

5-40  
Sandy Pines,  
Aug. 4, 1999

Theological Discussion Group  
Members:

In the light of our discussion at our last meeting, I thought that it would be helpful to go on from where we were last time.

It seems to me that the Rev. Clarence Boomsma set forth in his questions at our last meeting, the underlying resistance of many pastors to pressure from the side of evangelistic activity and from the concept of active missionary endeavor, as though this undercut or devaluated what was viewed as traditional pastoral work.

Secondly, there was resistance to preaching as defined as the proclamation of the total gospel and its call to repentance and faith. There was resistance to so-called evangelistic preaching, that is, in the liturgical worship setting. (cf. Prof. H. Dekker). True preaching was viewed as the exposition of the Word of God in a properly ecclesiastically-called public worship service.

Mission and evangelism were options for those so-inclined. In many ways the missionary and evangelist were eccentric to the main organization and its functioning. This was true re assemblies and other aspects of the life of the church. The church did not know what to do with their missionaries, and to many pastors a popular missionary was a threat.

This resulted in the fact that prayers for missions were often of a very general nature. And as a denomination we struggled with the methodology of calling missionaries. And the home missionary activity has not fit in well with the structure. And part of all this was a struggle between the synodical operation and the tendencies toward local congregationalism.

Perhaps last time we dealt too much with the power-struggle aspect, and the clash of personalities. We have to examine the stress and strains in our structure, and the challenge to the ecclesial institutions going back to Zinzendorf and others.

I will have something else to bring to the meeting, but this should get us started.

We may be moving back into town, so I haven't been able to concentrate on this like I would have been inclined to.

I am sorry that I said a few things last time that should not have been said in a public meeting, without said=people present. I apologize for that.

Sincerely,

  
R.R. Recker



### The Concept of Mission

Definition in brief of the mission of God:

The Missio Dei is that trinitarian redemptive activity of God in history, grounded in and validated by God's atoning work in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah of God, and vitalized and empowered by the Spirit of Pentecost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, by which God reclaims His world from rebellion, sin, and death, delivering it from the Satanic grasp, and leads it, His creation (redeemed humanity), to the goal which He has purposed for it from the beginning!

We of the Reformed tradition have emphasized the sovereignty of God, the reality of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and that in our impotence we are saved alone by grace. Hence the modern emphasis that at the heart of the concept of mission we must see the very mission (purposes and implementing program) of the living God. Already years ago our Professor Samuel Volbeda made this the very core of his treatment of the biblical principles of missions.

We must also note that the word mission comes from the Latin missio, and that the corresponding Greek apostellein is the root of our words "apostle" and "apostolate". The latter collective word has become very popular in the last couple of decades in the Netherlands. At the heart of these words are the English words: to send, sent and sentness! This immediately refers beyond the person who is sent to the one who is sending him. That is, in good biblical fashion our eyes are turned away from man to the God who coopts and sends in His program, to the great missionary of God, the Christ (John 4:34), who in turn sends his own disciples into all the world (John 20:21; Mt. 28:19). The person sent is thus a representative of the sender (Mt. 28:19; II Cor. 5:20), and the Sender is present with the person sent (Mt. 28:20). The authority remains, however, the authority of the Sender (Mt. 28:18). The term apostolate emphasizes that we are not a group of scattered sent-individuals, but that we are a sent-community. We are the congregation which is in Christ, one body; we are the New Testament people of God who are on mission.

Thus when we speak of the Christian mission we are speaking of the role (the representational identity) of the New Testament people of God who are dispersed in the world. Truly fearing God and delighting in His will makes us or leads us to identify with His purposes for and program in the world. In love we are drafted to work with God (II Cor. 6:1; I Cor. 3:9), to cooperate with the working out of God's redemptive plan for His world. We however must continue to recognize that this service as God's messengers is also a gift of grace and performed only by grace. In our justification as sinners we live by grace, but equally well in our service in Christ we are justified by grace. Fundamentally it is God who is at work (II Cor. 5:18). Yahweh is salvation (Jonah 2:9); He alone is Savior (Isa. 45:22; 43:11; 44:6). It is God, therefore, who wills and executes the salvation of His world, and in this process He graciously deigns to use sinful men, His covenantal sons and daughters.



This missionary service flows out of the truth that we by grace have been found in Christ! We have been brought so near to Christ that we have been touched by his passion; we have become identified with his crusade. Christians are "sent ones" because this identity and representational capacity for purposeful witnessing flows out of the anointing of Christ, God's arch missionary-mediator between God and man. Such sending is made possible by the central-foundational atoning work of the Christ, and as the risen ascended Lord he activates and stimulates us to mission through the gift of the Holy Spirit who effectuates the redemptive will of God. He qualifies us for that mission of daily translation of the Gospel.

It is the Holy Spirit of God who is the contact point between God and man, and between man and man. He opens doors and He stimulates hearts to respond to the saving impact of the Christ of God and to rest in the living or life-giving fellowship of the Spirit. Pentecost is to be seen as a great day in the life of the people of God, for that day marked and symbolized God's rejuvenation of the historical people of God who had received the Messiah of God. But Pentecost also enabled God's people to fulfil the old prophetic declaration, "Ye are my witnesses" (Isa. 43:10, 12; 44:8; Acts 1:8); the Spirit of God is to be the source of their witnessing power (Isa. 44:3-5; Joel 2:28-29). And this witnessing address is to aim at the target of the nations, the entire inhabited world. The Spirit but explicates and applies to the nations the victory and treasures of the Messiah of God (Ps. 98:1-3; 96:3; 98:2).

It is God who reigns over all the world (Ps. 93:1-2; 94:2, 10; 96:10, 13; 97:1, 9; 99:1-2), and who calls all peoples to account (Ps. 47; 66:4, 7-8; 67; 68:29-32; 72:18-19; Hab. 2:13-14, 20). The Christ of God who is both the Son of God and the Son of David is hence of the royal line. Upon his resurrection Christ is exalted to the right hand of God and reigns, all authority having been given him (Mt. 28:18). He has gained the victory over sin, death, the grave, and the entire demonic world. As a reward for his messianic redeeming work, the Messiah receives the right to reign from the throne of the universe. He receives from the Father his messianic inheritance, along with the right and the power to reclaim it, to subjugate the rebellious subjects of the realm. He proceeds in royal fashion to claim that which is his (Ps. 2:7-12; Rev. 6:2; 19:11-16; 3:21). The entire book of Revelation is really a comforting reassurance that this messianic activity takes place throughout the course of history. The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble. Kiss the son lest ye perish in the way!

Now this royal victory of the Christ is announced by him in the Great Commission. It is as it were the throne proclamation of the King of Kings. The Gospel thus comes with a royal claim; God in Christ does have the right to the allegiance of every human heart. To refuse to give Him this allegiance is to be unbelieving and disobedient. Such refusal is to make God a liar and to trample on the blood of the Lamb. And it is well to remember according to John 3:16, that the Lord had the



entire world in His purview in His sending of His Son. That is to say, the particularistic methodology and the concentration on Israel in the Old Testament era will change, for the coming of the Christ is to be a light to the nations! And thus it will be that he will be the glory of his people Israel (Isa. 49:5-6; 42:6). And of course, it was through the rejuvenation of his historic people Israel, in calling forth the twelve new tribes of Israel, the twelve disciples, that he implemented the second stage of the messianic mission.

The Christ, the long-promised and awaited Messiah of God, has come in the midst of lowly Israel. The Lord has again visited His people. But there must be legal witnesses who attest to this coming and to this victory among the peoples of the earth (Isa. 43:10, 12; 44:8; Acts 1:8). Israel subserved this purpose in the new covenant. But the twelve as the nuclear church, as the twelve princes of the twelve new tribes, are the connecting link between the Christ and the ongoing New Testament Church. They are the historical link (the legal bonafide trustworthy God-appointed witnesses) who point us to the Christ, who affirm that it was indeed so (John 1:14-15; I John 1:1-4).

There is, however, a change in methodology as we pass from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In the Old Testament era the expression of the missio dei in, through, and with the people of God (Israel) was more limited, was centripetally focused, and was anticipatory of the coming of the Messiah who would reveal as it were the "glory" of this operation. Traditionally we have characterized this dispensation as that in which God worked particularistically with Israel. Nevertheless we are pointed to Genesis 1-11 in order to reaffirm the truth that God from the beginning worked with all nations, and hence his particularistic dealings later with Israel can only be seen as subserving his universalistic program of dealing with all men. It was not the case that salvation in the old covenant was exclusively reserved for the children of Israel, but to taste of that salvation the foreigner was called to come to the center and symbol of God's presence, to Jerusalem, to Zion, to the temple, to Yahweh, the only Savior! This is that which has been classed as the centripetal movement of that era. The nations had to own the truth that God was indeed at work, and so revealed, among Israel and for Israel, before the face of all nations.

The Bible calls upon us to honor the truth of the progress of salvation history, and so that era is designated as the time when the Spirit of God was "not yet" (John 7:39) given. This historical giving on Pentecost awaited the "glorification" of the Christ on the cross, and his exaltation to heaven. The public address of and confrontation of the nations in an aggressive sense awaited the triumph of Christ and his receiving of the gift of the nations from his Father as his rightful inheritance. In the time of the old covenant there was as yet no salvation-historical "open door" to the nations (Rev. 3:7-8; 5:1-10). The Lamb of God has the authority and power to open the seals and to implement throughout the earth the redemptive program of God. No power in earth or heaven can now stay his hand! The universality and power of God's Lordship was there in the Old Testament era



(cf. Ps. 47; 67; 22:27-31; 24:1; 29; 33:13-15), but the historical freedom to breach the nations that sat in darkness awaited the victory of the Christ over the prince of darkness at Golgotha, where darkness could reign only as a short transitional interlude (Luke 1:79; Isa. 9:2; Mt. 4:13-16). During the Gospel era, during which time the messianic peace of the reign of Christ is being proclaimed, Satan is bound that he might not deceive entire nations, keeping them in the darkness of ignorance (Rev. 20:1-3; Jude 6). In the New Testament era the Christ has opened the door to the universal proclamation of the Gospel, and no man can shut. Only during the Satanic little season at the end of history, will there be restraint on the open spread of the Gospel, when the two witnesses will lie as dead bodies in the streets of the city (Rev. 11:9) for three and one-half days. The forms of the Word and Spirit will be there, having a low profile, and as though they were inanimate. But they shall be reanimated and will rise up to life, and the beasts, the dragon, and all that they represent will be judged by God.

Nevertheless, Israel during the Old Testamental era was in her national life God's sign and sounding-board before the nations. Always she stood before God and among the nations. It was as though she were the stage of the theatre, and God was active in her, and thus addressing the observer nations. Or again, in Old Testament language, the world of the "nations" was the arena, and the entire world was the law court in which God presented His case and claim (Isa. 43:8-10; Micah 6:1-2; Hab. 1:5), and Israel served as the prime legal witness to the truth and reign of Yahweh. If she would fail to give honest witness, the very inanimate mountains and the foundations of the earth would be called upon by God to give witness to the reality of the living God! God reigns and in and through Israel He was calling the earth to account.

Satan is bound in this limited sense that he can no longer hold in bondage and in darkness entire nations of the Gentiles. Everywhere on the face of the earth the Gospel has penetrated or is penetrating. Even in the lands of China and Russia we hear of the subtle effect of the yeast of the Gospel. In that the Messiah is on the throne of the universe, it is plain that Satan cannot be ruling the nations. Even as in the case of Job, so in the matter of the contest for the allegiance of the nations, Satan can move only so far as God allows him to move. Our God has committed all things into the hands of the Christ, and he is exercising his mediatorial messianic Lordship throughout this era. And the Christ will finally hand over this reign to the Father (I Cor. 15:24-28) that He may be all in all.

In the New Testament era therefore we will hear many echos of both the language of the Old Testament and its nuances. It will be enriched and expanded, however, and some of the rough edges as it were will have been erased. Clarity will come where once matters were left hazy and uncertain. Power will be evident where once there was passivity, if not apathy. Our Lord will do a new thing (Isa. 43:19) in the earth. The explosive going-out which is triggered by the ascension of



Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit of God on Pentecost will have as its accompaniment a witness to that Christ which inspires power and zeal in its address of the nations. This is the power in witness which Christ promised his disciples (Acts 1:8). Luke celebrates the course of that powerful Gospel-witness to the heart of the empire at Rome (Acts 28:31). In this victorious march of the Gospel throughout the earth (Phil. 1:5; Rom. 1:5; 16:26), barriers will tumble down, Babel will be reversed, and a new courage, daring, and sense of victory will be evident in the lives of those who are tutored by the Spirit.

The Church of Christ, as instituted by him and as qualified by the daily presence of the Spirit, will serve as the bearer of the Gospel throughout the earth. The Church has received the legal testimony of the first witnesses to the reality of the Christ, and she now translates and passes on that apostolic testimony to the nations. We have been brought into touch with the Christ by the once-for-all canonical witness of the first "sent ones", and our witness remains authentic only insofar as it is normed by that first New Testament declaration to Israel and to the nations that the Lord liveth, the Christ is risen, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. It is Christ who builds his church by his Word and Spirit, and the church is called upon to subserve his purposes.

In accord with the progress of salvation-history, there is an accent in the New Testament era that God's kingdom has come in Jesus Christ. So it follows that the New Testament people of God are called upon to embody the signs (maturing characteristics) of the shalom (the saving-health: joy, peace, mercy, long-suffering, self-control, perseverance, etc.) of the come-kingdom of God. So not just a part of their lives, but the whole of their lives is to be an epistle read of all men. In their entire existence they are called upon to be a missionary window into the heart and purpose of God. Their entire life, individually and collectively, must be an invitation into the blessedness of fellowship with the living God. This is one way of saying that the content of the "already" of the kingdom has increased and has become more universally evident.

No longer does the Gospel call men to come to Jerusalem, but rather it calls them to Christ in their own homes, and among their own kin. No longer must they join the historic people of God, Israel, but they are free and obligated to worship the one true God on any and every mountain. They are challenged to worship Him maturely in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Even as the King, so too the Gospel comes claiming jurisdiction not over all the world alone but over all aspects of life. The Gospel is comprehensive in its address of man in all the facets of his existence. There is nothing which is secular in the sense that the Gospel has nothing to say about it (Phil. 1:27; I Thess. 2:12; 4:12; II Thess. 1:5; 1:11-12). The Gospel in the name of the King critiques all things, and even those who take up the Gospel to bear it and claim it. The Gospel does not therefore only interest itself in a so-called "spiritual salvation", but it has something to say about man's total life and relationships

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on earth. The Gospel thus addresses both the individual and the communal aspects of human society. It speaks to the structures of society and to the various roles which men play in that structured society. The governor is the minister of God (Rom. 13), and he is called upon to reward the doer of good, and to punish the doer of evil. The children of the kingdom are no longer treated as wards under a guardian, but they are called upon to walk as adults in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are called upon to walk strongly as children bathed in his grace and power, for he reigns till every enemy shall be subdued under his feet.

This growing maturity of God's "sent ones" in the New Testament era also has something to say about the "comprehensive approach" and such matters. The church is given not only the gift of leaders and leadership (I Cor. 12:28), but the gift of judgment, discernment, wisdom as mature sons of the kingdom. She is given the grace and the freedom to order her life (I Cor. 14:40) in the context of the basic order instituted by Christ. She is entrusted with the Word and the Sacraments, with proclamation and the exercise of self-discipline, but the mode of their exercise is not prescribed. The church is given leadership in the persons of elders and deacons, but the matters of their tenure and assembling is not prescribed. The accent is on their qualifications, not on their method of operating. This underscores the truth that the church has a large measure of freedom in its mission methodology. She is mature and must deduce for ever-changing new historical situations the manner and the methods which the givens of the Gospel and the church demand. In her methodology she may not compromise the genius of the Gospel, the genius of grace, nor may she implicitly nor explicitly challenge the constant on-going Lordship of Jesus Christ. The basic New Testament Christian confession remains: Jesus is Lord and Savior!

This does lead to complications, however, in that matters of policy or methodology are not to be solved simply by an appeal to Scripture. Instances of a certain methodology which Paul or some other biblical person followed is not normative for today. He made tents to support himself, he traveled by ship, he utilized the arena of the synagogue. Methodologies are time bound, but the Gospel proclaimed by a method does not change. Hence the church in its maturity must be led by the Spirit as it consults, weighs, and investigates possible methodologies to make the right choice for the right time. She must learn by her historical mistakes, and by those methods which God has blessed and continues to bless. But in and through it all, she must realize that she is not a free lancer, she is simply a servant to the mission of the living God, she is simply a co-worker of the Lord Jesus Christ, she has been and is in her fallibility an unprofitable servant. She has no monopoly, but she is graciously privileged to speak a word, to bandage a wound, to give a sandwich, in the name of her Lord. She may use the "comprehensive approach" or any approach which the Holy Spirit tutors her to use which does not clash with the nature of the Gospel itself! For the Gospel remains in the hand of the Lord who is thrice-holy!



### The Goal of Mission

The last decade has seen an intensive discussion of the meaning of the concept of mission. What is the precise focus of the missionary identity of the people of God in the world, or if you will, of the church of Christ in the New Testament era? That leads immediately into a question as to the scope of mission.

As soon as we ask the question, Who are we as redeemed in Christ by the grace of God, and as thus subject to this redeemer-God who is our Lord?, we are immersed in the subject of our missionary identity. As church of Christ we are confronted with the question of the meaning of our collective and individual lives coram Deo. Our being saved has brought us into a face-to-face (responsible) relationship to God and to the world in which he has placed us.

One of the great challenges of our day is that we are being forced as the church of Christ to articulate what our role, style of life, burden, and responsibilities are as the representative agents of the triune God in the earth.

But that missionary self-understanding of the people of God will be very much affected by their understanding of what the goal of mission is. The goal of mission will have something to say about the focus, priorities and scope of the missionary activity of the people of God.

The goal of mission has been defined in various ways?

1. Some have emphasized simply the faithful proclamation of the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Or as was true of Paul in Ephesus (Acts 20:24, 27), the declaration of "the whole counsel of God." The accent thus falls on the communication of the will of God. This focus presumes that in and through this heralding activity God's character and will are revealed. This goal of mission is thus revelation-centered!
2. Others have emphasized the rescuing of individual souls from perdition, and thus calling them to repentance and faith, and thereby their incorporation into the body of Christ. This group would accentuate the calling of people to pass over the threshold from unbelief to faith. Here mission is equated with evangelism in the narrower sense. Salvation too is conceived of in a limited way. This goal of mission is salvation-centered!
3. Many have come to see the goal of mission as the planting of congregations of the church of Christ, that is, the securing of an organized, functioning, and continuing believing community of Christ. Many would add that such a congregation should be related to, and expressive of the people and culture of its indigenous environment. These congregations are viewed by many adherents of this view to be cells which serve as the springboard for further expansion of the church of Christ. The idea of collective self-fulfillment is embedded in the indigenous proviso. This goal of mission is church-centered!
4. In the Reformed tradition many have underscored the truth that the Gospel of Christ is the gospel of the kingdom, and therefore the goal of mission must be the perfect realization of the Kingly rule of the triune God. Thy kingdom come! thus becomes the battle cry of the mission of the people of God. The planting of the church of Christ, the call to conversion, and the proclamation of the will of God are set in the broader context of the kingdom of God. This goal of mission is thus kingdom-centered.



- a. This goal of the coming of the kingdom of God can be identified with the realization of God's will in history, the implementing of his revealed goal for all of history.
  - b. This coming of the kingdom of God, or the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven, is viewed as the revelation of the glory of God in and through the historical process. (Is. 66:19; Hab. 2:14)
  - c. The realization of God's kingly rule, the hallowing of the name of God, and the obedient doing of God's will from day to day are all a part of the manifestation of God's glory.
5. There are many within the tradition who wish to state that the goal of mission is the glory of God, that all things redound to God's praise. There is a tension here between the manifestation of the glory of God (for He has all glory) and the acclamation of God's glory. The question still remains whether or not acclamation includes deed-obedience as well as lip-obedience. This goal of mission is praise-centered!
6. When one recalls the Biblical focus of the divine activity on mankind, then we would have to underscore the goal of the renewed humanity, the new Jerusalem as the city of God. Mankind is redeemed, reclaimed, re-directed, and re-equipped by God to fulfill their purpose in the creation. (Eph. 2:15; 4:13) The cosmic struggle between God and Satan revolves around the allegiance of man to God! Christ came into this world as the new man, the real man, the last Adam. In his own person he sums up what men should be, children and servants of the living God. And in Christ, the new humanity takes shape and develops, and finally it will come to maturity. So it is that the word and concept of "humanization" has rightly come to the fore in missiological discussions. Christ redeems people, not to make them divine but to make them truly human. He enables them to become, to fill the niche, which God intended for them. This goal is new humanity-centered!

There are several aspects of this goal which might be isolated and emphasized:

- a. The most obvious is that of human liberation in Christ. Men and women have been delivered from bondage. (Ex. 15:1-21; 20. Ps. 130. Is. 31:1; 36:9; 41:14; 45:18-25; 53. Micah 6:8. I Cor. 1:22-25; 2:2.) "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." Truly to be man before the face of God is to be man truly free, free to live in harmony with his Creator and Lord.
- b. The goal of shalom in the earth is a Biblical goal, and often referred to in recent missiological discussions. This goal underscores the restoration of harmony in God's creation. It points to a fundamental re-integration of all things in Christ, and this is viewed as a far-reaching cosmic re-integration. 2 Peter 3; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20.



- c. There has also been the accent on a renewed sense of and participation in community, the transcending of individualistic self-preoccupation. Titus 2:11. Gal. 3:28. Eph. 2:16-19. I Cor. 12:25-27. Rom. 12:4-5. Rev. 22:2.
  - d. And there is also the Biblical concept of self-fulfillment, the goal of maturity in Christ. Thus a legitimate goal of ministry is to present every believer as a full-grown person in Christ. John 3:16; 10:10; 17:3. Col. 1:28; 4:12. Phil. 2:12-15; 1:9-11. Eph. 2:10; 4:13-15.
7. Then there is the negative goal of God's mission in Christ to destroy all the works of the devil. I John 3:8. Thus it is that hatred is contraband in the kingdom of God, and love and unity are extolled and nurtured. If harmony and reconciliation are to be achieved in the City of God, then all discordant factors must be eliminated. This goal of mission is exorcism-centered! The Lord Christ will crush the head of the old Serpent, and his followers will trample on that head as well, in the symbolic manner of the victor in war. Romans 16:20.

It is of significance to note what goal or goals are paramount in the book of the New Testament which you will be researching. Do the circumstances of the people determine the sort of goal which is held up? It should be quickly recognized that many of these envisioned goals are not exclusive, and hence are inter-related with others. One or two of them are all-inclusive, depending upon how they are defined.

As these documents are examined one should remember to ask questions concerning the motivation for mission, the scope of mission, the methodology of mission, the relation of church and mission, the agents of mission, and like questions.

R. Recker



Western Michigan Theological Society

Various Theses -- September 22, 1999

Bob Recker

1. God is Lord and Savior: (Isaiah & Psalms.  
Christ is Lord and Savior: (New Testament)
2. God desires the repentance and conversion of sinners:  
"O Israel, why will you die?" "Seek ye my face."  
Christ came to save sinners: "Come unto me, all ye that are  
weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Mt. 11)
3. God uses human instruments to draw humans to himself.  
--The doctrine of concurrence. *Missio Dei*
  - a. Through the people of God (in the New Testament called the  
church of Christ). That is, the apostolate of the people of God.
  - b. Through the lives, the works, the teachings, the testimonies  
of individual believers.
4. In this process, the Church instituted by Christ authoritatively  
exercises the keys of the kingdom of God.
  - a. Cf. the nuance of Schippers who wrote concerning the apostolate  
as the legal, authoritative witness to the life, death, and  
resurrection of the Christ. (Cf. Isaiah 43 and Acts)
  - b. That apostolic baptism is sprinkled on the entire church, the  
entire people of God.
5. The Church is the Servant of the Word of God, and hence the will  
of God. She is Gospel-bearer.
  - a. That means of the whole Gospel, which is a Gospel unto salvation.  
--That means evangelistic preaching, as well as teaching-preaching
  - b. She is to open the door to others, as well as nurture those  
who have been led into the fold.  
--The church is not simply involved in a maintenance ministry.  
--She is a divinely created instrument of salvation of sinners.
  - c. Even God in his providence exercises that upholding, government,  
and concurrence in a telic context.
6. Roland Allen, Harry Boer, J. Bavinck, and others have called  
attention to the role of the Holy Spirit both in the creating and  
the recreating activity of God in His world.
  - a. The Word of God is in the hands of the Spirit, is the sword of  
the Spirit.
  - b. The Spirit not only initiates the ministry, and enlivens the  
ministry, but he effectuates the ministry, by applying it to  
human hearts, by enlightening understanding to grasp spiritual  
things.
  - c. According to our brother Harry Boer, the fruit of, under God,  
drawing people into the church of Christ is the evidence of  
the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and an attest-  
ation that she is truly proclaiming the Gospel of our Savior  
Jesus Christ.  
--That is why I cannot be content until the Lord and Spirit  
honor the CRC's ministries with an abundant fruit which  
includes leading countless men and women to the water of life.  
--This should take place if we are proclaiming the gospel of Christ



- d1 At the same time I would hold to the difference between the Lutheran and Reformed conceptions of how the word works:
- 1) The Lutheran view (per verbum) is a sort of ex opera operato conception of the word read or preached, paralleling the the Roman Catholic view of the sacramental operation.
  - 2) The Reformed view (cum verbo) holds that the word becomes efficacious in and through the Spirit's presence and operation. The word (preached, spoken, read) is always in the hands of the Spirit. (The word is not an impersonal power that is self-effectuating, however, cf. the verse in Peter, I Believe.)
  - 3) In spite of these strictures, Van Ruler and other Reformed theologians have spoken eloquently of the charm and the power of the written word of God. And of course, as we read in faith, we can be overwhelmed by these qualities. The Bible speaks in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

7. The Reformed tradition holds to a comprehensive view of the mission of God, and so of the mission of the church, in which all aspects of that grand effort are related and intertwined. Hence, the efforts of the scholar, the teaching, nurturing and inspiring of the pastor, and the winsome plea of the evangelist are all caught up in the great identity and task to which we are called by God, and anointed by the Spirit of God. This integrated vision, I believe, is related to the parallel understanding of the Kingdom of God.

a. In times past there was a section of Reformed people and of congregations which wished to limit the church's mission activity very narrowly to the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments in public, communal, (For some of them, this was in the context of a fear of the social gospel.) liturgical settings.

--There was a fear of the "unauthorized" preaching of the word.  
--Many of these people and churches were suspicious of, if not opposed to the comprehensive approach.

b. I would contend that the kingdom-emphasia lays the basis for the comprehensive approach in mission outreach, in applying the word to people's lives.

-God is the God of all areas of life, and He speaks in them.  
-This presupposes and integrative understanding of the human person and of his and her way of living.  
-The accent here is on the church as the people of God, more than the church as an organized institution.

c. Gradually this came to be described as the holistic approach.

d. Methodologically and wedded to church-growth theory, this leads to churches building gymnasiums, Kelloggsville's building of an archery range, etc. etc.

e. Another ingredient in related developments is the death of the parish-oriented church ministry and mission.

1- Today it is quite common to target a certain segment of the population as a mission-approach.

2- Advertisizing may focus on a certain group of people: note the current advertizing of LaGrave Avenue Church and of Grace Episcopal church, which is focused on the upper, cultured class. (Great classical church music with a certain ethos.)

3- In earlier days in the CRC church there were leading ministers who spoke out about "trend churches", "clique churches", and "address-targets". I remember those who were opposed to child-evangelism on this and other grounds.

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8. Both worship and life are before God (coram Deo): the church, the congregation, serve as a microcosm of the community before the face of God.  
The "we" and the "thou" meet in a dialogic relationship (a la Buber) as a precipitate, as a symbol, of our total lives before the presence of God.
  - The church is an agent of God to call the world around it into a conscious obedient, worshipful stance before the living God who is Lord of all.
  - The church worship service is not a substitute for an obedient, communal living which honors God
  - And to be in such a relationship blesses all of life, and brings life in general into fruition before God.
  - That is why it is so important that believers live lives of godly obedience--the doing of Christ's commands.
  - Worship is an essential aspect of life, and is not to be replaced or fulfilled in the Sunday, communal worship service. To be sure, it is unique because the communal aspect of the family of God in Christ is graphically illustrated and practiced.
  
9. Christian congregations need the electricity, excitement, and inspiration of seeing, experiencing the turning of sinners from godlessness to godliness. That is part of what it means to be the church of Christ, an open window and invitation to God.
  - a. This in no way demeans or devalues the importance and thrill of growth in godliness on the part of adult members of the church and of the children of the covenant.
  - b. And it is not the case that the confrontation with the world, with the godless, is not going on in and through individual members, through the literature ministry, through the educational ministry, through chaplains, home missionaries, world ministries, radio and TV ministries.
  - c. God alone knows the sweat, tears, prayers, gifts that are being expended by our respective congregations and churches to reach those who are outside the pale of the historic church.
  - d. We don't need a tension or contest between the evangelistic calling of the church and the liturgical calling, or the educational calling.
  - e. What we do need is that all parties own the claim, the calling, and importance of the mission of God in and to this world, and that we all are coopted to be his agents in this mission. One author has entitled his book: Agents of Reconciliation (Arnold B. Come - Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, 1964. pp. 178. pb.)
  
10. With the difficulty of the work today, with the apparent unleashing of evil into our cultures, we all need to be reconvinced of our calling to be ambassadors for Christ, sons and daughters of light, and bearers of the eternal hope!