

MISSIONS

WORLDLY MANDATE AND COMMISSION

“Mission to the Whole World”

**Prepared for Agassiz CRC
April 2008**

When you think mission—what is first Bible text you think of? Or what is the term that often first comes to mind.

Matt 28:16-20

What is the name of this passage? G Commission

Where do you find the OT MOTHER of that G Commission?

After some prodding—ever heard of CULT MANDATE?

Where? In Gen 1:26—2:3 READ IT

This is the very first commandment in the Bible, first in time.

In the Reformed tradition, this is one of the most important passages in the Bible, because it sets the stage for human life and culture in the world. It gives us our mandate to go and do something with and in the world in such a way that you reflect God’s image.

Now doing something in the world reflecting God’s image did not mean first of all praying, building churches, reading the Bible or other kinds of so-called “religious things.” What is the first thing that the Bible reflects about God? TRY TO GET ANSWER.

The first thing is HIS LOVE FOR HIS CREATION—the physical creation we read about in this chapter—physical world itself, sun etc, water, animals, plants. He calls them all VERY GOOD. He delights in these as His beautiful handiwork.

And then He handed it over to the human race—go, develop it in a positive way. Make something of it. He had put all kinds of potentials and hidden laws in this creation and has assigned us to work them out and manage them. That assignment is called.....Cultural Mandate.

This Mandate is not known as widely as the G Commission. In fact, my research has shown that most Christians are not aware of it. Even in the Reformed community its memory is slipping. That is TRAGIC in capital letters, for it has led us to a serious neglect and to an impoverished insight into the heart of God, into His deep interest in this physical creation of His and has derailed our understanding of the human task and mission in this world. It has led us to somehow think that God is more interested in spiritual things, but that His interest in the physical is merely of secondary nature. Not very serious. We have better things to do—we think. In the depth of our Western worldview we have separated the things of the world from the things of the spirit.

We all know the tragedy that took place—the fall into sin. That literally screwed everything up, everything. It blinded us. It turned us into a wild bunch of egotists who use the resources of the world for our own selfish purposes. Never mind that this creates injustice and poverty and sickness everywhere. We lost our sense as to why we are here. We forgot our purpose for living and in general have made a mess of things.

Jesus came, of course, to straighten things out. First of all to reconcile us to God, to make us new creatures, born again to a new life with new values. He came to restore our ability to be fully human beings once again and a society in which justice reigns. He first taught His disciples. Then He left and sent the Holy Spirit who has been teaching His people ever since all through the ages how to correct things in this lost world. And just before He left, he gave us that Great Commission

So, now we have these two super assignments. Cultural Mandate and Great Commission. Most people do not see a connection between them, but that has not always been the case. Paul Stevens, a professor at Regent College in Vancouver, wrote that it is too bad that people have separated these two super assignments from each other, for they belong to each other. THE GR COM IS THE NT VERSION OF THE OT CULT MANDATE. 2X

Note that I call them super ASSIGNMENTS, not super laws. The super law is the law of love: You shall love the Lord above all and your neighbour as yourself. That super law covers them all, incl these super assignments.

So what is the connection between these two? It is this.

- 1. SINCE THE FALL, WE ARE NO LONGER CAPABLE of fulfilling the Cul Man as we should. TOTAL DEPRAVITY. We still develop culture. We do art, science, technology, business and what not. But we do them in a twisted and distorted way. The rich and strong**

oppress the weak. We hardly show the image of God with His love and mercy. Our entire human race is spiritually HANDICAPPED.

2. **WITH THE GR COM CHRIST IS SENDING US OUT TO THE WORLD** with the mission to reconcile people to God, to bring them to salvation, to forgiveness of sins, to understand what life is all about—and to re-equip us, to re-enable us to carry out our basic human task—the Cult Mand.
3. Then with the **HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR HEARTS**, we are born again and we re-learn what we lost—how to express, demonstrate, exemplify the image of God in us, how to fulfill the Cult Mandate. The Holy Spirit equips us anew with a thirst and knowledge of everything God wants and loves. It **ENABLES** us once again to follow His will. We can now do what He wanted us to do in the first place. We now know what He wants and what we should do.

So, we as missionaries go out into the world to let people know about Christ, who He is, what He did for us and the entire world. How he re-opened for us the way to God, the way to understanding, the way to live and the hope of eternal life—all of that in one exciting package. In short, to enable, to equip us once again to live the Cultural Mandate, to live in and develop this world reflecting God's image of love, justice and righteousness.

The Church is part of that scheme in 2 ways. First, it is the place where we support each other, encourage, warn, keep each other on the straight and narrow—as we often put it. It may be straight, but it is not that narrow. And secondly it is also that church that sends out missionaries

everywhere to spread that Gospel with a message for the entire world, for all of culture, for our lifestyles, our science and technology, for everything.

So, we missionaries go out there, everywhere--Nigeria and Vancouver's very pagan West End. We now have a CRC missionary in Vancouver Yale Town. To gather people into the church. To teach about the Name and Work of Jesus. To lead them on to being born again and equip them to follow the Cultural Mandate.

So, the relationship between these Super Assignments? We carry out the Great Comm. To equip people to carry out the Cultural Mandate. You are now in the church, but don't stop there. Continue with the Great Com and continue to both work out the Cult Mandate yourself and to equip others, enable others to do so.

What we are talking about this morning is traditionally a core difference between us as Reformed and Evangelicals. We emphasize both. Evangelicals have tended to emphasize only the Gr Commission. Work only to establish a church. Aim only at so-called spiritual results.

I have a FORTUNATELY here and an UNFORTUNATELY.

The Fortunately, there is a strong move among Evangelicals to re-embrace both. I am so thankful for that. They are widening their scope. The Unfortunately is that too many in our CRC churches have become indifferent to this and some other Reformed distinctives. Find them

dull, unexciting—at the very moment the Evangelicals are finding the excitement for this wider approach.

So, Pastor, you have your work cut out for you—to re-energize your people with a new sense of excitement for wholistic mission that begins with the Great Comm and ends up with working the Cult Mandate.

And this needs to be done everywhere. It used to be we felt the need to GO TO FAR OFF COUNTRIES to bring that message and to exemplify it. But today it is needed EVERYWHERE—abroad as well as at home. So, THINK GLOBALLY as did God when He created this globe. THINK GLOBALLY as did God when He pronounced that He so loved the WORLD that He gave his ONLY begotten son. In terms of the ancient culture in which all this took place, the only begotten Son was your most precious possession, He gave Him up for the salvation of the world.

That's the exciting task of missions. Fran and I have been in it for 30 years and these have been years of excitement, let me tell you. No, This NOT for WHIMPS. That is, SPIRITUAL whimps. This is for the strong in Spirit but who know themselves as WEAK in spirit, for when we know ourselves to be weak in Christ, then we are STRONG. It is upon you, the STRONG-WEAK OR THE WEAK-STRONG that on behalf of the Lord Himself and on behalf of the Council of Agassiz CRC I am calling to consider a challenge and be open to a call along this exciting line.

A calling. A challenge. A task. Two super assignments rolled into one. Regardless of your age: where do YOU fit in? (2X) That's the issue for YOU today on this, your first mission Sunday. You're not on your own. There are structures and organizations into which you can fit and make yourself available. Pastor Leon can guide you along that path.

Let us pray for open ears, open minds and open hearts that are ready to hear that calling. It may be very unexpected for you. It may lead to totally different plans for your future. It may change your entire life. It may mean you have to go to the end of the world. To some Canadian city downtown, to some university. We have a CRC missionary at the University of the North in Prince George. It may mean you have to stay right here in Agassiz and carry out a mission among your colleagues in whatever field the Lord has placed you. Let us pray for that kind of openness on the part of all of us to hear that calling. And be ready for a surprise.

Two exciting super assignments rolled into one. How exciting the Christian life!