religious World of the Twelfth Century: II: Anselm of Canterbury and His Influence,” 199.

⁷⁷ Bernard McGinn, “The Human Person as Image of God, II: Western Christianity,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century (World Spirituality, Vol. 16)*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 323.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 324.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

of *God* and *Sermons on the Song of Songs* there is a clear presentation of the “path from self-knowledge and self-love to the heights of loving union with God.”⁸¹

About 100 years later, Franciscan spirituality, founded by Francis of Assisi, was considered unstudied and direct. It stressed adoration of God, repentance, generosity, and forgiving those who wronged you.⁸² “It made much of love for one’s neighbors and one’s enemies, humility, and abstinence from vices, including especially the vices of the flesh. It advocated fasting and encouraged the confession of one’s sins to a priest.”⁸³ Ignatian spirituality, on the other hand, became a more aggressive missionary advance with Ignatius’ belief that he and his followers were soldiers for Christ. According to Aumman, “We are indebted to St. Ignatius for two outstanding contributions: he perfected the spiritual exercises and he gave to the Church a new form of religious life.”⁸⁴ By means of his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius has been credited with redirecting the course of Church history into new channels.⁸⁵ Written more for individual practice of discipline than

⁸¹ Ibid. Bernard describes four loves as developmental stages in the life of one seeking union with God. The first stage is the natural love of *loving self for self’s sake*. The second stage of love is, *loving God for self’s sake*. The third stage is, *loving God for God’s sake*. The final stage is, *loving self for God’s sake*. See Bernard of Clairvaux, “On Loving God,” (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2007). http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bernard/loving_god.html (accessed December 8, 2013).

⁸² Latourette, 431.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Aumann, 185.

⁸⁵ Chong, 39. Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* was written as a model for retreatants who wanted to experience greater spiritual growth. The exercises sought to help people find a spirit of generous service and a life of sanctity penetrated by prayer. Initially intended as a four-week retreat, the first week focused on putting one’s life in order. The second week was devoted to developing an interior knowledge of Christ by studying his life. The third week concentrated on the passion of Christ resulting in confirming the retreatant’s own commitment to follow Christ. The final week focused upon the risen Christ with the intent that the retreatant would become more like Christ in character and life. See Ray Gene Barber, “A Spiritual Formation Curriculum for Oakland City University” (D.Min., Asbury Theological Seminary, 1999), 40-41.

communal participation, the Ignatian exercises have been quite useful in shaping many missionaries for service.⁸⁶

It is important to mention spiritual direction and soul care specifically. For centuries, spiritual guidance and soul care was far less formalized and intentional as seen in today's practice. This is not to say guidance and care of the soul was unimportant. It was a major theme in early Christian literature—sermons, letters, and theological treatises, etc.⁸⁷ “Christian tradition has always emphasized that Christ or the Holy Spirit is the true guide of souls.”⁸⁸ Note Corcoran's insightful comment:

Notions of spiritual guidance in the patristic era and throughout the early Middle Ages were strongly indebted to the monastic tradition and experience. Though we can certainly assume that there has always been a concern for the guidance and care of souls in the Christian tradition, there is little literary evidence of it in the first twelve centuries. Even in the monastic tradition the gradual institutionalization of monastic life would substitute a specific rule of life and community formation for the highly personal and charismatic interaction of elder and disciple in primitive monasticism. Only in the twelfth century, with the rise of popular movements and the mendicant orders, did spiritual guidance of the laity become a concern in itself.⁸⁹

The most compelling discussions about the gains and losses of the monastic movement revolve around the kind of people that formed monastic communities. Monks were called such not because they lived a solitary life initially but because they were

⁸⁶ See Chong, 39. and Aumann, 188-189.

⁸⁷ Donald Corcoran, “Spiritual Guidance,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century (World Spirituality, Vol. 16)*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 444.

⁸⁸ Ibid. This is quite different from non-Christian Eastern religions where the role of a spiritual master, teacher and guide are considered indispensable.

⁸⁹ Ibid. A Mendicant order depends directly on charity for its livelihood (much like what is called ‘faith-based missions’ in Protestantism today). Wanting to copy Jesus’ way of life, mendicant orders are marked by two key characteristics: poverty, practiced in common; and a way of life that combines praying together in community with the work of the public ministry of the Church. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mendicant_orders.

occupied with one thing alone—the desire for God.⁹⁰ Even though monastic communities were not primarily or intentionally created for the purpose of mission, “they were permeated by a missionary dimension. Even without knowing it and without intending it, their conduct was missionary through and through.”⁹¹ How did this happen? What were the primary and noticeable characteristics of monks that made their conduct missional?

Bosch suggests four:

1. Due to their uncompromising life, peasants held monks in high esteem.
2. The quality of the monk’s life and character made a profound impact.
3. The monastery was not only the center for manual labor (which the peasants understood and respected) but also a center of culture and education.
4. Monks were undaunted in their mission even though often attacked and monasteries destroyed by barbarians; theirs was a spirituality of the long haul. They did not write off the world as a lost cause⁹².

Allen observed two main life-style advantages of the monastic movement that could be brought back for use today. First, they provided many valuable spiritual practices such as spiritual reading, prayer, retreats, meditation and the like. Second, monasticism acted as a prophetic protest to mediocre institutionalism standing as a reminder of the eschatological existence of the church—that God is up to something now that will one day be fully realized.⁹³

⁹⁰ Hugh Bishop, “Religious Communities: The Monastic Ideal,” *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 188, (1963): 269.

⁹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 238.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 236-237.

⁹³ W. L. Allen, “Elements of Monastic Spirituality in Protestant Intentional Communities,” *One in Christ* London 19, no. 2 (1983): 171.

Enlightenment

The Protestant Reformation brought certain necessary correctives to dangers and pitfalls within monastic practice and structure. One person's discipline became another's extreme asceticism, which led to pride and eventually to a form of works based salvation. At the same time, society was undergoing its own paradigm shift with the Enlightenment. Characterized by the Empiricism of Bacon and the Rationalism of Descartes, the world shifted into the 'Age of Reason'. These two shifts deeply influenced missions and thus, spirituality.

Bosch suggests seven implications of the Enlightenment and its impact on missions. First, the human mind became the point of departure for all knowing. Second, life became objectified, parted out from the whole and analyzed. Third, there was an elimination of purpose behind creation and human endeavor. Fourth, there came a fundamental belief in the necessity of progress and it was their prerogative to modernize the world. There was also a fundamental assumption that scientific knowledge is factual and value-free. Sixth, was the assumption that all problems could be solved through human reason and the application of the scientific method. Lastly, people were regarded as autonomous individuals.⁹⁴

These implications deeply affected religion. With the elevation of human reason above faith, the church responded to this challenge variously. According to Bosch, the first response was divorcing religion from reason to protect against objectifying life.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 270-273.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 275.

Secondly, Christian faith became a private matter and therefore created a dividing line between the private and public spheres and between faith and society.⁹⁶ “Facts belong to the public sphere, whereas values have been relegated to the private sphere.”⁹⁷ A third response was to “declare theology itself a science.”⁹⁸ Most troubling are the fourth and fifth responses to the Enlightenment. According to Bosch, the church attempted to create a “Christian society” but eventually embraced secular society whole-heartedly.⁹⁹

Reformation

Unfortunately, not all the necessary correctives to the late monastic period were helpful. Luther, Calvin and Bucer were instrumental in systematically rejecting monastic vows that formed a structured community as having no place in Christianity.¹⁰⁰ However, even though the Protestant movement started out attempting to grow apart from any structural approach like the monastic movement enjoyed, Protestants eventually had to create some structure in order to survive.¹⁰¹ “This omission represents the greatest error

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Jørgensen, “The Emergence and Challenge of the Missional Church Concept in the West,” 556.

⁹⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 276.

⁹⁹ Ibid. This does not strike me as much different from the Christendom of Constantine and is still an issue in today’s literature. For a searing critique of this line of thinking, see Hunter, 6-30.

¹⁰⁰ Allen, “Elements of Monastic Spirituality in Protestant Intentional Communities,” 173. For a fuller discussion on the break of Protestantism from Monasticism, Allen also points his reader to François Biot, *The Rise of Protestant Monasticism* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963).

¹⁰¹ Winter, 9. Winter makes a distinction between modalities and sodalities in Church growth. A modality is an organizational structure that is designed for long-term stability. It establishes routines and typically stays in one place for an extended period of time. The parish church is typically organized as a modality. A sodality is a group structure that is designed for mobility and trans-local activity. Their goal is not permanent residency, but seasonal, itinerant residency, that is marked with transition and travel. Winter saw monasticism as sodal because it tended to answer to the larger organizational church structure.

of the Reformation and the greatest weakness of the resulting Protestant tradition,” according to Winter.¹⁰²

While emphasizing a personal relationship with Christ is important, losing a sense of community to the autonomy of the individual has deeper implications than may have been initially realized. Here the proverbial chicken and egg dilemma exists—did this occur with a shift in understanding God or visa versa? Regardless, while elevating justification by faith and scripture (among other key characteristics of the Reformation), the relationality of the Trinity became secondary at best. Consequently, this has led theologians in the past 15-20 years to call for a revival of Trinitarian thinking and its implication for the way the church envisions life and mission today.¹⁰³

In another corner of the religious and socio-political landscape, Bosch points out the Enlightenment did more to shape spirituality than the other way around. “The entire Western missionary movement of the past three centuries emerged from the matrix of the Enlightenment.”¹⁰⁴ Now that human reason became elevated, so anthropology reflected a more optimistic view of man. With life being objectified, the Bible, faith and the Christian life itself also became objectified. Also, as purpose is eliminated, pragmatism became the catalyst for mission. As long as the right conditions were achieved, organizational success was guaranteed. So also, the sense of progress led Protestants to believe Western Christianity had a cure for the ills of the world. The distinction between

¹⁰² Ibid. Winter also suggests that had it not been for Pietists, Protestants would have been devoid of any renewing structure within their tradition.

¹⁰³ Simpson, “No Trinity, No Mission: The Apostolic Difference of Revisioning the Trinity,” 269. The two key modern day theologians associated with the retrieval of Trinitarian thinking are Karl Barth and Karl Rahner.

¹⁰⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 276.

fact and values opened mission to two distinct approaches. On the one extreme the social gospel emerged and on the other was only an emphasis on saving lost souls. And finally, with the notion that humans were now free and autonomous, whether implicitly or explicitly, God and humans are now rivals.¹⁰⁵

It may be some time before Christianity is able to shed its Enlightenment saturated ideologies. Time will tell that story. The call for missions and missionaries is to recover a Trinitarian theology of community that pulls God and his action back to the center of the missionary agenda.¹⁰⁶ Missionaries need a Trinitarian theology that sees relationality and community as not only reflecting who God is and what he is about but as the core and proof of their message. This chapter has shown, through the history of the church, how spiritual community and soul care have furthered and protected authentic Christianity until the Reformation of the church.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See Alan Roxburgh, "Rethinking Trinitarian Missiology," in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, ed. William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000).

CHAPTER 5

Missionary Spirituality in Community

A.W. Tozer once said, “Compared with our actual thoughts about [God], our creedal statements are of little consequence. Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is.”¹

Maybe it goes without saying; creeds, as well as our theological statements, declare what we think we believe. Yet, to only declare faith without the intentional process of working it out in our daily lives is irresponsible and dangerous. Truly, the way we live tells the real story—it reveals our core beliefs. But this is not to say our statements of doctrine or theology are unimportant; rather, they stand as a declaration of intent and direction in our living and thinking. This will outline a missionary spirituality of community and illustrate a model from our work in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Ministry Context

My wife and I have lived and worked cross-culturally for the past 14 years. Presently, we live in Chiang Mai, Thailand where we invest both locally and regionally in Christian leaders’ lives and ministries using a Christian formation model of leader development, which I will explain in the next section of this chapter. Regionally, our work involves contracting with Christian leaders for up to 18 months where they initially come and stay in our guesthouse up to 10 days for spiritual retreats, mentoring, or brief

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God, Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 4.

intensive counseling specific to a problem area in their lives and ministry. In the next quarter, either my wife or I travel to their context for a set amount of time giving a few extra days to work with their team. Three months later, the couple then travels back to Chiang Mai continuing work with us and so on until our contract period is ended or a point of resolve is reached. Between face-to-face visits, we maintain contact via Skype and email. Not wishing the couple or team to remain dependent upon us, the process is designed to wean them from not only receiving our help but also to develop an ongoing mutual investment in each other for continued personal and community growth.

Locally, our ministry focus is far more behind-the-scenes and specific. The behind-the-scenes nature of our work is that it is far more of a grassroots, over the backyard fence approach to leader development through hospitality and casual interaction within the community.² It is specific in that we focus on the leaders of leaders assuming they will be the last to seek any form of help and usually are the first to need a safe place to be heard.

Toward a Theology of Missionary Formation

A dynamic theology of formation that is thoroughly Trinitarian realizes and accepts the synergistic nature of God's work in the world: forming the individual within community and forming the community through individuals.³ According to Paul, a

² Peterson discusses the nature of pastoral ministry as behind the scenes or "subversive" since most front door approaches to people development rarely work well. See Eugene H. Peterson, Jim Lyster, and John Sharon, *Subversive Spirituality* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publications, 1994), 167-173.

³ I really see a couple of synergistic and overlapping activities of the Spirit in our formation. Paul tells us in Phil. 2:12-13 that our participation in salvation is cast within the backdrop of his deeper work in the heart to want to and act upon his good pleasure. At the same time, this deep work in the heart is not

believer's spiritual formation is set against the backdrop of God's work in the heart. "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," he tells believers, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12-13). Christian spiritual formation has as its focus the work of the Spirit in, among and through His people. For believers to be spiritually formed, they come under the shaping influence of the Spirit according to the will of God for the purpose of conforming them to the image of Christ.⁴ Christians do not do spiritual formation; the Spirit of God, placing both the individual and the Christian community in the center of Trinitarian activity, forms believers into the image of Christ (as individuals and a community).

Christian community is illustrated in Paul's writings by a "recurrent but frequently overlooked word *allelon* ("One another/each other")."⁵ Christian faith and formation is not an individual matter. "Everything is to be done with and for one another."⁶ Guder goes on to say:

Within the community of those who live "in Christ" by the power of the Holy Spirit, persons are to be "members of another" (Rms. 12:5), "build up each other" (1 Thes. 5:11), "love one another with mutual affection" (Rms. 12:10), "able to instruct one another" (Rms. 15:14), "become slaves to one another" (Gal. 5:13), and "live in harmony with one another" (Rms. 12:16). The social practice of Christian togetherness is how love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are lived out as believers "bear one another's burdens, and in this way... fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).⁷

apart from our formation within community. The community has a shaping influence on the individual and the individual's maturing effects the overall growth of the community.

⁴ Averbeck, "Spirit, Community, and Mission: A Biblical Theology for Spiritual Formation," 28.

⁵ Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 148.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Since formation is something acted upon believers in which they participate, working out one's salvation with fear and trembling throws Christians into the middle of the action. From the time of Dionysius, the early church has understood the progression of growth to be a movement or detachment from not-God (purgation), seeing what one's soul most deeply desires (illumination), and an attachment to God in love (union).⁸ While helpful, I still find this model frustrating. Developed into something more and more linear over time, the Three Way model leads one to assume a clear point of arrival, which seems to ignore the inherent paradox of living in union with God and separates believers from Trinitarian living.⁹

A believer's Christian spirituality cannot be understood apart from the Trinity; therefore what is needed is a better framework for envisioning this life.¹⁰ If Trinity is a shared dance of life and love, where Father, Son and Spirit, in loving wisdom, extended the dance to humanity through the incarnation of the Son and his finished work on the cross, one can begin to understand the implications of Trinitarian theology for Christian

⁸ This Three Way model of growth was not initially envisioned as successive stages of spiritual development, but as parallel methods of action at every stage. Over time the application of these "ways" became more "stages" of growth. See Laporte for a more comprehensive discussion and comparison of how the model progressed over time. S.J. Jean-Marc Laporte, "Understanding the Spiritual Journey: From the Classical Tradition to the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius," (2009). <http://www.jesuits.ca/orientations/stages%20in%20the%20spiritual%20journey.pdf> (accessed November 8, 2012). I also highly recommend John Coe's article reflecting on John of the Cross using the three way model. See John H. Coe, "Musings on the Dark Night of the Soul: Insights from St. John of the Cross on a Developmental Spirituality," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 28, no. 4 (2000).

⁹ To borrow a phrase, I think there is an "already/not yet" element to our life in God. Believers are in union with God and growing into that union at the same time.

¹⁰ Sarot, "Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of the Christian Community," 37.

formation.¹¹ Already mentioned in chapter 3, Chan points out three implications that may help better frame a revision of the Three Way tradition: union (*theosis*), communion (*henosis*), and mission (*kenosis*).¹²

For Chan, the first implication is union with God. When Jesus prays in his high priestly prayer that believers would be one *in the same way* he and the Father are one (Jn. 17:21-24), he immediately draws Christians into the life of the Trinity. The basis for “[a *believer’s*] relationship with God and with other believers is the relationship between the Father and the Son. We are called to and granted not just *a* relationship with God, but a share in *the very same* relationship that God the Son has enjoyed from all eternity with his Father.”¹³ “All of Christian life, and indeed all of human life, is directly related to the central relationship that exists.”¹⁴

Jesus hints of this life in union with him and the Father when he tells the disciples they can do nothing apart from him (Jn. 15:5). Paul explains this dynamic further. “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and *each member belongs to all the others*” (Rms. 12:4-5).¹⁵ Here we see Chan’s second implication. A believer’s *union* with God is at the same time a *communion* with fellow believers. Thomas Scirghi

¹¹ C. Baxter Kruger, “The Meaning of the Trinity,” in *Baxter’s Ongoing Thoughts* (Brandon, MS: 2011), 18.

¹² Chan, 52-55.

¹³ Donald Fairbairn, “Patristic Soteriology: Three Trajectories,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (2007): 309.

¹⁴ Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers*, Kindle ed. loc. 406.

¹⁵ Emphasis mine.

notes, “The individual and community are inter-related.”¹⁶ Thus, living this Trinitarian life expresses a unity that, according to Carl Braaten, “presupposes and gives ultimate value to relationship, reciprocity, and mutuality among members in a loving communion of equals.”¹⁷

The final implication reflects God’s activity in the world. Within the Trinity, “life and work are inseparable.”¹⁸ A believer’s life *is* the story God is telling. Simply put, Christians are and participate in the *Missio Dei*—one cannot separate mission from being. Whether eating or drinking or whatever one does, it is for the glory of God.¹⁹ Nowhere in scripture is there a distinction between the life one lives in Christ and the work done for him. This life mission of the church is best summed up in the word love. Where God loves the world (Jn. 3:16), believers too, taking on his life, love the world.²⁰ This is the reason for Christian existence—to enjoy the life of love given to believers in Christ and to become a co-lover with him.²¹

So, continuous union with God, deepening communion with others, and widening mission in the world now provides the backdrop for a revised Three Way model using Kreeft’s categories of formation where one can begin to envision a more dynamic process of formation within a Trinitarian context:

¹⁶ Scirghi, “The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society,” 341.

¹⁷ Braaten, “The Triune God: The Source and Model of Christian Unity and Mission,” 425.

¹⁸ Chan, 54.

¹⁹ 1 Cor. 10:31. Paraphrase mine.

²⁰ I envision something quite dynamic here. While we can say that we love, we also discover how poorly we do so in our broken relationships and excursions into sin. The point here is simply that life and ministry are bound up completely in the One who is love, drawing the world to join in the dance.

²¹ Johnson, 63.

- 1) The Ecclesiastes experience of waking up to despair—“life is meaningless.”
- 2) The Job experience of seeing hope in suffering—“I am immoral wanting something more than I want God.”
- 3) The Song of Songs experience of finding self in love—“God delights in me and I am alive in him.”²²

This cycle not only expresses an intra-personal experience but is also indicative of inter-personal encounters as well. The Ecclesiastes experience describes the process of coming to an end of self. There is a feeling of failing to make sense of things and a lack of passion. Facing the meaninglessness of life brings a person to see that all attempts to make life work are bankrupt and futile, which opens one to true detachment from anything not God. Ecclesiastes shows the sheer despair of seeking life apart from God.

“The Job experience initiates the process of moral brokenness, where we admit that we are not who we most long to be, who we should be, who God intends us to be; and, even more painfully, where we acknowledge that we have become an immoral and amoral person, that we are bankrupt of every good thing.”²³ So, the Job experience eventually awakens believers to the intensity of their desire for God, where like Job they can say, “I admit I once lived by rumors of you; now I have it all firsthand—from my own eyes and ears” (Job 42:5 (MSG))!

A Song of Songs experience takes shape as one begins to more fully grasp why grace is needed in the first place and the subsequent brokenness leads to repentance.

²² See Peter Kreeft, *Three Philosophies of Life: Ecclesiastes--Life as Vanity, Job--Life as Suffering, Song of Songs--Life as Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989).

²³ Larry Crabb, “The School of Spiritual Direction Training Manual,” (New Way Ministries, 2002), 9.

Entering more fully into the Trinitarian life believers discover and celebrate their existence as a source of pleasure for God and themselves as well.²⁴

Where else can one face the paradoxical realities of living cross-culturally except in true community? A thoroughly Trinitarian spiritual community will have three components. First, a Trinitarian spiritual community of missionaries will be characterized as a discerning community (communion) that deeply believes God is always up to something good, even in the midst of an Ecclesiastes experience, opening the missionary to deeper faith. Second, spiritual community will be characterized as a transforming community (union) willing to wait with people in their brokenness, embracing hope above despair. The final component of spiritual community is expressed as an incarnational community (mission) caught up in the wonder of being loved and loving others.²⁵

Fleshing these categories out further, maturing missionaries, living in spiritual community will exhibit these three qualities: union with God in love (Eph. 3:16–19), spiritual hunger (Deut. 8:1–5), and a passionate expression of Christ (Phil. 2:3–5). Union with God turns moral formation into Spirit wrought transformation.²⁶ There is:

- 1) An increased sensitivity to one's impact on God and others, as well as a compelling passion to glorify God that is stronger than any other passion.

²⁴ I sense the inadequacy of words at this juncture partly because I remain in process and this dynamic is exactly that, a dynamic process of ongoing movement. Any model at this point may fall prey to the allure of linear thinking and somehow leave off the mystery of change and the inner dynamic of actual growth that is far from formulaic. My ideas for this section came from Larry Crabb's school of spiritual direction. The adaptation and experience is mine. See *ibid*.

²⁵ I borrowed the broad categories of discerning, transforming and incarnational community from *ibid*.

²⁶ Developed from a personal email correspondence with my friend, Trip Moore, on July 11, 2012.

- 2) A growing hatred for everything in the self that robs God of pleasure.
- 3) A growing freedom to be authentic with God and others.
- 4) The ability to hear God's voice more clearly through Scripture and prayer.
- 5) A growing sense of stability and freedom based on the reality of God's presence rather than needing an experience of God's presence.

Spiritual hunger uncovers one's deepest allegiances and replaces independence with interdependence. There is:

- 1) A growing comfortability with our own interior mess.
- 2) An ongoing and growing hunger for God that competes with all other hungers (whether circumstantial or relational).
- 3) An eager willingness to be productively disrupted by the input of people who know them well.²⁷
- 4) A growing realization that nothing brings believers the deep kind of satisfaction for which they long. The things that used to bring satisfaction (people, events, possession) do so less and less. Consequently, there is a growing dissatisfaction with life at the deepest level (an increased groaning)²⁸ and there is also an increasing attachment to the hope that nothing in this world can fulfill.²⁹

A passionate expression of Christ reflects a believer's deepest calling of others-centered living and loving. There is:

1. A growing compassion for others that replaces cynicism and judgmentalism.
2. A growing desire to offer a taste of God's goodness in relationships.

²⁷ Ps. 139:23.

²⁸ See 2 Cor. 5:2; Rms. 8:19-24.

²⁹ See 1 Pe. 1:13; Ps. 73:25; Rms. 8:23-24.

3. A growing receptivity and openness to the process God is working out in others.
4. A humble sense of mutuality and service in the journey of life.

Gather, Build, Deepen

Transformational, discerning, and incarnational community does not happen accidentally. Intentional living is required. In the same way the monastics lived into the questions of injustices and disunity found in the church and society of their day, so missions today has the same opportunity and challenge.³⁰ Missionaries cannot afford to take lightly their responsibility and the potential to display the truth of the gospel in the way they live and interact among themselves and the world.

While it is important for individual missionaries to engage spiritual practices and stand as a ‘prophetic protest’ to mediocre Christianity, there needs to be a better defined backdrop or context to their life in community—particularly on the mission field.³¹ A missionary monastic rule is not in view here, though the above categories could eventually be the basis for such a document. Missionaries would even do well to consider a way of life that adopts Patrick’s model for living out one’s discipleship and making disciples in the process.³²

³⁰ See chapter 4 of this study and Henry, “Monastic Mission: The Monastic Tradition as Source for Unity and Renewal Today,” 275.

³¹ The fact that missionaries leave all to live cross-culturally is in many ways a stance against mediocre Christianity. This is not to say that missionaries are the only ones who lead responsible Christian lives. There are many marks of ‘prophetic protest’, which are not discussed in this study. For more on the life-style advantages to the monastic community, see Allen, “Elements of Monastic Spirituality in Protestant Intentional Communities,” 171.

³² Patrick’s model today could look like: (1) Living contemplatively, (2) Having a soul friend or two, (3) Involvement in a small spiritual formation group, (4) Investing in the common life of both fellow missionaries and the cross-cultural context within which missionaries live, (5) Cross-pollinating ministry together. See note 42 in chapter 4 of this study and Hunter, 37.

The proposed model is intentional as much as it is supernatural. Life for the cross-cultural Christian worker is ambiguous and paradoxical. Missionaries struggle with identity, loss, anger, loneliness, and privilege. Each of these brings varying levels of joy and pain. Each has its own continuum in a crisis of faith, hope, and love. My wife and I have spoken into such situations regionally and locally through hospitality, mentoring, counseling, seminars, workshops, and retreats.

Our approach to cultivating and nurturing spiritual community in Chiang Mai is three-fold: Gather Community, Build Community, and Deepen Community. When ‘gathering community’, we create contexts to quietly break down the boundaries between agencies, denominations and culture. The invitation is to any who will come. In Chiang Mai, there is not a lot to do, so we come up with various ways to aid in forming relationships and learning to enjoy each other’s company. For us, the whole effort falls under the spiritual discipline of hospitality—of making a place for people to share life together and heighten an awareness of God. We host organizational dinners, holiday celebrations, and even birthday parties for singles who do not have people locally to celebrate them. My wife hosts makeover brunches using ‘free gift with purchase’ donations from ladies in the states. The amazing thing to note is the ministry partnerships that begin to form through these events. People step beyond differences and begin to network and learn to care for one another through common interests beyond their work.

Opportunities for ‘building community’ naturally arise through the gathering contexts. With a mood of looking beyond the obvious to see and hear the work of God in a person’s soul, it does not take long in conversation for a trained ear and compassionate heart to realize someone is searching, needing, wanting...something...God. Intentional

conversation is needed. For the missionary, context and timing is crucial when speaking into their lives. Expanding our ‘over the backyard fence’, behind-the-scenes, intentional investment in leader’s lives, we offer thematic workshops, retreats, and small groups designed to speak into their lives on felt needs. Often we are asked to lead a retreat or workshop for teams in the region wanting further input and direction in ways and means of team development. Avoiding a cookie cutter approach to these more intimate contexts, we make it a point to interview the team or key members of the group so to more specifically shape the message to the people concerned.

Locally, we formed something we call, “Dinner Discussion Groups” to meet specific needs of leaders in our community, which I will outline in the next section. House church also provides a deeper level of community. All we are doing is creating more intimate contexts for taking truth a step further and speaking to the question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” in a particular community context.

Within the more intimate contexts of small groups and retreats, inevitably someone asks for more time. These individualized, intentional conversations are the context for ‘deepening community’. Depending upon the need, these moments can look a lot like counseling, mentoring, spiritual direction, coaching, or spiritual friending. In the end, the goal is to foster their union with God in love, cultivate their spiritual hunger, and release their passionate expression of Christ.

Dinner Discussion Groups

The best illustration of this recommended model for missionary spiritual community is our Dinner Discussion Groups. Some years ago we came across a magazine article about a couple that enjoyed cooking and were lamenting the loss of

actual community gatherings around a good meal and a great bottle of wine. In their desire to meet new people and actually create a place for community to happen, they decided upon a plan to invite a certain number of people who were then asked to invite someone else to the dinner party. The couple would cook and the guests were to bring the wine. Apparently, the idea became such a success the couple was stopped frequently on the street asking for an invitation to their dinner events.

Realizing a similar lament in us and capitalizing on our belief that hospitality is not only a lost art but also a significant means of entry into people's lives, we created a similar initiative with a twist. We wanted everyone to linger, to enter the art of chatting deeply. But missionaries are a tough group. As leaders, they are far more comfortable and familiar with talking about their work, not their hearts. So, our first requirement was simply that they could not talk shop. Also, we decided to send out an article for them to read and engage in preparation for our time together. The intent was not to discuss the tenets of the author's argument but to talk about how the article stirred our hearts and then invite others into our journey just a little. We are quite clear; Dinner Discussion Group is not a therapy group, nor is it a back door attempt to create another house church. The intent is to journey together as fellow leaders and learn how to cultivate spiritual community.

In our first attempt, we created two groups that met monthly. Meeting more often was not feasible due to travel schedules and the many other commitments we each faced in our leadership responsibilities. In the first year, one group flourished while the other never fully got off the ground due to scheduling difficulties and, we suspect, a poor mix

of people. In the following year, the group that flourished asked if they could continue as a group and we started another group as well, which equally flourished.

The discussion groups have now provided enough momentum to launch the next phase. We plan to offer a new discussion group each year as a means of ‘gathering community’. The background question in the discussions is simply, “How are you, really?” The purpose for each new group is to encourage new relationships, communicate an enjoyment of and encourage each person participating, and pique their interest for more. The means, as mentioned above, is through the use of random articles that speak to the heart, a fine meal and atmosphere designed to foster stimulating conversations, and directional conversations that draw people out. The desired results will be seen in the cross-pollinating relationships, individuals and marriages encouraged, an internal buoyancy that begins to flow into others, and a growing intimacy with God and others.

If the first year group reflects an attitude of ‘invitation’, then the second year group is more intentional in ‘building community’ with the background question of, “How are we on the Way?” The purpose of the second year group is to take existing relationships a bit further and deeper as we learn the art of group spiritual direction. This will give the participants and chance to explore inter-personal and intra-personal dynamics they may face within a safe environment. Again, since this is not intended to be a therapy group, the conditions of our sharing are to cultivate a sense of living prayer as we learn to be more authentic within a discerning, transforming, and incarnational community. The means, or method, is to choose participants from the previous year’s groups, provide more intentional thought provoking questions included with the reading (as apposed to the more random nature of interacting with the reading in the previous

group). The context of meeting around a meal will remain the same with one addition. My wife and I will meet with each participant as individuals or couples apart from the dinner each month. Our desired results are to see folks more stirred in their passion for God and to step beyond the safety of the group to reproduce these elements of community within their own contexts. As well, we would like to see shared ministry partnerships between the participants.

The third and final year calls for a full investment from the participants, pondering the background question, “How is God releasing me?” The purpose of this year’s discussion group is to begin looking at entrenched places in the heart that get in the way of life and ministry. The participants will be hand picked from the second year groups and will meet regularly, as individuals, with a spiritual mentor and/or friend. We will plan and prepare two spiritual retreats as a group for more structured teaching, talking, listening, thinking, praying, worship, and rest. The desired result is an ongoing spiritual formation that turns away from moral formation, more spiritual hunger, and a growing passion and love for others.

Our plan includes specific content that will change as we grow and our community changes. The intent and focus is more on ethos and spiritual growth than content transfer. This is partly due to our personality as counselors and allows the group dynamic to direct some of the content and direction. Each year is intended to build upon the previous year allowing the participants a chance to shape things to their learning community with application to their primary communities outside the group. It should also be noted that we have only ‘white boarded’ this plan to give room for our staff to make adjustments as they apply this idea in their own context as well.

Truly, the greatest obstacle we face is the multi-faceted view of community within the expat Christian community of multi-nationals, multiple denominations and a vast spectrum of opinions about missiology and the necessity of community within their cross-cultural lives. Taking on these discrepant and diverse life contexts is not our intention. In fact, we are pretty sure a head on approach will lose the battle. A behind-the-scenes approach, I think, is necessary to win the day. Folks simply cannot know what we are trying to accomplish in their hearts unless they ask, which is far more rare than one might imagine.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to outline a missionary spirituality of community that is thoroughly Trinitarian and to illustrate a model from our work in Chiang Mai, Thailand that reflects important aspects from monastic church history. Embracing a Trinitarian reality for life and ministry where transformation, discernment, and incarnation become the ethos of missionary life together, will best come in slow, behind the scenes experiences of true community made up of individuals who are growing in union with God in love, spiritually hungry, and passionately expressing Christ through their lives. Hunter reminds us that when a church (or in this case, a missionary community) is able to embrace a common narrative and common practices in a caring and accountable community, spiritual formation will “unfold as a natural expression of its common life.”³³ If Plueddermann is correct, that, “the goal of mission is to foster the life long process of spiritual formation among every tribe, people, and language”... and that,

³³ Hunter, 237.

“worship is both the motivation and the goal of spiritual formation in world missions,”
then all missionaries are their brother and sister’s keeper.³⁴

³⁴ *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions.*

CHAPTER 6

Recommendations and Curriculum

The purpose of this study was to develop a theological backdrop for missionary mutual care through spiritual community and thus promote a more intentional approach to relationships among missionaries for the sake of their own longevity and validation of their message to a lost world. The call to foreign missions embodies the call to love God and others; this includes fellow missionaries of other nationalities, agencies, and denominational backgrounds.

With the concern for missionary longevity and vitality, agency leaders need to proactively address the way their personnel interact among themselves and with fellow missionaries in their immediate locale. As was noted in chapter 2, missionaries that learn to live in community will have less conflict and difficulty with culture shock and other stressors endemic to cross-cultural mission life. These conclusions are illustrated well in the research on social support and culture shock among foreign students.¹ How missionaries relate to one another shapes the national's perception of the Gospel and the nature of Christ's church. "Forming of Christian community is not an option but the very lifestyle and vocation of the church."² Therefore, it is imperative that missionary research

¹ See Canchu Lin, "Culture Shock and Social Support: An Investigation of a Chinese Student Organization on a Us Campus," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 35, no. 2 (2006).; Stella Pantelidou and Tom K. J. Craig, "Culture Shock and Social Support," *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology* 41, no. 10 (2006).; Alfred P. Rovai, "Building Sense of Community at a Distance," *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 3, no. 1 (2002). For example, studies of exchange students are showing an association between a lack of support and psychological distress. Pantelidou and Craig, "Culture Shock and Social Support," 778.

² Guder and Barrett, 153.

go beyond “what keeps good people going” to the correlation between longevity and community.³

I was only able to locate two articles on mutual care of missionaries with a smattering of dissertations offering suggestions on spiritual formation training of leaders. In each case, the authors strongly encourage a high priority and commitment to some form of mutuality among missionaries.⁴ I recommend further exploration into the reasons missionaries and agencies seemingly fail to see the urgency in these pleas. With the present level of research and the elements of network, specialist, and sender care shaping up in significant ways, it is imperative mutual care take center stage in research for a while.

This study provides a theological foundation and way of thinking about Trinitarian spiritual community for missionaries that is thoroughly grounded in church history. By expressing a Trinitarian reality within community, missionaries can cultivate a growing culture of mutuality, trust, wholeness, and health in the way they relate, which will have an incredible influence in the sending agency, team, surrounding mission culture and the cross-cultural setting within which they minister. While the dynamic of Trinitarian relating in the context of spiritual formation is presented, ‘gathering, building,

³ Taylor, “Revisiting a Provocative Theme: The Attrition of Longer-Term Missionaries,” 79.

⁴ Laura Mae Gardner, “Proactive Care of Missionary Personnel,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 15, no. 4 (1987): 313.; Williams, 58.; Williamson.; Tidwell.; Amy Shane, “A Survey of Intentional Spiritual Formation Training among Mission Sending Agencies, Missionaries, and Member Care Agencies.” (Denver Seminary, 2013).; Brian Keith Rice, “Providing Spiritual Direction to Christian Leaders in Isolated Ministry Contexts Using an Internet Based Delivery System” (Bethel Seminary, 2006).; Craig S. Oldenburg and George Fox University, “Experiential Formations: Influences of Apprenticeship, Mentoring, and Intentional Community on Spiritual Formation” (George Fox Seminary, 2006).; Beth Jeanine Davis, “Building Interpersonal Relationship Skills among Missionaries in Assemblies of God World Missions Northern Asia Region” (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2008).; Chong.

and deepening community’ can be applied variously. The Dinner Discussion Groups were outlined as an example.

The long-term goal of this thesis is to develop a dynamic curriculum that gives practical guidance to missionaries within their particular context for developing and living in spiritual community. I have resisted a systematized approach in curriculum development for fear this only adds to the growing number of models that fall into misuse over time—similar to my concern over the Three Way model mentioned in chapter 5. The goal is to provide a way of thinking about relationships and to cultivate a mood and deeper understanding of what the leader actually wants *for* their team as well as to help them put words to what they want *from* their team.

Curriculum Structure and Content

Whether used in a small group or a larger context, the overall structure of this curriculum can remain the same with small adjustments for context or time demands so it is easily shaped to the participant. Also, by providing a way of thinking that stimulates an individual’s union with God in love, spiritual hunger, and passion in expressing Christ, the participant can make the material their own and apply it quickly. Rephrasing the key benefits gained from the monastics, I would say they taught us to “know ourselves, be ourselves, and give ourselves.”⁵

⁵ Initially an off the cuff statement to Dr. Meade’s request of a leader’s mantra based upon my reading for his class, chats, and class discussion on leadership. It also happens to nicely summarize my study of the monastics in chapter 4. These sentiments are reflected in present literature on leadership. Note, George and Sims statement that self-awareness is “central to becoming an authentic leader.” George and Sims, 67. Kouzes, encourages leaders to “find [their] voice” Kouzes and Posner, 47. Rath and Conchie aid leaders in discovering and leading from their strengths. See Rath and Conchie.

Leaders know their strengths. Some may even be able to articulate their weaknesses. But do they really know themselves? Questions like, “Who am I really?” “What am I about?” “Where do I see the work of the Spirit in me and what still needs a lot of work?” need to be asked on a regular basis. Certainly, there is any number of helpful tools to aid in the discovery of the self. However, knowing oneself is more than understanding strengths and weaknesses, needs and desires, values and motives.⁶ Paying attention requires an ongoing awareness of one’s approach to relationships (*present story*), how one handles relational pain in light of one’s values, beliefs and motives (*inside story*), as well as facing the energy in one’s heart bound up in their view of and attitude toward God (*deepest story*). If knowing self does not include uncovering a deepening hunger for and union with God as well as personal brokenness that keeps one from fully embracing these God implanted desires, the person is missing something profoundly essential in their leadership.

This means missionaries need to wrestle more with following Jesus into “personal and relational darkness with His light”⁷ rather than focusing primarily on character development.⁸ They must grapple with God in the totality of their life, which ushers them, by necessity, into the ugly elements they would rather leave unattended.⁹ This holistic leadership by nature is an interactive, organic, and interconnected process that

⁶ George and Sims, 76.

⁷ Lawrence J. Crabb, *Real Church: Does It Exist? Can I Find It?* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 54. See also, Eph. 5:8b-14a.

⁸ Meade, Kindle ed. loc. 1519. Also note: while I appreciate the discussion on character development and the importance in a leader’s development, I think it misses the mark setting Christian leaders up for eventual failure.

⁹ Hunter, 226-229.

demands relational holiness as much as it requires personal holiness.¹⁰ Therefore, missionary leadership is only as good as it is open to the mirror of relationships and is willing to live into the reality of its impact in the lives of those they serve.

Knowing oneself must include facing the loss underlying anger, the despair behind cynicism, and the ways in which one addictively sate's his or her soul from feeling the impact of living in a fallen world and so dull a genuine response to God, self and others. This means missionaries must welcome opportunities to face seasons of "pride-shattering brokenness that [has the potential of arousing their] appetite for God into a desire stronger than for anything else."¹¹

With this in mind, the questions missionaries must ask themselves begin to take a different shape. Rather than asking, "what am I about?", for example, missionaries now begin to ponder whether they see a hunger for God within their emptiness and loneliness.¹² Where do they see their appetite for God growing stronger as a result of facing their inner demons and with whom do they journey into these dark regions of their soul, and on whose behalf do they make the journey? Is their hope in God stronger than their need for an experience of God? Are they as much aware of what they want *from* others, as they are of what they want *for* them?¹³

¹⁰ Meade, Kindle ed. loc. 1070. For more on understanding holiness in relational terms, see Kruger, *The Great Dance*, 25.

¹¹ Crabb, 54.

¹² These questions can easily be applied to culture shock, burnout, and the like.

¹³ I think it is both impossible and naïve to assume that as leaders we want more for a person than we want from them. In reality, both work in creative tension. The issue is whether we allow the questions to purify each other. E.g. in a perfect world, I want my wife to experience the kind of love her soul was meant to enjoy as much as I want to experience it myself. If I only focus on wanting that kind of love for her, eventually my love becomes lopsided in that it does not invite her into the kind of loving reciprocity of

“There is nothing more difficult than knowing who [we are]. There is no greater adventure than trying to find out.”¹⁴ Knowing oneself is a process that will last a lifetime requiring intentionality, effort and grace. However, becoming self-aware is only part of the challenge.¹⁵ Entering the mystery of how one is made, one’s responses to life and God, and one’s mixed desires require that believers live by faith—of believing the Father defines one’s deepest identity, the life of Christ is resident within, and the Spirit empowers believers toward life and godliness.¹⁶ This becomes a synergistic and dynamic interplay of knowing self and knowing Him.¹⁷ Thus, one’s self-awareness, if it is honest, opens one to life outside of oneself.¹⁸

Being oneself is not so much about reflecting self-knowledge as it is entering the process of knowing self in relation to God, self and others. Individuals will always undergo a process of self-awareness. How one lives with an understanding of self is the compelling issue at this juncture. It is like an ongoing turning aside, taking off one’s shoes and paying attention to the burning bushes in life. It is a matter of looking for Him in the ordinary, mundane moments. “The burning bush was, after all, a most ordinary

relating to me. She was designed to give love as much as she was designed to receive it. Unless I call her to both, my love is limited and most likely self-serving.

¹⁴ Alan W. Jones, *The Soul's Journey: Exploring the Three Passages of the Spiritual Life with Dante as a Guide*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 3. Quoted in Crabb, 11.

¹⁵ George and Sims, 81. I agree that self-awareness is half the battle but take issue with their understanding of “self love.” Paul exhorts Roman believers to have an accurate knowledge of self (Rms. 12:3) according to their measure of faith.

¹⁶ Eph. 1: 3-13; 2 Pe. 1: 3ff. See also, Crabb, 11.

¹⁷ See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., The Library of Christian Classics, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 35-38. For Calvin, without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God and vice versa.

¹⁸ I refer to Trinitarian relating that combines relating to God, self and others. Simon Chan is quite helpful in this regard. Chan, 52-55. My thinking here is also reflected in part by George and Sims, 70.

object that became extraordinary because it was on fire with divine activity.”¹⁹ So, relational holiness becomes the means and impetus for seeing God’s divine activity in others.

Being oneself, as one who is growing in self-awareness, means that one is able and willing to hear his or her impact on others. Questions like the following become important in being oneself: “What is it like being my wife?” “How do you experience me as a father, leader, friend, parishioner?” “What stirs in me as I relate to this person?” Being oneself, a person enters and engages feelings of loss so that one’s anger is diffused into sorrow and humility.²⁰ A person also enters and engages his or her feelings of despair in ways that replace cynicism with hope and holiness.²¹ As well, a person will grapple with his or her addiction to self, by embracing sacredness and substance.²²

Being oneself is not an attitude of “this is who I am, take it or leave it.” Rather, it is an attitude of humble assurance that one is in process—a synergistic process of

¹⁹ R. Ruth Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 64.

²⁰ 2 Cor. 7: 8-11. I’m loosely defining loss as the reality of living in a fallen world that does not work as we wish or even as we were designed to enjoy it. Loss is also a relational matter where we are failed in relationship and we fail others. In every case, as an image bearer, these losses are an assault on our soul. Rather than turn to fight or flight, I understand sorrow and humility to be a mature response to these harsh realities.

²¹ Ezek. 40: 1-2; 4-5; 43: 2, 4-5. Despair is an existential wallow in the possibility that little meaning really exists and life offers little, if anything, to look forward to. Kruger defines holiness as the wonder and beauty, uniqueness, health and rightness of the Trinitarian life. See Kruger, *The Great Dance*, 25. Hope recognizes the Spirit is at work whether we see Him or not.

²² 1 Cor. 3: 1-4; Heb. 5: 11-14. Sacredness takes us beyond the myopia and preoccupation with ourselves into the awe and wonder of God’s work around us and in us in ways that chip away at our illusions. Substance is a putting away of childish things in deference for the meat of the Word.

working out his or her salvation with fear and trembling within the broader context of God's work within.²³

What I have attempted to establish up to this point is a reframing of Hunter's "faithful presence."²⁴ Knowing oneself and being oneself is a matter of being fully present to one's faith community as much as it is being present to those who are not.²⁵ Yet, there is a cost to this kind of leadership. "There is no true leadership without putting at risk one's time, wealth, reputation, and position."²⁶ Everything goes on the line if believers are to be faithfully present in their immediate community. Giving oneself begins with embracing brokenness as prerequisite for being present in the first place.²⁷ As Allender points out, God's model of leadership is to choose "fools who live foolishly in order to reveal the economy of heaven, which reverses and inverts the wisdom of this world. He calls us to brokenness, not performance; to relationships, not commotion; to grace, not success."²⁸

What is in view is a life of ongoing repentance, of abandoning power in favor of love, which frees us to offer ourselves to our faith community, our tasks, and our larger

²³ Phil. 2: 12-13.

²⁴ Hunter, 243.

²⁵ Ibid., 244.

²⁶ Ibid., 259.

²⁷ 1 Tim. 1: 15-16. Our starting place is not that we are broken because we sin. Rather, we sin because we are broken. Therefore, we must be aware of our brokenness in the use of our time, wealth, reputation, and position regardless of how small.

²⁸ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2006), 55.

spheres of influence as for the Lord.²⁹ Practically, this way of life takes on a similar feel to what Allender describes as Paul’s example of inverted leadership. “[Paul] leads by taking the greatest risk of all—inviting dialogue, creating a context for story, living into tension and ambiguity, and blessing chaos as the context for brave souls to find a way through complexity.”³⁰

The quick review of the core curriculum above provides an overarching outline whether gathering community in large settings like conferences, building community through more intimate settings like seminars, workshops, and group spiritual direction, or when deepening community and mentoring individuals or couples in their process of growth. This provides opportunity to explore personal stories in multiple levels of their experience.³¹

Another example where this model is evidenced in missions is through the BREATHE Conference held annually in Wilderswil, Switzerland.³² Missionaries from around the world gather within the provided context to ‘breathe’. The conference is designed to give missionaries time and space within a tranquil setting for personal reflection, rest, worship, and interaction with others in the journey where they learn to build community in a safe context. Counseling and soul care is provided each day to

²⁹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 63. See also, Hunter, 243-247. Hunter uses Col. 3: 22-24 to illustrate his point regarding our approach to tasks. I think it should be used in the broader context as well.

³⁰ Allender, 52.

³¹ I parenthetically mention present, inside, and deepest stories to illustrate the layers in telling our stories. Depending upon the context, each of these layers can provide all sorts of information to process in small groups or with a spiral director, counselor, or mentor.

³² Daniel Hahn and Lori Hahn, “Catalyst International” <http://www.catalystintl.org> (accessed December 17, 2013).

cultivate deepening community; as well as medical consultation and professional massage therapy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by creating an environment of mutuality where union with God, spiritual hunger, and one's passion for Jesus are celebrated and enhanced through transforming, discerning and incarnational community, these cross-cultural ministers will enjoy increasing vitality in ministry and validate the good news of Christ. Simply put, mutual care among missionaries is essential to their well-being and the message they represent.

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