

**THE APOCALYPSE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MISSION THEOLOGY:
AN ANALYSIS OF DAVID BOSCH'S TRANSFORMING
ESCHATOLOGICAL PARADIGM**

by

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Summary

Within the first chapter I highlight the extent Platonism influenced modern eschatology and motives for mission.

This dualism led to separating divine and secular history and suited the philosophy of secular historians and theologian's who had no taste for divine reality purveying both everyday history, and individual lives.

The second chapter discusses how these views, because of Premillennial-Dispensationalism, created American fundamentalism that changed what motivates foreign and local missions. Oppression and the poor have become nothing more than the evidences of a corrupt world that is destined to be destroyed; hence, all stress is concentrated on saving individual souls from the wrath to come.

The third chapter consists in analysing David Bosch's aversion to this very notion and his reasons for avoiding apocalyptic language in many of his writings. I conclude in agreement with Bosch's motivation for mission and a similar view of eschatology which embraces a present realised kingdom and a future consummation thereof.

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Introduction

Many theologies have been written on the role of missions. Some stress that mission praxis should be understood *within* an eschatological framework, emphasising a general redemptive historical or an *already and not yet* eschatological paradigm. Others stress that mission acts as a catalyst ushering in the eschaton. Still some have dismissed the apocalypse as naive latter insertions by disillusioned primitive church redactors that never saw its fulfilment.

In light of these points I believe it is necessary to address the second which has dominated the view of many American churches today. The predominant eschatological position that is held by Southern Baptist, Charismatic and non-denominational churches has led many of them to “spiritually” separate human societies from the world. This in turn has rendered many who hold to a dualistic view of this world and the next devoid of a much needed social ethic and concern for the plight of many of the minority groups that live within the inner cities and reservations *allocated* to them. Therefore, domestic ministry is never seen as a mission field.

The romantic notion to depart from the American soil (God’s bastion of hope) to win the “heathen” to the eminent American Christian way, “freedom,” and American way of life becomes the motive for mission praxis, regardless of the injustices and social concerns within their communities.

Bosch, who is the primary motivation for this thesis, has correctly identified Western mission work as degenerating into nothing more than placing value only on the personal decision and commitment in conversion that narrows the reign of God spiritually and individually to the sum total of saved souls. This concept of mission work is driven by the eschatological belief that the current generation is living in the “end times” and seeks the future, yet imminent reign of God. In turn this notion acts as an impetus to hasten the irruption of the final reign but leaves the exigencies of this life as an after thought. The political and economical structures of society are left untouched because they are viewed by many as unredeemable and belonging to the kingdom of darkness, and therefore will be used as a mechanism by the antichrist as a means to bring about the mark of the beast. Hence, the world, and its commercial, educational and medical

structures are left to be judged by the consuming fire which will dissolve them with the old “earth and heaven.”

This dissertation questions the motive that drives the eschatological view that has deferred the hope and expectation of Christ’s kingdom, which was *given* to the first century saints, to the present time. Many today eagerly expect an imminent apocalyptic to shake the present structures of the world and establish a physical kingdom of a thousand years. And the idea that this world and the next are distinctly different world’s is propagated through the neoplatonic notion that the present existing world is evil and not worth saving, and therefore a future “spiritual” utopia must break into history.

I am of the opinion that it is necessary to address the current mission philosophy embraced by many conservative evangelical American churches that embrace such a theory. Most have forgotten, in their quest for unravelling the signs of the times, that people in their communities have been relegated to second class citizens by virtue of their race, class and differing faiths.¹

Mission is not a matter of crossing oceans with hopes of converting nations and peoples only to personal or dare I say, “denominational” faith in Jesus and telling them to ignore the social concerns because that is part of “suffering for Jesus.”

On the contrary, we who claim to be Christians and are labouring for the expansion of the kingdom must see the urgency of people’s lost souls and social plight as a distress call to God’s eschatological community. To pluck individuals out of their social conditions, medicate their souls, only to return them to their impoverished state is to act naively and to ignore the call for *righteousness* and *justice*. Many of those who are marginalised are people who exist within a nation’s border amongst opulence and thriving churches. And to simply ignore and pretend they are invisible is a blatant sin.

More money is spent planting and propagating new churches than building existing congregations and making them more effective in their communities. Emphasis

¹ I am referring specifically to three of the major minority groups in the U.S: the Hispanics who have recently become the largest minority group; African American’s who are “evangelized” through “black ministries,” as if they cannot be approached by any other group or with the Scriptures that cross cultural and racial barriers; and the Native American Indians, who are hidden on reservations across America because they are a harsh reminder of the embarrassing way the federal government dealt with them in the past – namely the “trail of tears,” which decimated the Cherokee Indians of the Appalachian Mountains. Today most tribes are totally ignored and isolated because of the bitter race relations that continue to fail.

is placed on the type of church that will be built and whether it will meet the local consumers' needs. This entire strategy also takes into consideration whether the church is to be Hispanic, African American or Anglo. Once this has been established, the congregation's eyes are cast to foreign shores for a country or people who will *receive* the gospel preached from a context that imposes itself on a different national group and its context. Most often the underlying theme for evangelisation is the imminent return of Christ, and souls that are *left behind* will experience suffering that is equated to going to hell. Local enthusiasm is drummed up by encouraging prospective missionaries that they are God's frontline soldiers being sent to battle the forces of darkness and conquer the hearts of backward natives, and God will reward their endeavours by saving souls from the *tribulation* or eternal damnation.

Local concerns are left as an embarrassing but insignificant problem that can be overcome by prayer and regular attendance in the local church. But never is the plight of the person living in the poorer neighbourhood and the deprivation they endure everyday a concern. This is considered the work of the local minister.

It is therefore the aim of this dissertation to make the reader aware that mission is not only loving the *foreigner* but *also* loving thy *next door neighbour*. Therefore, the position that is propagated in this dissertation is threefold. First, it is one that views history as the ongoing *act* of God, displayed through the various *scenes* of the covenants and that "all the world is a stage" on which this salvation-historical act is played out on. Second, in the light of this explanation to assert the dictum *Endzeit als Urzeit* (Behold, I make the last things as the first things)² and to present eschatology as *protology*: the goal of all redemptive history as a return to the primal condition of creation from which humankind fell and then go beyond it to a glorified state, which the original creation did not reach. Third, to bring to the attention of the reader that the world is upheld by God's purposes in grace and by his performative word, which he has fulfilled what was promised to the patriarchs and to his people through the prophets. And, in spite of what seems to be the apparent absence of God's *positive visible kingdom* in the present, God is active in bringing about the final act (2 Peter 3:1-9). Instead of seeing the world as

² Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliot (eds.) G.K Beale, *The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology*, Eschatology in Bible Theology, (Illinois, IVP, 1997), 49. This quote is from the Epistle of Barnabas 6:13.

negative and surreal, it is my aim to offer a positive view of the world and history, and God's perceived apparent slowness, as his incredible patience and kindness toward ignorant creatures who struggle with understanding the *historical script*. I am going to argue that this last stage of history is the promise of the in-between time of God's mercy extended to the entire human race for salvation.

It is also evident from the structure of the dissertation that I have adopted for my research method a literature study approach and the books that have been most helpful to me forming and developing my understanding of this subject are first, David Bosch's book, *Transforming Mission*. Bosch has been a tremendous impetus to my own view of biblical theology and understanding various paradigms within mission work from the gospel's and Paul's epistles, as well as the concept of how a comprehensive mission is to be approached within an eschatological framework.

Second, Harry Boer's book, *Pentecost and Mission*, is another excellent book which discusses the work of the Holy Spirit from Pentecost through the history of redemption and his role in modern mission to "the ends of the earth and the end of time."

Third, Hendrikus Berkhof has written an interesting book called *Christ The Meaning of History*. This is a helpful book to understand a linear salvation perspective of history and the purpose of the church as a missionary endeavouring force that has the potential of *secularising* the world and history.

Fourth, David Chilton's book, *Paradise Restored*, is helpful from the perspective of an *already fulfilled* position. The theme proposed is one of a "conquering church," in the light of fulfilled prophecy and the consummated kingdom on earth.

Last, *Eschatology in the Bible and Theology*, is a compilation of papers presented on eschatology and its relevancy to the twenty-first century church.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows: In the first chapter of the dissertation, I will briefly discuss the development of the interpretation of history by various schools of theology and prominent theologians who effected change within the eschatological schools. In the second chapter, I will deal with eschatology and its effects on missiology in America and how specific eschatological positions drove the formation of various denominations and their motives for mission work.

The third chapter will be an analysis of David Bosch's changing attitude toward apocalyptic theology and mission from his book, *Witness to the World*, 1980, to his magnum opus, *Transforming Mission*, 2000. And I will form my propositions regarding why he ignored the apocalyptic literature of the New Testament in his earlier writings. The final chapter will consist of my own views on the significance of eschatology and history and its relationship to missiology, and I will assert, in tandem to Bosch, the importance of a more comprehensive approach to mission.

Chapter 1

Plato's Two World's versus Paul's Two Ages.³

1.1 The Platonic Legacy. The Greek culture interpreted history as a continuing cycle in which the present was simply the adumbrations of the future. Past and present would meet the future, only for the future to return to the past. All experiences that were collected through the senses were merely the shadows that danced across the wall. People were imprisoned to the inside of a cave where the world of sight was limited to the projection of figures on the wall in front of them. Man had to escape the chains that bound his mind and the ascent, and the view of the upper world (Plato's absolute world of Forms) is the rising of the soul into the world of the mind. For Plato, history was no more than an imperfect copy and remembrance of the Idea/ Form. The Greeks had no view toward the future; their interest in history was directed to the past.⁴

Bosch says “[T]his thinking made deep inroads into Christianity. The Logos was interpreted not so much as reference to the historical incarnation but was painted in purely metaphysical colors derived from Platonism.”⁵

Even the great Christian philosopher Augustine, when he wrote his main work, *The City of God*, could not escape the influences of Platonism. In place of the lost Roman opinion of history, he gave them a new one that has been proclaimed through the centuries. For Augustine the meaning of history is found in the struggle between earthly and eternal kingdoms.

Aquinas stressed that God is categorically distinct from His creatures, unique, transcendent, all knowledge concerning Him is merely analogical. He separated the

³ This title is from Michael Horton's internet article, *Eschaton or Escape? Paul's Two Ages Vs. Plato's Two Worlds*. <http://www.alliance.org/pub/mr/mr99/1999.01.JanFeb/mr9901.msh.eschaton.html>

⁴ There were few exceptions, namely Heraclitus, who stated that one could never step into the same river twice. His was a world that was dynamic, a world wherein “becoming” was the starting point of his thinking. Regarding Plato's doctrines of other metaphysical absolutes and values, we see a form of *Middle Platonism* (discussed in the main body of the paper) which developed in the first Century B.C. and was inclined to a more religious motive. Moral values, absolutes and the Creator remain, but each thinker makes his own adaptations. God remains transcendent, incomprehensible except in momentary revelations. God becomes knowable only through a second mind, (the World-Soul) and Platonic Forms now become thoughts in the “divine mind.”

⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, Orbis books, 2000), 500.

eternal and temporal. Seeing God with the inner eye was superior to anything that could be seen with the outer eye – the Beatific Vision.⁶

This dichotomy continued throughout Western thought. Lessing suggested “that history was the training period in the ways of God, in which revelation serves to reach a future phase more rapidly than is possible by reason alone. The development is from lower to higher; the higher the stage, the less Christian revelation in the traditional sense is necessary. The final goal is reached when man has come of age, and is led solely by his reason to do good for the simple purpose of doing good. Then the time of the ‘eternal gospel’ will have arrived.”⁷ Lessing could not cross the “ugly, broad ditch” which separated the “accidental truths of history” from the truths of reason in the matter of Christianity. For Lessing the truth and value of religion are to be apprehended in experience alone. Berkhof states, referring to this idealistic view of history, “The Christian view of history as a struggle between two kingdoms, followed by the victory of Christ, gives way to a view in which the struggle is replaced by *development*, and in which history is not moved by the contradictory forces of God and evil, but by the good forces God has placed in man.”⁸

Further development of this dualism came from the school of dialectical theology, which was spearheaded by Bultmann, Barth and Brunner, who took Christianity out of the realm of history and made it purely an existential affair based upon the *kerygma* in the moment of crisis and decision. Horton states “...it’s the reason why modern theology could get along fine with a ‘Christ event’ which had profound implications for one’s individual encounter with God while denying the historical reality of the resurrection.”⁹ In Rudolf Bultmann’s memorable words, ‘But the Christ after the flesh is no concern of ours.’¹⁰ Bultmann’s eschatology, as Saayman puts it, “[is] that which stands in relation to salvation, that which creates salvation. This salvation means ‘entweltlichung’, that which frees us from the world. For this reason, ‘eschatologic’ can also mean ‘unworldly’,

⁶ Aquinas distinguished between faith, opinion and knowledge. Faith, an act of the mind is stronger than opinion. It involves a firm assent to its object. But because it lacks full comprehension (vision) it is less than knowledge. Religious faith, was for Aquinas, a species of the genus.

⁷ Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ The Meaning Of History*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1979), 24.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Horton, “Eschaton or Escape?”, 2

¹⁰ Ibid.

being free from the fallenness of the world.”¹¹ Julius Schneiwind engaged Bultmann on these very issues and came close to accusing the Marburg theologian of outright Gnosticism in his division of historical and existential encounters. Horton quotes:

The eschatology of the early church is not a vague belief in the transcendent or in immortality, but a definite day of judgement toward which history is moving. The New Testament knows nothing of an ascent of the soul, either individual or corporate. Each individual is involved with the rest of mankind in the stream of human history, in the time process, and in this present age. Such an eschatology begins with resurrection rather than with transcendence, with the day of judgment rather than with immortality. . . . Hence the New Testament is right and Bultmann wrong: eschatology is ultimate history. There is a *synteleia*, a completion of this aeon. The eschatological wrath of God is at work already here and now. The kingdom of God has already dawned in Christ. Here we have a profound critique of our popular ideas about time, as Luther saw when he said that in the sight of God the whole history of man from Adam down to the present moment happened ‘as it were but yesterday.’¹²

Barth continued with a form of Bultmannian dualism, but in reaction to the German liberalism of the nineteenth century, Barth proclaimed a discontinuity between God and man. No longer was the authentic subject man and his religion, but God and his Word. The Word that demands wholehearted obedience; the Word that authenticates itself; the Word that does not therefore require historical legitimisation. Although Barth did not yield to the demythologisation of Bultmann, he nevertheless resolved that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an event that would not yield to the scrutiny of positivistic historical science.¹³

¹¹ Willem Saayman, *Eschatological Models In Missionary Thinking, Missionalia Vol. 15 No. 1*, (April 1987), 9.

¹² Horton., “Eschaton or Escape?,” 3. There is a strong tendency, especially today, to divide the world into evil and good spheres, which is a prominent rule in many eschatological schools. If anything, it prevents the church from facing the real dichotomy, which is righteousness versus unrighteousness. Christians will have to confront the real source of alienation both in this world and in their lives – and this is ultimately the rebellion that lives in all people’s hearts. It is not because of some supposed hostility between the world of invisible, unchanging, perfect and eternal forms and the temporal, material realm of appearances that is the cause of perpetuating evil. As Horton states, “The Gnostic myth of an innocent spirit thrown mercilessly into history (not to mention a physical body) may help us think good thoughts about ourselves, but at the end of the day it is still that: a myth, and it doesn’t really explain anything.” I am of the opinion as well as in agreement with Michael Horton that modern American eschatology has left this world to the devils and to the world of shadowy appearances like those on Plato’s cave wall. The result is that a form of pietism has engulfed certain churches with a particular eschatological view, forcing them to surrender the public realm of history, culture, politics and life in general to others, while they sit in small “enlightened” groups, enjoy private experiences, and watch for the signs of the imminent return of Christ. A modern form of monasticism where churches contemplate the Eternal.

¹³ A student of Barth who went beyond his view of the “historical Jesus in history” was Pannenberg, who said that Christ became human and *historical* flesh. Trying to prevent God’s self-

1.2 Some secular views. Within secularism a view of history developed under the rubric of positivism, which echoed, in some sense, the voice of Lessing. It was a deterministic view whereby society developed intellectual insight into the fixed social laws, which are a continuation of the biological laws of the lower nature. “Intellectual insight” passed through phases until it attained a high position in which it saw all things in their natural causality.

People had now taken their own insights and ideals as a standard for discovering meaning and observing direction and progress. All forms of knowledge and norms for development could be sought from outside of the person. Berkhof states: “The facts, however, show eloquently that the positivistic thinkers often tried to combine their causal mechanistic explanation of the historical process, with an idea of goal directedness. . . Comte, the father of positivism in the last phase of his life had already arrived at a kind of pantheistic religion in which ‘humanity’ takes the place vacated by God, in order to function as the meaning and goal of history.”¹⁴

Other prominent figures, such as Ludwig Feuerbach, said Christianity/religion owes its existence to unfulfilled human needs and wishes, and therefore is a projection of the self, and “heaven” is a projection of the self’s longing for immortality, a theme that became prominent in Freud’s psychoanalysis. The Platonic god had become an abstraction of the timeless and static idea of the good, the true and the beautiful, separated from concrete historical reality.¹⁵

Friedrich Nietzsche continued this theme by describing how the “real world is merely a fable” and how this “real world” has become totally irrelevant. It was once attainable for the wise, pious and virtuous man. But then it was said that the real world was unattainable for now but was promised to the “sinner” who repents. In another stage

revelation from being dissolved into mythology or Gnosticism, he stressed a Hegelian vision of the historical movement and total unity of God’s revealed Word of truth. This could only occur when theology stresses the eschatological goal, which draws all history towards God. This he called “the ontological priority of the future.” This idea led him to reject the modern idea that the apocalyptic framework of Jesus’ teaching was an embarrassment. Instead, Jesus anticipated the end of history through his life, death and resurrection. Pannenberg’s theology was a swing back to history and reason, for him faith and knowledge are rooted in their own history. Biblical history he defined as “an event suspended between promise and fulfillment.” P.J.A Cook, “Wolfhart Pannenberg,” in *New Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright: Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 487-488.

¹⁴Berkhof., 26.

¹⁵ Horton., “Eschaton or Escape?,” 4.

it was taught that the real world had become unattainable and unprovable, but the mere thought of it, a consolation, an obligation. Here we encounter the Kantian bifurcation.

Eventually the “real world” becomes totally irrelevant. There is no obligation; the ethical residue has finally evaporated. Unfortunately with Nietzsche’s view of a dissipating “real world,” it does away with the apparent one too.¹⁶ Horton states that “much of modern secularism is due to the fact that the ‘other world’ of Plato’s transcendence was swallowing up ‘this world’ of historical existence.”¹⁷ The disembodied mind of Descartes (*res cogitans*) that was conscious of itself through thought widened the gap to the announcement of Nietzsche’s *Oberman*, who would take his rightful place as master over history. For Feuerbach, Nietzsche and Marx, Christianity was “Platonism for the masses.” Without this “true world” from which absolutism could be derived, all truths and falsehoods died in “this world” and ethics became merely a personal opinion. In reality, this world could no longer be a representation or projection of a pure heavenly realm – for it did not exist after all.

1.3 The adoption of secular views of history lead to shifts in Christian eschatology. Returning to the theological development of eschatology, we need to briefly consider some recent trends, namely the *Naherwartung* and the *Fernerwartung*, and those who contributed to these developments.

A vigorous reaction during the last decade of the nineteenth century came from Johannes Weiss, who reacted to Ritschl and Harnack, who both rejected the eschatological aspects of the kingdom of God in its future sense and saw Jesus as merely a teacher of morality (typical of nineteenth century and evolutionary and non-eschatological thinking). For Weiss, Jesus stood at the crucial juncture of the times, and he was the proclaimer of an eschatologically orientated salvation.¹⁸ Under the pressure of disappointing circumstances, Jesus came to realise that he would have to die for his people in order to usher in the kingdom.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Weiss claimed that Jesus expected the kingdom as a future (*konsequent*) reality. The future was not going to come as a gradual evolutionary process, but rather as a complete break in history. As Anthony Hoekema quotes, “The kingdom, when it comes, will be ‘the breaking out of an overpowering divine storm which erupts into history to destroy and renew.’” See Anthony A Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, (p. 290.)

This theme was endorsed and expanded by Albert Schweitzer who claimed that eschatological conceptions dominated Jesus' entire life and ministry. Hence, Schweitzer's interpretation of Jesus and his kingdom came to be known as *consistent eschatology*. For Schweitzer, Jesus conceived of the kingdom as purely a future reality based on the disappointment in Matthew 10:23 when the disciples completed their preaching tour and the Son of man did not come. This became the first instance of the "delay." Hoekema states: "in Schweitzer's own view, this eschatological expectation proved to be an illusion. For Schweitzer, Jesus became a tragic figure – a man who occasioned his own death in order to bring about what God actually had no intention of bringing about. All that is left for us to distil from Jesus' teachings [are] certain ethical emphases."¹⁹

Charles Dodd's view constituted a vigorous reaction against Schweitzer. Dodd argued that for Jesus, the kingdom was present, and that he taught the reality of the kingdom as realised in his own ministry. Hence Jesus' eschatology is *realised eschatology*; the eschaton moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation to the realised experience. For Dodd, future eschatology found in the New Testament is derived from Jewish apocalyptic literature. When believers, who expected the immediate return of the Lord were disappointed, they reconstructed the traditional Jewish eschatology scheme. When we take a closer look at Dodd's realised eschatology, it becomes apparent that he believes the Second Coming to be a myth. Because Christ did not descend in the time of the early church, he claims, ". . .to expect him thus to return in the twentieth century is to go contrary to primitive Christianity."²⁰

Further light is cast on his understanding when we look at his interpretation of Mark 14:25, where Jesus is speaking of not drinking of the vine until he drinks it in the kingdom of God. Hoekema quotes Dodd as saying, "Are we to think of the Kingdom of God here as something yet to come? If so, it is not to come in this world, for the 'new wine' belongs to the 'new heaven and new earth' of apocalyptic thought, that is, to the transcendent order beyond space and time."²¹ Here we detect Dodd's Platonic

¹⁹ Anthony A. Hoekema., *The Bible And The Future*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 292.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 294.

²¹ *Ibid.*

insertions.²² Hoekema writes, quoting Dodd from his book *Apostolic Preaching*, with regards to John:

The fact is that in this Gospel even more fully than in Paul, eschatology is sublimated into a distinctive kind of mysticism. Its underlying philosophy, like that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is of a Platonic cast, which is always congenial to the mystical outlook. The ultimate reality, instead of being, as in Jewish apocalyptic, figured as the last term in the historical series, is conceived as an eternal order of being, of which the phenomenal order in history is the shadowy symbol. This eternal order is the Kingdom of God.²³

To Dodd's credit, he corrected Schweitzer's one sided view that the kingdom of God is wholly future, but his Platonic sense of the future, which is beyond space and time raises a series of questions, for surely the future kingdom and the Parousia were not timeless entities in the minds of Biblical narrators.

Geerhardus Vos, sounding much like Dodd, stated that the Old Testament pointed forward to the Parousia, which is the one great future eschatological event, but the New Testament divided the event into two stages: the present Messianic age and the consummate state of the future. He states, "The New Testament anticipates the coming age in the present. This has assumed shape in the belief that the great eschatological transactions have already begun to take place, hence believers have already attained to at least partial enjoyment of the eschatological privileges."²⁴ Vos develops this thesis by reflecting on the writings of Paul. He asserts that for the Old Testament writers the distinction between "this world" and the "world to come" was thought of as merely chronological successions. But when the Messiah, who was predicted, arrived on the scene, the eschatological process had begun; therefore, the chronological succession between the present world and the world to come was inadequate. The Messianic appearance now began unfolding itself into two successive epochs: "the age to come was perceived to bear in its womb another age to come."²⁵

²² Dodd means that the coming kingdom seems to be a timeless ideal, of which the earthly life is merely a feeble reflection. The future of the coming kingdom in essence is therefore *suprahistorical* – beyond time, and hence there is no expectation of a future consummation of God's kingdom and neither the necessity of a renewed earth.

²³ *Ibid.*, 296.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 298.

²⁵ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, (New Jersey, P&R Publishing, 1994), 36.

According to Vos, New Testament believers live both in this world and in the world to come at the same time. Therefore, believers are conscious of the perfection they would inherit after the Parousia, so they looked at their present salvation in the light of the final perfection.²⁶ Vos anticipated Dodd in maintaining that with the coming of Christ the kingdom of God had arrived and the final eschaton has begun, but in distinction from Dodd, Vos taught a Second Coming and a future resurrection from the dead, and a final judgement.

Finally, this leads us to consider one more significant contributor, Oscar Cullman, who outstandingly represented what is known as “salvation-history.” What Cullman means by salvation history is that God has revealed himself in history through a series of redemptive acts, at the centre of which is the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Cullman describes his thesis as follows: “New Testament man was certain that he was continuing the work God began with the election of the people of Israel for the salvation of mankind, which God fulfilled in Christ, which he unfolds in the present, and which he will complete at the end.”²⁷ Cullman agrees that in a sense we are in the last days and that the great eschatological incision into history has been made.²⁸

Disagreeing with Dodd and in agreement with Vos, Cullman expects a future consummation of the Kingdom in history – his position is open to both a future as well as a realised eschatology. Basic to his view is that the great midpoint (the Christ event) lies behind us and therefore in a real sense believers are living in the new age. The final consummation of the Kingdom of God, which will include the Second Coming of Christ, the general resurrection, and the renewal of creation is still in the future. Hence, the

²⁶ Vos illustrates this point by arguing that soteriology is shaped by eschatology, and the four illustrations he uses are first, the resurrection. Vos finds it striking that the new life of a believer is described by Paul as being “raised with Christ.” He says, “the phrases ‘to be raised in or with Christ’ can bear only the meaning: to have through a radical change of life one of the two fundamental acts of eschatology applied to one’s self...It is in the most literal sense of the word an anticipative effect produced by the eschatological world upon such who are still abiding in the present world.” (*ibid.*, 45). Second is the concept of salvation. Vos claims Paul reversed the order: as we shall be saved in the future, so we are saved in the present. (*Ibid.*, 51-53). Third, is the illustrative concept of justification. Vos contends, that for Paul, the act of justification, “as far as the believer is concerned, a last judgement anticipated.” (*ibid.*, 55). Last, Vos comments about Paul’s understanding of the role of the Spirit, to whom he had referred earlier as the “earnest and first fruits of the adequate final possession of the celestial state.” (*Ibid.*, 59).

²⁷ Oscar Cullman, *Salvation in History*, trans. S.G. Sowers (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 13.

²⁸ Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950), 83.

present era is characterised by tension. The New Testament believer is compared with that of a person living between D-day and V-day during World War 2.

Like Vos, Cullman believes in the overlapping of the two ages. In one sense the believer is already in the new age, since the great eschatological midpoint lies behind him.²⁹ In another sense he is not yet in the new age, since the Parousia has not occurred.³⁰

Cullman's understanding of time is also significant, for he draws from the New Testament a conception of time, which he considers fundamental to grasping the message. He conceives of time to be linear and yet also fluctuating³¹ and claims that for primitive Christianity time was an upward sloping line.³² This "fluctuating linear" line is contrasted with the Greek concept of cyclical time. Redemption for the Greeks was an escape from time to a timeless beyond. However, in primitive Christianity, salvation is conceived strictly in terms of a time process.³³ Cullman insisted that redemptive history acts as an anchor in time, and this has rendered a service for evangelical Christianity.

In the light of the above excursus, I am in full agreement with Bosch's statement that Greek philosophy contributed to an ahistorical trend in Christianity. This is evidenced by the Platonism that created a dualism in Christian eschatology and was adopted into a secular worldview to create an alternative historiography. Bosch says:

...the Christian church found it impossible to hold on to the eschatological-historical character of the faith. Christian proclamation shifted from announcement of the reign of God to introducing to people the only true and universal religion. In this development it was only natural that the Old Testament would be underplayed, even neglected.

²⁹ For the Christian living between the times (between the First and Second Coming) means living in the time of the Spirit, which ultimately means that it is the time for missions. Bosch states, referring to this time period: "It fills the present and keeps the walls of history apart...as even Hoekendijk could still put it in 1948... 'History is kept open by mission' ". (*Transforming Missions*, p.508).

³⁰ This tension is illustrated in 1 Peter 3:22 which states that the invisible powers have already been subjected to Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:25 teaches that all Christ's enemies will be put under his feet at the end time. Whereas 2 Timothy 1:10 states death has been abolished by Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:26 asserts that the destruction of death still lies in the near future.

³¹ Cullman, *Salvation History*, 15. Cullman adds that he wants to leave room for human resistance and sin within the divine plan. Hence salvation history must include *Unheilsgeschichte*.

³² Cullman, *Christ and Time*, 51, 53.

³³ Hoekema, *The Bible and The Future*. Hoekema states, "Adopting as his own what he calls the view of primitive Christianity, Cullman therefore rejects all 'philosophical reinterpretation and dissolution' of time into 'timeless metaphysics.' One example of this kind of metaphysics he finds in Plato. Whereas for primitive Christianity eternity is understood simply as an endless time line, for Plato eternity is timelessness, qualitatively different from time. Cullman therefore also rejects Karl Barth's view of time as something qualitatively different from eternity maintaining that this conception is a remnant of Platonism." (See page 305).

Compared to Christianity as the true and universal religion it was, at best, provisional but now largely antiquated.

To a significant extent this view was the result of the hellenization of the Christian faith. In the Greek culture even historians – such as Herodotus and Thucydides – understood history as a continuing circle. Philosophers likewise interpreted events in human history mainly as adumbrations of what was to come, as prototypes of the return to the origin.³⁴

The question however, is what was the eschatology of the early church?³⁵ Did Paul have a two-age model that he used to define the various *aeons*? Hence, can Paul's eschatology reshape our thinking in an age of false dualism, and can it offer a fresh alternative to both Platonism and the postmodern announcement that there is no God, no self and therefore no meaning in history? We will explore this question first in the light of the influences of eschatology on American missions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and in the next chapter in the light of David Bosch's changing views on the apocalyptic.

³⁴ David. J Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, Orbis, 2000), 500.

³⁵ In otherwords, what were the eschatological expectations of the apostles and their followers as they tried to establish ecclesiology, and enlarge the church through mission work.

Chapter 2

The Millennial Kingdom and the Garden of America.

2.1 American missions and Postmillennialism. A short introduction to this chapter is needed to qualify the reason for my singling out many conservative Southern and Independent Biblicist churches, as well as the para-church organisations in America for their role in mission. First, it seems to me that millennialism has had a bigger effect on American Christianity than anywhere else in the world. And since millennialism is strongly linked to constructing views on mission and evangelism, it warrants a separate treatment of its birth and development.

Second, the United States has been my ecclesiastical and theological home for the last five years as a missionary to Native Americans and therefore this section has a personal element to my decision to discuss America separately.

Missions in America were borne out of a millennial eschatological structure that gave meaning to mission. According to millenarians' calculations, the millennium was two centuries away,³⁶ and it would arrive through preaching the gospel and the use of the ordinary means of grace. The march of God in history and his determined ordering of providence would make the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of his Son.³⁷

The motivation underlining Protestant missions in America between the years of 1606-1820 was an effort to subdue the "wilderness" and the goal of American churches was to plant (colonise) the "wilderness" with properly ordered churches and to set them correctly in an ordered society. Mission was defined as transforming the wilderness into "the garden" through the proclamation of the gospel among the "heathen."³⁸

The entire colonisation enterprise was drawn within an eschatological framework and was related to God's ultimate purpose. God, through history, would bring about his

³⁶ Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1979), 14.

³⁷ Charles L. Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America*, (California, William Carey Library, 1976), 269.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

predetermined consummated plans. Hence, eschatology played a decisive role as a vehicle for perpetuating aggressive national American culture against the ideas and cultures of other people.

With the great migration from Europe in 1630 came eschatological overtones, from John Elliot who related his mission to the Indians as God's Spirit being poured out in the latter days to the prophetic expositions of Jonathan Edwards and his disciple Samuel Hopkins. Their views became structurally determinative for the missionary endeavour of the early "national" period. Edwards' millennial thought represented a departure from the eschatology that was held by most Eighteenth Century Americans. Most postulated that the millennial age of the church was to be brought about by a dramatic interruption of history, by the return of Christ.

In a series of sermons that were preached to his Northampton congregation, edited and published in 1747 entitled, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement And Visible Union Among God's people, In Extraordinary Prayer For The Revival of Religion, And The Advancement of Christ's Kingdom On Earth, Pursuant*, Edwards proposed the worst sufferings of the church are past.³⁹ To the contrary, he foresaw a golden age for the church on earth, within history, achieved through the ordinary process of gospel preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. There would be a mass conversion of the Jewish nation and the vast heathen darkness would be dispelled, and barbarous nations would become polite as England, and learning, holiness, peace, love and prosperity would spread everywhere through the light of the preached gospel.⁴⁰

For Edwards, America was the continent from which God would establish this new and most glorious state of His church on earth, the New World from which He creates a new heaven and new earth. Edward's states:

...the most glorious renovation of the world shall originate from the new continent, and the church of God in that respect be from hence. And so it is probable that will come to pass in spirituals, which has taken place in temporals, with respect to America...and if we suppose that this glorious work of God shall begin in any part of America, I think, if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of New England, it must needs appear the most likely, of all American colonies, to be the place whence this work shall principally rise. And, if these things be so, it gives us more abundant reason to hope that what is now

³⁹ Howard Peskett, "Missions and Eschatology," in *Eschatology in Bible Theology* (ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliot. Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1997), 303-304.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

seen in America, and especially in New England, may prove the dawn of that glorious day: and the very uncommon and wonderful circumstances and events of this work, seem to me strongly to argue that God intends it as the beginning or forerunner of something vastly great.⁴¹

Essentially, the millennium was fast approaching; the Reformation represented the fifth vial of Revelation, and the world was in the period of the penultimate sixth vial. For Edwards the New Jerusalem was descending and God's glorious work was in progress.⁴² For the evangelical churches, his theory sustained their morale and gave them a philosophy of history that partnered them with God in the redemption of the world.⁴³

The other side of Edwards' "optimistic postmillennial legacy" was a patriotic optimism that fuelled what Peskett calls an "unstable amalgam called civil millenarianism in America." He continues, "During America's struggle for independence patriotism and prophecy combined to produce a characteristic brew of interpretations: Lord Bute (from the Scottish island) was the beast from the sea; the Stamp Act was the mark of the beast; King George was the Antichrist; the words 'Royal Supremacy in Great Britain' totalled 666 in Greek and Hebrew."⁴⁴

Postmillennialism had become the commonly received doctrine of the colonies and in 1854 a Tennessee minister of the Methodist church, Samuel Davis Baldwin, apparently could prove that if correctly interpreted, Daniel referred to the end of the sacrifices in the temple in AD 68 and July 1776. And that Israel, referred to in prophetic literature was really America. But this inherently unstable eschatological view soon gave way to biblical criticism, a distaste for apocalyptic genre and Ritschlian theology.⁴⁵ Peskett says this "led quite quickly to the view that the New Testament belief in Jesus' second coming was a mistake, that millennialism was adolescent, and a 'thaumaturgical advent' was not to be expected. In more personal terms, process was preferred to crisis,

⁴¹ J. Edwards, *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England* (1740), in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, (Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers), Vol. 1 Chapter X, 382

⁴² Peskett, *Mission and Eschatology*, 306.

⁴³ Chaney., *The Birth of Missions in America*, 270.

⁴⁴ Peskett, *Mission and Eschatology*, 309.

⁴⁵ Ritschl rejected metaphysics and interpreted Christianity through Hegelian idealism. He viewed Christianity as "an ellipse with two foci: the kingdom of God, and personal redemption, but was more concerned with Christ's vocation of establishing God's *ethical* lordship." Hence this ethical reality would grow steadily without intrusions as people embraced their vocation to practice civil morality and serve the kingdom of God. See H. R. Mackintosh, "Albrecht Ritschl," in *New Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright: Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 595-596.

conversion was de-emphasized and nurture was emphasized. Death was beatified, and even after death there would be no sudden changes.”⁴⁶

2.2 Mission and Premillennialism. Society was changing drastically due to large-scale secularisation and the complexity of urban life. Modernism and its cult of efficiency, war and disagreement amongst churches led to the decline of any sort of supernaturalism or the expectation of miracles. Postmillennialism became a relic of a lost world and was replaced by a more negative, pessimistic amillennialism, premillennialism and fundamentalism.

For others who held onto a historicist premillennial view, the French Revolution, the era of Napoleon, and the exile of the Pope were the fulfilment of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. These events coupled with the struggle with infidelity, the spectacular revivals that broke out across America, and the sudden rise of missionary endeavour with the success around the world of benevolent societies attempting to assuage social ills, augured one conclusion: the immanence of the glorious consummation. Once the certainty of the coming Millennial Kingdom was presented, it was just a matter of discovering the approximate time when that age would arrive.

Advocates of this position were divided into many groups that cannot be fully discussed in the scope of this dissertation. However, a brief glance at the development of the significant views will be provided and how they affected American missions.

Some held the opinion that the Kingdom would not be brought about by a literal return of Christ, hence there would not be a chiliastic kingdom. Instead, the successful labours of the Church in missionary endeavour would lead to the transformation of the “wilderness” to “paradise.”⁴⁷

For ages the church was hidden in the wilderness and God has called the church out in order to bring it to its millennial triumph. The missionary movement was one of the great means to introduce the glories of the millennial period. Christ would reign in the hearts of men and women and the world would become the garden of the Lord.⁴⁸

The next step was to study those important disclosures of God’s calendar as they unfold through human affairs. This enabled the church to deduce the condition and

⁴⁶ Peskett, *Mission and Eschatology*, 309-310.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

prospects of the church.⁴⁹ Chaney gives a plethora of events that fed this perception: the rise of Protestant World Mission; the Napoleonic wars, were interpreted as the shaking of “the nations;” the conflict of the Ottoman Empire with Russia against Persia convinced many of the receding of Islam. This awareness motivated the American church to extraordinary missionary endeavour. All these events created the perception that God was doing something in the world and with his Church.

By the second decade of the 19th Century, there was no distinction between the pagan peoples of the American continent and the mission to the frontier settlements. The condition of both peoples was described as “wilderness.”⁵⁰ By 1820-1920, there was a massive effort to cultivate the divine garden and bring paradise to perfection. America was considered a Christian nation, and nationalism, brought about after the civil war of 1812, would be created under the rallying cry of Manifest Destiny. This would also mean bringing the various Indian nations into the “fold.” Missionaries became the shock troops of the eminently compelling American way.⁵¹ Chaney describes missions in this period as turning from offence to defence:

Its major purpose was to maintain, perfect and extend the nascent Protestant empire that was already evident by 1820. Even revivalism, the main evangelistic method of the 19th Century, is an instrument for renewing the establishment. It presupposes something given, something that can be revitalized. In this process, home mission no longer was a part of the world mission. It did not lose its importance to the American churches. It simply became the technique for maintaining Christian America, which in the providence of God would save the world.⁵²

Home missions became the divine hoe for keeping the garden clean and every effort was made to ensure that all the wild herbs (Roman Catholics, Indians, Mormons, immigrants, slaves etc.) were either domesticated or cast out. Americanisation was the emphasis for both the immigrant and the Indian. All would learn English and adopt the culture of the eastern seaboard. Churches had to Christianise the Natives and immigrants so they could be Anglo-Saxonised. Chaney describes how denominational

⁴⁹ Ibid., 274-275.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 294.

⁵¹ Robert L. Dana, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Missions: The Historiography of American Protestant Foreign Missions Since World War II”, in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 18 (October 1994): 148.

⁵² Ibid., 295.

exclusivism helped shape the mission to America, by parcelling up the garden. Once the garden was controllable, overseas missions gained ascendancy and America became the sending nation that was destined to renovate the world with the gospel and democracy.⁵³

The periphery of the garden was constantly extended until the frontier no longer existed. Chaney quotes Horace Bushnell, whose ideas seemed much like Edwards, when he stated in 1847, “The struggle might take a century. But the nation would enter a condition of Christian culture and virtue and become the most august, and happiest nation in the earth and the leading power in world history. . . There can be no other duty at all comparable to saving our country. America is the brightest hope of the ages. America must become the new Christian Empire whose name the believing and the good of all people shall hail as name of hope and blessing.”⁵⁴

These statements were echoed and enhanced by Josiah Strong who says that “the Anglo-Saxon, the true American, has two traits of genius: self-government and a pure spiritual Christianity.” He continues, “The Christians of the United States have it in their hands to hasten or retard the coming of Christ’s Kingdom to the world by hundreds or thousands of years. We of this generation and nation, occupy the Gibraltar of the ages which commands the world’s future.”⁵⁵

Chaney states that the mission to America became subservient to the mission of the nation. The national mission had become identical with the mission of God. He says, “Such seems almost inevitable when the Church identifies the nation as the garden of God By the end of the century there was a dangerous tendency to identify national destiny with the eternal plan of God. America, not the Church, had become the new Israel.”⁵⁶

By 1875, a new kind of premillennialism had developed. It was called Dispensationalism, and it gained wide acceptance among those who thought the earlier Adventist’s were both foolish and heretical. This view gained wide acceptance among

⁵³ Ibid., 297.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 298.

evangelicals who had become disillusioned with the discredited Millerites.⁵⁷ Under the gifted teaching of Nelson Darby and his latter student C.I. Scofield, Dispensationalists used a “futurist” hermeneutic to interpret prophecy, which held that no “last days” prophecy will be fulfilled until just before Christ’s return. As a whole they denied that the prophecies were intended for the church age and everything rested on the conviction that God has two completely different plans operating in history: one for Israel and one for the church.⁵⁸ Weber states, “In essence this meant that the Christian church had no prophecies of its own. It occupied a mysterious, prophetic time warp, a ‘great parenthesis,’ which had no place in God’s original plans.”⁵⁹

Believing that God was unable to deal with his two peoples or operate his two plans at the same time complicated their position. Consequently, it was necessary to remove the church before God could proceed with his final plans for Israel. This difficulty, however, was overcome by formulating their distinctive doctrine – the secret pretribulational rapture of the church. Their biblical defence was Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians in Chapter 4:16-17.⁶⁰ The revealing of the Antichrist and his treacherous dealings with Israel would then follow suit.

With the radically fast changing pace of American evangelicalism under the onslaught of Darwinism and the progress of technology, more liberal evangelicals found it difficult to maintain the worldview expressed in the Bible. Premillennialists, however, felt very much at home and maintained that telephones, telegraphs, motor cars, and airplanes were the confirmation of apocalyptic prophecies mentioned by John in the book

⁵⁷ The Millerites were millenarians who were provided with the “millennial arithmetic” by William Miller who established what today is called the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. He calculated that the date for Jesus’ return, would be October 22, 1844. By 1845 the false predictions led Miller to disregard all other denominations as the “Babylonian whore” when they, the Millerites, were treated as the laughing stock of American evangelicalism.

⁵⁸ Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 16.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁰ This was a neat solution to a thorny concern, and many historians are still trying to determine how Darby developed it. Weber states that Samuel Tergelles, who was a Plymouth Brethren, charged that the idea originated in 1832 during an ecstatic utterance in the congregation of a charismatic church. A newer version claims that Margaret Macdonald, a teenager from Scotland, had a vision of the end and spoke in tongues. Being sent by the Plymouth Brethren to investigate the allegations, Darby borrowed Margaret Macdonald’s view of the rapture and modified it where necessary. However, Darby’s own account, according to Weber, is that the dispensational doctrine jumped out of the pages of Scripture once he (Darby) accepted and consistently maintained the distinction between Israel and the church (See pp. 21-22).

of Revelation. Postmillennialism was quickly losing credibility after the Civil War, as things were getting worse. The crumbling postmillennial evangelical empire seemed empty and highly improbable. Weber states: “Premillennialists made much of the current state of society and interpreted it as ‘signs of the times.’ Political corruption, pornography, intemperance, the rise of monopolies, the desecration of the Lord’s Day by immigrant worldliness in the church, liberal theology (which was equated with apostasy), international conflicts . . . and countless other events were seen as proof that premillennialism was correct and the end of the age might be approaching.”⁶¹

Unlike the Millerites and dispensationalists, many premillennialists struggled with the idea of the church being suspended in prophetic time. They could not calculate Christ’s coming, and their eschatology demanded that they live in both the present and future. However, they were careful not to put too much emphasis on either. This led to various inconsistencies, for to raise a family and educate the children required long term planning that could be interrupted by the coming of the Lord. These normal demands of life in the world threatened to rob them of their enthusiasm and certainty about the possibility of the imminent return.⁶²

Weber quotes R.A Torrey as stating, “premillennialists should prepare themselves through a ‘separation from the world’s indulgence of the flesh, from the world’s immersion in the affairs of this life and intense daily earnestness in prayer.’ ”⁶³

On its most fundamental level, dispensationalism injected a new note of urgency into evangelism and missions by reminding their adherents that at any time Christ would return like a thief in the night and there was simply no time to lose. Premillennialists viewed the world as a sinking ship whose doomed passengers could be saved only by coming one at a time into the lifeboats of personal conversion. Since the course of the world is in a downward spiral, only souls, not societies could be saved from damnation.⁶⁴ Weber quotes Moody as saying, “I look on this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given

⁶¹ Weber., 42.

⁶² Consequently, Dispensationalists were constantly reminding each other to be in a perpetual state of anticipation and expectation. Weber states: “They likened themselves to the soldier on picket duty who knows that his present peace might be shattered by the call to action. Unlike his comrades back in the camp who could afford to lie around the camp fires and relax, the sentry must be constantly alert and on his guard.” (See p. 46).

⁶³ Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 47.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

me a lifeboat, and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.' God will come in judgement and burn up this world, but the children of God don't belong to this world; they are in it, but not of it, like a ship in the water. This world is getting darker and darker; its ruin is coming nearer and nearer. If you have any friends on this wreck unsaved, you had better lose no time in getting them off."⁶⁵

Premillennialism not only gave its advocates a new incentive for converting the lost of the world, but it gave them a new and powerful way to shake them up from spiritual lethargy. As Weber states: "Premillennialists were able to add to this already effective approach. No longer did the sinner only have to worry about dying unexpectedly; now he had to live with the possibility of being left behind when Jesus returned to rapture the church."⁶⁶ The Great Tribulation was equated to going to hell, and these techniques employed by the premillennial revivalists were graphically enhanced when sinners were reminded that they would be separated from their raptured loved ones. Premillennialism offered both a different view of the future as well as providing a different explanation of what God aimed to do in this age. Simply put, God had no intention of converting this world before the Second Coming. God's chief purpose in this dispensation was to "visit the Gentiles" in order to take out a people for His name. Prior to His return, God's work was limited to a comparatively small part of the human race; therefore, the church should not think that it was commissioned to win the world for Christ and turn it into the kingdom of God. Evangelisation and missions were simply dispensing the gospel to non-Christians, and there would not be a response as postmillennialists envisioned; therefore, Christians should be content with their minority status and the apparent failure of their cause. The lack of success was not due to the church's lack of faith and discipline. It was rather God's ordained plan for this age.

Mission work was by no means abandoned. On the contrary, it demanded even more strenuous effort. Continuing with the metaphor to describe the world and missions, the world is a sinking ship, and while the church could not keep the ship afloat, it could at least rescue a few passengers. In 1912, C.I Scofield had the ideal setting for the ship/lifeboat metaphor. While addressing the memorial service in Belfast, Ireland for the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 54.

victims of the Titanic disaster, Scofield warned that “the ship upon which humanity is crossing the sea is doomed, but that God had provided a lifeboat that was large enough to hold all those who wanted to climb aboard.”⁶⁷

Premillennialists were committed to missions, which now became “world evangelisation,” even though they understood the response would be minimal. The Second Coming was directly linked to world evangelisation and the key Biblical clue, which became their battle cry, was found in Matthew 24:14. The Lord was poised on the battlements of heaven, waiting for the saints to complete the task, and once the evangelisation was complete, the Second Advent would occur.⁶⁸ Although the events of the future were fixed, the exact time of the apocalypse was contingent on the church’s faithfulness and obedience. This enabled premillennialists to maintain a firm hold on the present and their activity in it. Weber states, “Premillennialists held that the millennium could come only after personal intervention of Christ. But to this extent they maintained for themselves some determination of when that intervention would occur. While the church could not convert the world, it could determine when Christ would.”⁶⁹

Premillennialists were sold out missionaries; they supported missions with both their monies and lives. They played a significant role in the founding of the Student Volunteer Movement and by 1887, over 2000 collegians had pledged themselves for missionary careers. They also founded “faith missions” that was by definition a para-church organisation. These were geared primarily for evangelisation and were ideally suited for their premillennial concerns and strategies.

Another example of premillennial commitment to missions was the formation of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.⁷⁰ A. B Simpson, a Presbyterian premillennialist,

⁶⁷ Ibid., 71.

⁶⁸ Many dispensationalists, who taught that no predicted event stood between the present and the rapture of the church, were uneasy with this model of eschatology and felt that the premillennialists made the Second Coming contingent upon evangelising the world. They dealt with this proposal by arguing that the gospel already had been preached throughout the world in apostolic times and that, although He could come for the saints at any time, He would not return for them until evangelisation was complete. Thus, leaving the responsibility with the Jews, who were expected to be converted during the great tribulation. See Weber, (pp.71-72).

⁶⁹ Weber., 72.

⁷⁰ The Alliance was not an ecclesiastical body but a fraternity of consecrated believers that were connected to various evangelical churches. Their goal as an organisation was to hold up Jesus in His fullness; to lead God’s [spiritually] hungry children to know the full blessing of the spirit, body, and soul; and to witness the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the millennial King.

helped develop the alliance that worked among the poor and unchurched of New York City.⁷¹ Given the growing urbanisation of America and the world, then present and future predicaments (World War I & II), one is not surprised to learn that premillennialists were not totally enthusiastic participants in the social movements of their day. In fact their Biblical assertions were diametrically opposed to any social involvement. Weber states:

Premillennialists believed that the key to the situation could be found in the vision of King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2). According to their interpretation, the 'times of the Gentiles,' which had begun at Babylon's ascendancy over the ancient Jews, would remain until the Lord Jesus returned to break Gentile power and restore his Messianic kingdom. Since that situation was part of God's plan, premillennialists had no right to try to change it. Social turmoil, politics corruption, and economic exploitation were all natural results of Satan's control over the present age. Until the second coming God had pretty much given everything over to the Devil, and all reform activity in the world could not change it. The church, therefore, must bide its time and let things run their course . . . It was as though God had wound up the cosmic clock until: the Devil's time had run out, the world was his to do with as he pleased.⁷²

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, American mission organisations were seeking the city of God within the dream of national destiny. However, defining the city of God became the concern. The emphasis remained, as it is today, on personal and proclamation evangelism.

Premillennial pessimism and separatism combined with fundamentalism had significantly affected sections of the American church and the denominations most touched were those that embraced an "escapee adventism," which in essence was more of an escape from reality. Many were less concerned with historical details than with the intricacies of Scripture. Against this flow of current fundamentalist thinking, came a voice "crying in the wilderness." Carl F. Henry was an example of the new sort of evangelical that was emerging in America. Referring to Henry's book *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism*, Peskett writes:

He [Henry] indicted fundamentalism as the modern priest and Levite, bypassing suffering humanity. He noted that there was a growing awareness in fundamentalist circles that 'evangelical Christianity has become increasingly inarticulate about the social reference

⁷¹ Michael Tymchak, "Ethics and the Coming King," n.p [cited 14 February 2002]. Online: http://online.cbccts.ca/alliancestudies/ahtheadings/ahtr_s1423.html. What held the Alliance together was a zeal for foreign missions, a concern for the poor and an adherence to conversion, entire sanctification, divine healing and a premillennial Second Coming.

⁷² Weber., 92.

of the gospel'. He was particularly eloquent about the embarrassing divorce between evangelical Christianity and great social reform movements; he criticized fundamentalism for its loss of a Catholic Calvinist vision for the whole of life; and he was particularly succinct in his summary of fundamentalist preoccupation with the intricacies of the kingdom then which had led to the neglect of commitment to an all-inclusive, redemptive context for evangelicals assault on the world's ills; total opposition to moral evils, social and personal; and the offer of a higher ethical standard with Christ providing the needed energy of those transformations.⁷³

With hindsight one would think that much was learned from all the end-time rhetoric as American Christianity moved into the future. However, very little has changed in the twentieth century. The reflex of pessimism emerged once again. In John Piper's book on missions⁷⁴ a different question regarding the way missions should be done is asked, and his main thesis is that the love of God demands and defines missions. Using the metaphor of two sinking ocean liners,⁷⁵ Piper describes the world as also sinking to its doom and suggests that we cannot save everyone from both ships. Rather, our energy should be dispensed at the place we find ourselves at rescue. He continues that "...the task of missions may not be merely to win as many individuals as possible from the most responsive people groups of the world, but rather to win individuals from *all* the people groups of the world."⁷⁶ His emphasis is ultimately that Jesus' mission was not one in which the disciples were sent out to win as many individuals as possible, but to reach people groups of the world: gathering in the "sons of God" who are scattered (John 11:52) and calling the "ransomed from every tongue and tribe and people and nation" (Romans 15:11).⁷⁷

⁷³ Peskett., *Mission and Eschatology*, 317.

⁷⁴ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad, The Supremacy of God in Missions*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1999), 167-170.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 169. If I understand the metaphor correctly, the ships represent both home and foreign missions. Piper states: "...even if some of the successful rescuers must leave a fruitful *reached* people (the first ocean liner), in order to labor in a (possibly less fruitful) *unreached* people (the second ocean liner)."

⁷⁶ Ibid., 169.

⁷⁷ Piper's entire thesis is driven by his interpretation of *panta ta ethne* in Genesis 18:18 and Galatians 3:8, and most fundamentally the supremacy of God among the nations. His book does not mention any particular eschatological position. The emphasis is rather on gospel proclamation and gathering in the lost from all nations. However, even though it is a good book on the Great Commission, it is devoid of any mission ethic. Typical of most books written by mainstream conservatives today, the emphasis is always placed on the fact that Christians are aliens in this world, whose eschatological perspectives override all other functions of missions, namely, the ethical and social dimensions. Mission is now primarily regarded as evangelism – the gathering in of people into the family of God. See Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter O' Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth, A Biblical Theology of Mission*, 269. What stands out is the dualistic idea that this world cannot possibly be good; it is characterised as a sinking

Modern premillennialism has changed little over the years in America, and to a large extent it is still the governing eschatology in Southern Baptist, Pentecostal, and Independent Biblicist churches. Evangelism and missions have been given impetus with recent books and a movie.⁷⁸ They inspire the average American Christian to evangelise (be on mission) and to share their faith in the “real world,” ingraining the concept that the worst possible thing in this world is to be “left behind”.

Many of the larger theological institutions such as Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, under the inspiration of their President, Dr. Paige Patterson, still propagate the “storm trooper” mentality; evangelists are being sent out from a Christian Empire to subdue the “wilderness” and gather in the “drowning souls” across the world.

There is still the strong belief that through ardent evangelism/mission work the millennial kingdom will be inaugurated. Chaney, who is also a Southern Baptist, responds:

I do not believe that America is now or ever has been a Christian Empire, or that God ever shifted his missionary calling to the nation instead of the Church. Making America the ‘Redeemer Nation’ contaminated, compromised and castrated the Church. By identifying America as the New Israel through which God intended to renovate the world, the church became impure, immoral and impotent...The Church in America is a mixed multitude in a mess, not a company of obedient disciples on a mission. This nation is deluded by allegiance to a civil religion and ensnared by militant hedonism, secular humanism and a new exotic paganism.⁷⁹

As a whole, I believe the general statement, that the premillennial view has despaired of social action as one solution to the problem of mankind, is fairly accurate, and in turn they have lost the essential expression of obedience to Christ’s missionary command. Holding firmly to a premillennial view of Christ’s coming, there has been a subtle pessimism about the victory of Christ and His church among people.

ship, and the lost must be saved in order to be removed from a sin-wrecked world to the *ideal* world, the New Jerusalem.

⁷⁸ I am referring to the series of Left Behind books, written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, that has dominated both Christian and secular book stores in America, as well as the co-authored Prophecy Study Bible, and the *Left Behind* film that made its debut in the U.S in 2001. These of course received their major impetus from Hal Lindsey’s book *Late Great Planet Earth*, published in 1977.

⁷⁹ Chaney., 302.

They have perceived, I believe, “that in this world we have *no* lasting city,” and therefore look “for the city which is to come” (Heb. 13:14). Both premillennialists and dispensationalists have designed their ethical views in accordance with a psychology appropriate to their reading of the events surrounding the return of Christ, rather than conforming to the explicit ethic that Jesus has left for us in Scripture.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Often the following texts of Matthew 6:10, where Christ is teaching on prayer and what the Father’s will is, as well as John 5:30 and Matthew 7:21 are ignored. These texts reveal the essential contents of God’s will for us and for Christian ethics and conduct. Premillennialists draw from Matthew 28:17-20, conclusions that pertain only to winning the lost for Christ, and this conclusion is played off against involvement in socially ameliorative activities. The question to be asked is not whether normal premillennialists’ conclusions are valid, but whether they represent adequately what Jesus said. Most often premillennialists use two conditions for making a social ethic a secondary matter to evangelism. First, being a disciple has no primary social dimensions, and second, what Jesus taught in Matthew 28:20, does not contain any prescription of behaviours with a social dimension. They are also caught in a deep contradiction, playing off the results of evangelism against the task of evangelism. Seeking conversions is always good, but Christ’s command involves a commitment to discipleship and to practice “everything,” and the results are the implications for social action. However, when social ethics are ignored, then the essential character of the Great Commission is misrepresented with the result that yields a logic, as mentioned in the body of this paper, that the world is a sinking ship, and therefore the brass doesn’t require polishing. This conviction translates into social paralyses. Hence, evangelism becomes the primary, and sometimes the only, task of the church. Never should evangelism and social action be seen as competitors, for the latter always loses to the former. Your neighbour, by definition is social, and in essence is not an isolated individual, rather, your neighbour is a member of society. We have contact with this individual not only personally, as an individual, but also through institutions, organisations, governments, churches and all the social structures and systems of which Christians *are* a part of. Our love of our neighbour should extend from the personal and individual contacts through to the policies and practices of the larger social units and systems already mentioned. In this broad spectrum of responsibilities, the entire ethic of Scripture comes into play from individual gestures of love that meet personal needs, to sharing the gospel and the prophetic call to justice and fairness in social structures. Finally, we then read that according to Jesus, to love one’s neighbour is second, not to evangelism, but to the love of God the Father. Hence, this secondary love of the neighbour is the powerful motive both for sharing the gospel, in its full complexity – i.e. *Missio Dei*, and for the caring behaviour Jesus powerfully prescribed. This will be discussed more fully in the final chapter.

Chapter 3

David J. Bosch's Changing Views on Apocalyptic Theology and Missiology.

3.1 Introduction to analysis. From what has been written concerning Bosch's view on mission, eschatology and the apocalyptic, it is apparent that he had an interesting history of change in his thoughts. Adrio König, who has written an article concerning this very issue, states, "In his [Bosch's] doctoral thesis (1959) apocalyptic is virtually absent, in *Witness to the World* (1980) it is present but in an exclusively negative sense, but in his *magnum opus* (1989) it plays a prominent and positive role – though, and this is striking, it is restricted to his interpretation of Paul, leaving his dealings with the rest of the New Testament (Jesus, Matthew, Luke) untouched."⁸¹

Hence, it is evident that Bosch underwent a change in his view of the dynamic influence eschatology and apocalyptic theology has on missions. Beginning with his thesis, König's observation is that Bosch merely touches on the issue of apocalyptic theology of the Old Testament. He comments, "He distinguishes apocalyptic clearly from the Old Testament and New Testament eschatology and evaluates them as an exclusively negative world view in which nothing is expected of the present evil world, consisting merely of an escape into futile speculation about the future."⁸²

According to König, Bosch acknowledges that the coming of Christ and his authenticating works of preaching, teaching and healing have a distinctive apocalyptic background, but he never deals with these within an apocalyptic context.⁸³

One can only speculate that when Bosch wrote his doctoral thesis, his negative view of apocalyptic theology created a defence of a "present hope" reality that is offered in Christ for all who are living at any given time. In undermining the reality of a future hope and placing a future content into the present, Bosch, who was living in South Africa at a time of crisis when politically the country was being governed by an oppressive regime, needed to emphasise that all hope could not be deferred to some future glorious

⁸¹ Adrio König, Apocalyptic, Theology, Missiology, *Missionalia*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (April 1990), 20.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

state. Hence, if Christ has come then the present is filled with salvific opportunity and liberation.

History, therefore, would not be an empty vessel transporting humans who are trying to do the best they can with what they have mercilessly forward. For this reason König stated that Bosch's view of "Apocalyptic moves between a tired *Fernerwartung* and an overheated *Naherwartung*, but offers nothing for the present. It is a hope without faith and love."⁸⁴

3.2 Witness to the World. These negative sentiments of the apocalyptic continued from his doctorate to his next major work, *Witness to the World*.⁸⁵ However, his apocalyptic view, which according to König was cursory in his doctoral thesis, becomes more prominent therein.

Bosch begins *Witness to the World* by laying the foundations for interpreting history and the Bible with a hermeneutic that is a combination of the inductive and deductive approaches. This he claims will prevent the imposition of one culture's micro-ethnic upon another. For behind every presupposition lurks a cultural interpretation; using a cultural context as a departure point to interpreting the Bible lends itself to interpreting both history and Scripture through a particular cultural lens. He gives an example: "An American Protestant reads the Bible in a way which differs from that of a German Catholic or a Kimbanguist from Zaire...Historical events and personal or group experience are too ambivalent to serve as key for the interpretation of a biblical text."⁸⁶

Quoting Casalis, Bosch gives the reader a clue to his approach to understanding his view on mission and how other related topics such as apocalyptic theology are affected by it. He quotes: " 'Theology, nurtured by the word of God, reflects on a historical situation in which we are wholly and responsibly involved.' Or elsewhere: 'The situation is not God's word; God's word is not outside the situation; only a reference back to both the analysis (of the situation) and the word *permits* [italics mine] the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ David Bosch, *Witness to the World, The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*, (Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1980).

⁸⁶ Ibid., 43-44. I share these sentiments with Bosch, and I have tried to explain how perceived history and culture can influence our view of eschatology. See my discussion thereof in the second chapter of this dissertation under the heading: "The Millennial Kingdom and the Garden of America," pp. 11-24.

discovery of all dimensions of the situation.’ ”⁸⁷ Emphasising the word “permits” Bosch reiterates the notion “that the practice of theology remains at risk.” He stresses, “We can engage in theology only haltingly.”⁸⁸

Could this be the key to understanding Bosch’s negativity and hesitancy toward framing mission theology in his earlier writings, within an apocalyptic theology? I believe that a case could be made for this possibility. Although he speaks of mission in general, Bosch is clear to assert that the above reasoning is important for reflection on the biblical foundation of mission and to prevent confusion regarding the meaning and content of mission. He concludes the section of inductive and deductive approaches with the following words:

...we have at least made it possible to listen to what Scripture says about this with a certain degree of openness. We are now aware of the fact that our own definitions cannot without further ado advance the claim of being the only valid ones. We may discover that not even in the Bible itself is there any carefully defined and unalterable notion of mission, but rather a variety of emphases and approaches within the wider framework of an understanding of mission as God’s concern with the world for the salvation of man.⁸⁹

Combining both his historical circumstances in South Africa with its looming political instability and the concern not to impose a white South African view upon Scripture (a present apocalyptic national wasteland and a deferred hope in a future utopian state) and neither desiring to depart from both an inductive and deductive approach to Scripture, Bosch lays the foundation for his hesitancy to interpret mission in an apocalyptic framework.

By treating apocalyptic theology negatively, Bosch tries to infuse value into the present by evaluating three models of history. The first view evaluated is the ahistorical or cyclical view of reality. This view as mentioned earlier is characterised by a cyclical thought pattern, which immunises the believer to the historical character of biblical revelation and the present value of the Christian life. As Bosch says, “...the present makes room for the idea of the eternal, immutable and timeless truths, [causing one to leave] the soil of biblical revelation.”⁹⁰ Bosch believes that an equally unacceptable

⁸⁷ Ibid., 44-45.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 60.

partner to the ahistorical approach is to over historicise leading to a hyper-accentuation of the past. This occurs in two ways, by maintaining that biblical revelation has to do with historical events, and that all emphasis is placed on what he calls eternal immutables. Bosch continues, "...it becomes more important to preserve the historical correctness of the original event than it is to move in to the future and act in light of that event. The Bible then becomes an oracle. Conservatism and dead orthodoxy then become more important than taking the risk of stepping into the future and devising new 'models' of obedience."⁹¹ Finally, the third model Bosch evaluates is the excessive emphasis on the future which focuses primarily on apocalypticism, he writes:

... the framework of utopian categories an overwhelmingly glorious future expected, a future which bears no resemblance to the drab and dreary present. No attempt is made to change the present dismal conditions. All that remains is to sit and wait for the dawn of a new day – as the Qumran community did in their settlements near the Dead Sea. The two contrasting forms of over-historicisation are in reality closely related. In both instances the present is left empty. God is regarded as active either only in the past or only in the future. And because the present is empty, genuine missionary involvement is possible in neither case.⁹²

Following the evaluation of the historical models Bosch defends the concept of a filled present. This he does by discussing the concept of *kairos* in Jesus' statement in Luke 19:44 where the leaders of Israel did not recognise God's moment when it came. Bosch says, "History is filled time, now, in the present. This being said in many ways, and precisely this awareness forms the basis for the early Church's involvement in mission... if you participate in this historical event, you are involved in the world..."⁹³

He further expands on the reality of a filled and valuable time by mentioning the post-Easter period, "... when Jesus was no longer present in the flesh among his disciples – the awareness of living in a *kairos* did not change. On the contrary, it was broadened and deepened."⁹⁴ He states that there could easily have been a relapse by the disciples to once again experience the present as empty and bleak, yielding to a Pharisaic model that codifies the traditions of Jesus in a 'new law' that tempts its adherents to live in the past. A result that manifested itself in the teaching of the Ebionitic Christians.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 60-61.

⁹³ Ibid., 65.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Bosch continues with the contrasts mentioned above. He says, “There was likewise, the danger, that, under the influence of Gnosticism, the historicity of Jesus might be regarded as insignificant and even a stumbling block; in this way the new message might dissipate into the Greek spiritual world of ideas.”⁹⁵ Finally, Bosch asserts that two events that protected the early church from regressing into the past or deferring hope into the future, or escaping into the world of ideas was the Holy Spirit, he says, “that Jesus was raised from the dead and sent his Spirit to remain with his disciples. These pivotal events gave them the consciousness that the present was still filled, that, because of these events, they were irrevocably involved with the world...”⁹⁶

Bosch’s position begins to become more apparent throughout his book, and he makes it clear that he is a strong proponent of a “realised eschatology” that is rooted in the efforts of a dynamic church whose mandate is predicated in Christ and the grace extended through him to the world.⁹⁷ Hence the hope of Christ was not some future event, but a hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15)⁹⁸, a present reality fulfilling an ongoing present task. The position he adopts is obviated through stressing the urgency for the here and now. Hence, apocalyptic is not invested in Christ, instead Christ is the sole reason for the activities of the church. For Bosch, the God of history has used Israel, as he states, “as [an] arena for his activities among the nations and the history of Jesus as a gateway to the world.”⁹⁹

So for Bosch the church is a living, present, active, organic entity, amongst the nations, that has value in what it offers to any given generation. The church since its inception, Bosch says, “...is *in* but not *of* the world. She always moves ‘between salvation history and history.’ She is a sociological entity like any other human organisation and as susceptible to all human frailties; at the same time she is an eschatological entity and as such the incorruptible Body of Christ.”¹⁰⁰

The negative view of the apocalyptic and the present meaning and function of the church are stressed by asserting that the early church was not trapped between a *gnosis*

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Bosch discusses this point in Chapter nine of *Witness to the World*.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 83.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 93.

religion, “in which the world is remote from God, sin is interpreted as being trapped in matter and mission mean[t] showing man a way out of the world.”¹⁰¹ Neither did the church become absorbed in apocalypticism, “...as happened in Montanism, where ‘having the Spirit’ became the prerogative of an elite group and mission consisted in admitting as members the elect who were merely waiting for the imminent end of the world and Christ’s return.”¹⁰² Instead what the church did to survive was reject the above heresies, but also at its cost a new fundamental was embraced. The church neglected its relationship with the world because ecclesiology became the next concern. Bosch quotes Hoekendijk: “Ecclesiology has been a subject of major concern only in the ‘*second* generation’; in the ‘first generation,’ periods of revival, reformation or missionary advance, our interest was absorbed by Christology, thought-patterns were determined by eschatology, life became a doxology...”¹⁰³

Bosch’s negative evaluation of the apocalyptic continues in the light of the early church and its function:

One of the most serious problems the early Church had to face lay in the fact that the return of Christ, expected in the immediate future, did not take place... The second epistle to the Thessalonians is intended to put in a wider perspective this expectation of the end ... Nowhere in the New testament did apocalypticism completely win the day because nowhere was the present regarded as empty. Time and again mission proved to be the Church’s dynamic involvement in the world, her response to the question about the significance of the interim period... By the second century...The hereafter was increasingly interpreted as something outside of time... This led to the despising of *this* world. Official Christianity tended to become a religion of redemption, modelled on the mystery religions. The emphasis was on salvation from the earth rather than a renewal of the earth... Thus eschatology was spiritualised; in its turn this led to a moralism which spread like blight over Christianity’s entire expectation of the future.¹⁰⁴

Bosch’s harshest criticism of apocalyptic theology is expressed in chapter nineteen under the sub heading of *Shades of Dualism*. He expresses his disdain for the Church’s constant dualistic approach to the world. Evangelicals are criticised for acknowledging Jesus as “Lord only of the Church and not of the cosmos as well.”¹⁰⁵ Salvation is seen as an escape from this world rather than a renewal of the world. Bosch

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 94.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 95.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 96-97.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 202.

remarks, “The believer however feels most happy when he is building dykes against the threatening flood of social involvement. He has to watch against satanic tactics of diversion and any adulteration of his faith. After all, ‘the frame of this world is passing away’ (1 Cor.7.31). In this view the dualism between spirit and body, eternal and temporal, personal and social, sacred and profane is total.”¹⁰⁶

The interim period loses all contextual value if the Church continues to be inconsistent in its purposes and attitude toward the world and Bosch feels its important to unmask this peculiar inconsistency. He says:

Whereas evangelicals emphasis that everything in this world is temporary, relative, and therefore unimportant, it is precisely in these circles that we find an almost fanatical clinging to existing structures and patterns of life. The confession that the frame of this world, is passing away, in a paradoxical manner leads to absolutising of the existing order. The Church’s task, it appears, is to help maintain the status quo. The more the gospel is proclaimed as an otherworldly reality, the more existing order is uncritically upheld. Perhaps this phenomenon can be explained with reference to the dualism that is typical of pietistic evangelicals.¹⁰⁷

One begins to see more clearly Bosch’s commitment to defending a *kyrios Iesus* theology knitted together with a realised eschatology as opposed to an over simplified apocalyptic that castrates the Church of any present ethic. In defence of the Lordship of Christ both of this world and the cosmos, Bosch says:

When a man’s personal piety positions itself between him and his fellow man, when his religious commitment closes his heart to his neighbour, when the ministry of the Holy Spirit is confined to the area of personal ethics, when Christianity is defined solely in terms of sacred activities at appointed times, when biblical statements concerning people’s concrete needs are spiritualised, when redemption is confined to man’s personal relationship with God, when somebody is saved but all his relationships remain unaffected, when structural and institutionalised sins are not exposed, we are involved with an unbiblical one-sidedness and a spurious Christianity... ‘Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, *on earth* as in heaven’ (Matt. 6:10) the Kingdom comes wherever Jesus overcomes the evil one. This happens (or ought to happen) in its fullest measure in the Church.¹⁰⁸

Bosch tries to rectify the view that separates biblical ethics and “active, present eschatology.” This he does by removing the apocalyptic element, which according to him

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 203.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 207.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 209.

caused innumerable problems both in the early church, and its modern counterpart. He says, "... old doceticism, which denied Christ's existence in the flesh has its modern analogy in the tendency to place the Church and the believer outside the turbulent events of the world...".¹⁰⁹ He continues, "Eschatology is the doctrine about things already in the process of fulfilment. And if it appears that the Church is shying away from too much realised eschatology, retreating into other-worldliness, then this is so because she has not understood the message and ministry of Jesus Christ, and because the tension in which she lives has proved to be too much for her."¹¹⁰

This brings me to my final point concerning Bosch's negative view of the apocalyptic in *Witness to the World*. In chapter twenty two, Bosch isolates apocalyptic completely from eschatology by presenting a meaningful relationship between mission and eschatology. He rejects both schools of thinking that regards salvation history as "something quarantined from world history."¹¹¹ According to Bosch, on the one hand, evangelicals deduce from global missions a progression of history and "what time it is on God's watch and how close we are to the unfolding of salvation history... All other events are ascribed to the machinations of the evil one..."¹¹² On the other hand, ecumenicals, in reaction to this narrow view of salvation history interpretation, have placed God's operation in the secular world and desacralised salvation history. Bosch says that both these views are inadequate and subjectivistic.¹¹³ It is not simply an "either" "or" situation. God's acts, according to Bosch, must be seen through the eyes of faith, because history is full of contradictions. Therefore, if history is full of contradictions, apocalyptic details are contingent on circumstances in a given cultural context and historical framework, and our interpretations thereof are governed by an individual's or group's prejudices and predilections, then it becomes irresponsible to simply create dualistic categories "between light and dark."¹¹⁴

By rejecting these models, Bosch does not want to be understood as having denied the activity of God anywhere in history. Rather he rejects the "one-dimensional

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 210.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 230.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 231.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 233.

interpretation of history”¹¹⁵ that these models offer. For Bosch salvation history and secular history are inseparable. His major thesis is the Church, which is both a theological and sociological entity, involves itself in world history through mission. The Church, Bosch says:

...does not have to become less and less ‘sociological’ in order to become more and more ‘theological’. All things considered, the sociological dimension does not endanger the theological. On the contrary. The Church is ‘a phenomenon of world history which can be grasped in historical and psychological terms like any other.’

The focal point of God’s involvement in world history is called mission. Christian consciousness of history is a missionary consciousness that recognises a divine commission; it is therefore a consciousness of the contradiction inherent in this unredeemed world... Therefore, even if there did exist a strong apocalyptic tendencies in the early Church, it was mission that prevented apocalypticism from detaching the Christian community from world history...¹¹⁶

Hence, for Bosch, mission is an eschatological event, the unfolding of events from which the Church, when it partakes, receives meaning. Mission is never a hastening of the end; an introspection, because of self-preservation due to apocalyptic hype; rather, “Mission eschatologically [is] understood as a constant stimulus for the Church... To wait for the end never implies passivity but rather intense activity in the here and now. Involvement in the world is one of the chief ways of preparing ourselves for the *parousia*.”¹¹⁷

By relaying the certainty of the Kingdom of God, which is both a present and future reality, Bosch stresses that the present is filled, not with blind apocalyptic speculation, but with “anticipations in human experiences now. The meaning of history can be ascertained, since the goal of history has been revealed.”¹¹⁸ Again the point is stressed: Bosch wants to make it clear that the present is infused with hope. However, this hope is not some utopian wishful thinking to come in some future, deferred kingdom, rather, Bosch says:

It is precisely mission which should keep alive the hope for a divine fulfilment of the Kingdom. Where the expectation of God’s intervention withers, mission loses its true character and eschatology is reduced to ethics. It then becomes either merely humanitarian improvement without a transcendent dimension or a private affair where

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 232.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 236.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

the concern is not with the renewal of the entire creation but simply with individual salvation, a living after death.¹¹⁹

Lastly, Bosch pits eschatology against apocalyptic with these final words, “...mission as eschatological event arms the Church-in-mission against despondency. The eschatological motif, as we have seen, impels us to involve ourselves for the erection of signs of the Kingdom here and now, yet at the same time it fortifies us against danger and disappointment, disillusionment and frustration... Only a healthy eschatological perspective can fortify against it.”¹²⁰

My conclusion concerning Bosch’s negative attitude toward the apocalyptic in *Witness to the World* is summarised with a few observations. It appears that Bosch evaluates apocalyptic theology in an exclusively negative way. For him apocalyptic is an escape from present reality because it empties history of meaning. Second, Bosch tends to identify the apocalyptic movement with extra-biblical groups like the Qumran community and the post-Nicene Montanists. Where he does relate apocalyptic theology to intra-biblical material, he tries to correct the present worldview that embraces it.¹²¹ Third, Bosch argues that mission, which is incompatible with apocalyptic, prevented apocalypticism from removing the early church’s social and evangelistic mandate. For Bosch, mission returns meaning and content to the interim time. Finally, Bosch’s reluctance to engage present reality with apocalyptic theology, as mentioned before, is possibly because of the circumstances then in South Africa, with its oppression of the majority population groups by the regime; his desire not to impose a cultural perspective when interpreting the Bible; and his lack of distinction between different forms of apocalyptic (i.e. late Jewish apocalyptic and Montanism) makes evaluating apocalyptic in a positive light difficult. However, he does relate mission and eschatology in a positive light and he does so by isolating eschatology from apocalyptic, as König says, “Over against his negative evaluation of apocalyptic....”¹²² Bosch seems convinced that eschatology and apocalyptic are incompatible and therefore should be distinguished clearly. Mission is regarded as an eschatological event whereas apocalyptic is rejected as

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 237.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 238.

¹²¹ See my quote on page 30. Footnote number 99.

¹²² Ibid., Adrio König, *Apocalyptic, Theology, Missiology*, 22

having been influenced by Gnosticism and the Greek mystery cults and their view of history. He states:

I do not think that the New Testament has to be interpreted apocalyptically. A pessimistic view of history is an *essential* part of apocalyptic thinking. The world is evil and continues to deteriorate. The present is empty. The past is a Golden Era for which people yearn nostalgically but which is not constitutive for the present. The future comes as a *deus ex machina*, catastrophically; it is the complete reversal of the present. This is how every apocalyptic functions, be it Christian eschatology or non-Christian. Examples are first century Jewish apocalyptic, as well as the countless variations of Christian apocalyptic, from the Montanists in the second century, up to the Millerite movement in the nineteenth century and various groups in our own time.

In contrast, the New Testament expectation of the future kingdom of God is not the exclusive point of focus of the entire history of salvation. The future, as I have said on p.236, has been cleft in two by Christ. The future is already present.¹²³

In *Witness to the World*, Bosch seems to have created dualistic categories between eschatology and apocalyptic, which according to him have been separated by the attestation of the New Testament's teaching of the risen Christ. However, it could be argued that this is the very essence of the Christian apocalyptic. What was once regarded as an exclusively Jewish future apocalyptic, has now come to fruition in the present, in the resurrection of Christ Jesus, and the resurrection of the dead at his return. Christ's future return becomes the future hope, as it is rooted in his resurrection, and the interim is infused with urgent apocalyptic. This apocalyptic is the tension of the "already" and "not yet," hence Christ's return could be a moment away. This tension is the essence of New Testament apocalyptic teaching, and mission is the consequence of the Christian apocalyptic. In short, eschatology is the framework for mission, and apocalyptic injects the present activity of the church in which the Holy Spirit/Comforter entered, as a gift of the end. Hence, between the ascension and return of Christ, the church is to perform its mandate with urgency.

3.3 Transforming Mission. In *Transforming Mission*, Bosch adopted an entirely different approach from *Witness to the World*. The Apostle Paul's thoughts receive extensive focus, and in exclusively apocalyptic categories. Bosch says Paul viewed the end as always incalculable, and, at the same time, imminent. Hence, Paul's mission work

¹²³ David Bosch, *Salvation, Tomorrow and today* (A response to Adrio König), in *Theologia Evangelica*, Pretoria, South Africa, Vol. 13, Numbers 2 and 3, (July-September 1980): 24.

“[took] place within the framework of a fervent eschatological expectation... There is, then, no abiding conflict between apostolicity and apocalyptic in Paul, only a creative tension.”¹²⁴ He also quotes from material, which was available prior to his book *Witness to the World*; “Scholars now tend to agree that Paul has to be understood not only in opposition to his Jewish past but also in continuation with that past. This applies to his appreciation for the Law and the abiding validity of God’s promises to Israel...as well as to his eschatological convictions.”¹²⁵ Quoting Wilckens (1959) to substantiate this point, Bosch writes, “Rather, Saul (as Pharisee!) stood in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition from Daniel onward, a tradition which decisively influenced the theology of Paul the Christian; we will never understand Paul unless this is fully recognized.”¹²⁶ And quoting Beker who argues for a distinction between apocalyptic Judaism before the Jewish War and the negative reaction to the apocalyptic following the war, Bosch writes:

Classical Judaism of the post-Jamnia period made apocalyptic responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, because of its messianic speculations. Since the Jamnia council of AD 90, the rabbinic-Hebrew canon, because of its distaste for apocalyptic, had excluded both the apocrypha and the apocalyptic Pseudepigrapha... Paul, however, belongs to pre-war Judaism and should be read and understood against that background.¹²⁷

He also quotes Käsemann (1969), who stated “In the case of Paul, then, apocalyptic is indeed the ‘mother of theology.’ ”¹²⁸ Hence, one sees Bosch trying now to make a strong case for understanding Pauline literature as grounded in a strong modified apocalyptic framework. And he gives no reason for his radical change of mind.

Interestingly, the chapter on Paul is also the longest of his chapters on biblical authors, and yet he still does not interpret the rest of the New Testament apocalyptically. Ironically he takes the position which deals negatively with those traditions in Christianity that have rejected any manifestation of the apocalyptic and he quotes J.C. Beker extensively (according to König, fifty times in less than twenty pages)¹²⁹ throughout his book, to make his point. He equates the Judaism of the period after AD 70,

¹²⁴ Bosch., *Transforming Mission*, 131.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 140.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 143.

¹²⁹ Ibid., Adrio König, *Apocalyptic, Theology, Missiology*, 23.

which spurned its apocalyptic heritage, with modern mainline Christianity, who have likewise rejected “an ‘apocalyptic’ Paul.”¹³⁰ He writes:

Paul is understood as though he was reacting to (Christianity’s interpretation of) classical post-war rabbinic Judaism.

Apocalyptic is often characterized by the supposition that the present is empty and that all salvation lies only in the future. The despair and frustration people experience in the present propel them to long for total redemption in the future, which is usually understood to be both imminent and calculable.

Montanism, a late second and early-third century heresy, is one of the earliest examples of a Christian apocalyptic movement and bears resemblance to many other millenarian sects that flourished in the Middle Ages...The cultural climate of our own time appears to be particularly conducive to such movements, as the writings of Hal Lindsey [illustrate]... Beker...highlights several grave distortions of the gospel which characterize Lindsey’s updated version of Montanism. Lindsey’s descriptions of the future are deterministic in the extreme; his apocalyptic is devoid of a christological focus; the biblical materials he cites are totally divorced from their proper contexts; his hope for the future is self-centered in the extreme; and there is no theology of the cross in his apocalyptic.¹³¹

In his discussion of those traditions within the Christian history that dealt negatively with any form of apocalyptic, Bosch says, “It was either silenced or neutralized by the established church, which resulted in future eschatology being largely pushed out of the mainstream of Christianity and into heretical aberrations.”¹³² In defence of the apocalypticists, Bosch says, “[they] at least kept alive the conviction of a fundamental reordering of reality in time at some future moment, the main body of the church soon came under the spell of Platonic thinking.”¹³³ In turn we see Bosch dealing negatively with those positions that oppose any manifestations of apocalyptic, and again adding a positive view to apocalyptic theology, he continues, “This manifested itself in several ways, particularly under the influence of Origen and Augustine. The resurrection of Christ was viewed as a completed event and severed from the hope of a future resurrection of believers. Christian history after the Christ-event was regarded as little more than the working out of God’s once-for-all action in Christ. The expectation of a ‘new heaven and a new earth’ was spiritualized away.”¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Ibid., 140.

¹³¹ Ibid., 140-141.

¹³² Ibid., 141.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

This last paragraph comes close to some of the criticism Bosch himself made at many protagonists of the apocalyptic position. Nonetheless, it has become clear throughout Bosch's writing in *Transforming Mission* that he, although he gives no reason for his changed position, has aligned himself with Beker to make a defence of rehabilitating the much maligned term apocalyptic over against eschatology. According to Bosch, "... 'apocalyptic' clarifies the future-temporal character of Paul's gospel and denotes an end-time occurrence that is both cosmic-universal and definitive."¹³⁵

Bosch also makes a necessary distinction within apocalyptic. In contrast to the Jewish apocalyptic, which had as its centre, the Law, "...apocalyptic is given a new 'centre of gravity,' Jesus Christ."¹³⁶ More specifically it is the death and resurrection of Christ which signifies "... the apocalyptic judgment... whereas the resurrection signifies the free gift of new life..."¹³⁷ Bosch writes, "The resurrection of Christ necessarily points to the future glory of God and its completion. This means that Paul's theology is not unifocal but bifocal, coming from God's past act in Christ it moves toward God's future act... both events stand or fall together, and both converge on Christian life in the present..."¹³⁸

Hence, Bosch asserts that the dualistic structure of Jewish apocalyptic has now been profoundly modified by Paul, for although Paul focuses on what God must still do, there is a hope because of what God has already done.¹³⁹ For Bosch, Paul's apocalyptic is therefore vastly different from certain apocalyptic groups. He spells this out in two ways: first, most apocalyptic groups, are "...sectarian, introverted, exclusivists, and jealous in guarding their boundaries,"¹⁴⁰ thus leaving no room for large-scale missionary enterprises because of the expectation of an only imminent end. Second, when mission is initiated it is done as a precondition for "...precipitating the parousia."¹⁴¹ Paul, on the other hand, is not paralysed by the parousia, instead he has a zeal for mission, and therefore, according

¹³⁵ Ibid., 142.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 143.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 145.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

to Bosch, "...can only proclaim the lordship of Christ, not inaugurate it; it remains the prerogative of God himself to usher in the end."¹⁴²

Bosch also makes the point of applying Paul's apocalyptic theology to ethics, and comparing it to social conservatism and its marriage to apocalyptic enthusiasm, Bosch says the natural progeny of this thinking is that "Waiting for God's imminent kingdom, people are drawn out of society into the haven of the church, which is nothing but a lifeboat going around and around in a hostile sea, picking up survivors of a shipwreck...Moreover, apocalyptic enthusiasts usually display a peculiar self-centeredness. They see themselves as a favored elite. The world is the stage for their own striving for sanctification; the dualism between spirit and body devaluates the created order to a testing ground for heaven."¹⁴³ However, Paul's apocalyptic is different because, although the form of this world is passing away, Bosch says, for Paul "The church already belongs to the redeemed world; it is that segment of the world that is obedient to God...it is not preoccupied with self-preservation; it serves the world in the sure hope of the world's transformation at the time of God's final triumph."¹⁴⁴

Bosch says this strong ethic finds its grounding in Pauline apocalyptic, and he, it seems, derives his strong missiological impetus from this very Pauline notion. He enumerates:

In Paul's thinking, then, church and world are joined together in a bond of solidarity. The church, as the already redeemed creation, cannot boast in a 'realized eschatology' for itself over against the world. It is placed, as a community of hope, in the context of the world and its power structures. And it is as members of such a community that Christians 'groan inwardly' together with the 'whole creation,' which is 'groaning in travail.'...It most certainly matters what Christians do and how authentically they demonstrate the mind of Christ and the values of the reign of God in their daily lives. Since the forces of the future are already at work in the world, Paul's apocalyptic is not an invitation to ethical passivity, but to active participation in God's redemptive will...Authentic apocalyptic hope thus compels ethical seriousness. It is impossible to believe in God's coming triumph without being agitators for God's kingdom here and now...Opposing the false apocalypses of power politics, Christians strive for those intimations of the good that already foreshadow God's ultimate triumph...¹⁴⁵

Finally, Bosch summarises Paul's apocalyptic view in *Transforming Mission* by

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 150.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 150-151.

appealing to the church to heed the flexibility of Paul's apocalyptic expectation in the circumstances history places believers in. He quotes Beker; "...we should do it by providing an answer, in the spirit of Paul's apocalyptic, to at least four fundamental objections to much pedestrian apocalyptic: the obsolete character of the apocalyptic worldview, the misleading 'literal' language of apocalyptic for Christian spirituality, the argument that apocalyptic has a purely symbolic significance, and the refutation of future apocalyptic by the ongoing process of history."¹⁴⁶

My concluding remarks concerning Bosch's changed attitude to emphasising the apocalyptic is as follows: It appears that Bosch desired to transcend the traditional framework of apocalyptic movements by ignoring the apocalyptic *in Witness To The World* in order to defend a more positive view of history. To cling to apocalyptic thinking, according to him, would mean essentially holding to a pessimistic view of salvation history. Bosch, it seems to me, wanted to emphasis the present reality of the kingdom, for more often than not the church places a one sided view on the 'not yet,' and this has caused a paralysis in effecting the social dimensions of society.

In *Transforming Mission* he emphasised the important role apocalyptic can play. He has placed emphasis predominantly on Pauline literature to argue for a re-opening of the eschatological office, and Matthew's "progression of the kingdom thought" and Luke's *Heilsgeschichte* pale in significance to the attention given to Paul's writings. It can also be said that the elements mentioned by Bosch concerning the bifocal nature of Paul's gospel could not have been missed by him when he was writing his monograph, 1989, as they were available within many older publications on this subject (Vos, Ridderbos *et al*). However, it remains difficult to give a precise reason or reasons for the migration in Bosch's thinking from a negative view of apocalyptic in *Witness to the World*, 1980 to a more positive view in *Transforming Mission*, 1989. If anything, more questions arise as opposed to speculative answers given. Hence, in regards to his *thoughts*, I am unable to explain the sudden change in his acknowledgment and defence of an apocalyptic framework for missiology and ethics in *Transforming Mission*.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 154.

¹⁴⁷ König seems to think that the formal change in Bosch's thinking is not due to his unawareness of apocalyptic elements, as they were previously mentioned in his older publications. Rather he believes up to 1980 Bosch did not recognise the apocalyptic character of these elements in the gospel, but, according to

However, I believe that the *substance* of Bosch's driving thesis is evident within both books, as I have mentioned above, the imminence of the future kingdom should be approached on the basis of the reality of the kingdom here and now, and therefore he lays emphasis on the churches' responsibility in any given age to actively participate in God's redemptive will.

There seems to be no formal change within his substance, but rather a repeated emphasis on the churches' mandate within a newly acknowledged apocalyptic framework, which ultimately, for him, eschatology determines, as it is the horizon of all Christian understanding.¹⁴⁸ He also defines the word apocalyptic, which he argues is not an emptying of the present, but rather a filling with urgency of the present redemption tension between the already and not yet. Therefore, he stresses that a Christian understanding of eschatology as a whole must be dynamic and it should reformulate a theology of mission in the light of an authentic meaning of history and eschatology.¹⁴⁹

The recognition and adoption of an apocalyptic framework have certainly enhanced Bosch's argument for the urgency of the church affecting the social, moral, political and spiritual nature of the world.

Recognising an eschatology for mission which is both future-directed as well as orientated to any present context allows for a strong creative and redemptive tension between the already and not yet; the old age which is fading but yet present in the dusk of history and the new age that is upon us, illuminating the harvest for its workers.

Although it is difficult to explain the changes in Bosch's thinking, I am of the opinion that he has laid stress on the right motifs for doing mission in every era. Therefore I will adopt a similar position to Bosch's apocalyptic motivation and his view of *one* history, and *two* ways of understanding history,¹⁵⁰ as a framework for presenting a possible view for doing mission.

König, [Bosch] interpreted them as part of the pure New Testament eschatology as opposed to apocalyptic. An interesting thought would be whether Bosch considered that the time statements in regards to the apocalyptic were to be fulfilled in their present time. Hence, any apocalyptic theology is totally unnecessary for the modern church. See König's suggestion on p. 24 of his article *Apocalyptic, Theology, Missiology*.

¹⁴⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 508.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 4

History's Progress and God's Plan of Redemption.

4.1 Introduction. I chose David Bosch as my specific interlocutor for a number of reasons. First, Bosch has world-wide influence through his many publications, especially *Transforming Mission*, which has been translated into many languages and used as a text book. It can therefore be expected that Bosch will have significant influence on both this and the next generation of mission and missiologists. Second, eschatology has been a significant dimension in his mission thinking. This is evident in his publications, *Witness to the World* and *Transforming Mission*. Third, and most importantly, Bosch's eschatological thinking was dynamic, undergoing shifts which are worth investigating. His general position and shift alerts us to consider the flux of eschatological thinking and is important to aid us in our impasse described in chapters one and two.

The first section of this dissertation was a brief discussion of how Platonism affected both the Church's view of history as well as the way it was adopted and manipulated to suit the secular, modern and postmodern view of history. The former developed a two-age model, which it used to define the various *aeons*, while the latter used Platonism to do away with the metaphysical world, replacing it with the idea of a dethroned God and individuals, who are now the captains of their souls and the masters of their destinies.

I then proceeded to discuss how this dualistic view of history became the dominant theme in American missions and how it gave birth to Dispensationalism and Premillennialism, using the ideas of Chiliasm. The predominant theme throughout American evangelicalism became and still is, the world is decaying (a sinking ship), and as many people as possible must be saved in order for the ideal world (the kingdom of God) to be established. History is thought of in secular terms, and the church tries to free itself from fear and in the process, God functions as no more than a beneficent stop-gap.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Berkhof, *Christ The Meaning of History*, 15.

These views are inept, as they do no justice to what I believe Scripture teaches regarding both history and the eschatological age. On the one hand, I reject a rigid biblicist view, which wants to resuscitate the apostolic expectation of an imminent end, for it is contradicted by history. And on the other hand, I also reject the existential solution that celebrates the delay of the parousia and thus removes Paul's apocalyptic-cosmic intentions.

The question was posed on page eleven, "Did Paul have a two-age model that he used to define the various *aeons*? Hence, can Paul's eschatology reshape our thinking in an age of false dualism, and can it offer a fresh alternative to Platonism?" I believe it can, and I will discuss, in this last chapter, what seems to me to be a reasonable view of the *meaning of history, the new humanity that is born through the unfolding thereof, and its historical role (the Great Commission)* which I hope to present as a divine multi-faceted tool for unfolding God's plan in salvation and secular history.

4.2 The Meaning of History and the New Creation. *The latter day creation:* Bosch correctly quotes, "...the Christian church found it impossible to hold on to the eschatological-historical character of faith. Christian proclamation shifted from the announcement of the reign of God to introducing to people the only true and universal religion."¹⁵² This is argued because of the hellenisation of the Christian faith. Christianity merely became salvation as individual bliss, and both the present and future were merely prototypes of the return to the origin.¹⁵³ The church absorbed Plato's thought; eternity is not distinguished from time but is opposed to it. Life and circumstances change in the realm of history, but in the realm of eternity, everything is permanent. This Platonic mysticism is precisely what the modern church identified itself with while under the onslaught of the Enlightenment; in turn the church reinforced the prevailing trends. Bosch says, "[b]eing banished from the public sphere of facts to the private spheres of values and opinion, religion found refuge in the metahistory of mysticism, the eternal, suprahistorical redemption of the soul, or the safe enclave of the empirical church."¹⁵⁴

Paul is opposed to such Platonism. Instead of creating an ontological opposition between what is physical and spiritual, Paul presents an eschatological dualism. For him,

¹⁵² Bosch., *Transforming Mission*, 500.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 501.

the antithesis is between creation under the dominion of sin and creation under the dominion of righteousness. In other words all eschatological themes are divided under the headings of Adam versus Christ.¹⁵⁵ Horton says: “[b]ecause of his death and resurrection, Jesus (‘the first’ fruits’) has ushered in the ‘age to come,’ and as this promised consummation invades the present reality of death and despair, it continues the resurrection-work by beginning from the inside (i.e., the regeneration of the ‘inner man’) out (i.e., the final resurrection of the body).”¹⁵⁶

In the light of this perspective of history and eschatology, I wish to propose that eschatology “the already and not yet,” latter day creation is a heuristic lens for understanding history and the role mission plays within the realm of the already *new creation* – the first fruits and age that has come.

It is common today to view the rapture, tribulation and millennium as precursors to the finality of history. Christ’s first coming is not in the least connected to leading up to his second coming. The term “latter days” is often associated by most Christians to mean the very end of history and yet a careful study of these phrases will reveal the other side of *history*.¹⁵⁷ Many of these end-time phrases find clarity in the Old Testament, and it is therein that we need to find the full meaning before we can understand its New Testaments use. Throughout the span of the Old Testament, this phrase is prophetic and refers to a future time when there will be tribulation for Israel. Beale captures the scene well when he says:

[T]here will be a tribulation for Israel consisting of oppression (Ezk. 38:14-17ff.), persecution (Dn. 10:14ff.; 11:27-12:10), false teaching, deception and apostasy (Dn.10:14ff.; 11:27-35)...after the tribulation Israel will seek the Lord (Ho. 3:4-5), they will be delivered (Ezk. 38:14-16ff.; Dn.10:14ff.; 12:1-13) and their enemies will be judged (Ezk. 38:14-16ff.; Dn. 10:14ff.; 11:40-45; 12:2) ...this deliverance and judgment will occur because a leader (Messiah) from Israel will finally conquer all of its Gentile enemies (Gn. 49:1, 8-12; Nu. 24:14-19; Is. 2:2-4; Mi. 4:1-3; Dn. 2:28-45; 10:14-12:10). ...God will establish a kingdom on the earth and rule over it (Is. 2:2-4; Mi. 4:1-3; Dn. 2:28-45) together with a Davidic king (Ho. 3:4-5)...after the time of tribulation and

¹⁵⁵ The list would consist of the old age versus the new; law/bondage versus gospel/liberty; lawlessness versus righteousness; covenant of works versus covenant of grace; etc.

¹⁵⁶ Horton, *Eschaton or Escape?* 6.

¹⁵⁷ The phrase “latter days” and its synonyms occur approximately twenty-seven times in the New Testament, and sometimes refer exclusively to the very end of history as is typically thought of today. Most often the phrase is used to describe the end-times which have already begun in the first century.

persecution, Daniel 11-12 says there will be a resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous (so Dn. 11:30-12.3ff.).¹⁵⁸

From this brief glance one can argue that Israel did not view its national events and the history of nations as an endless illusion, a wheel within a wheel, or a formless ocean of events which had no beginning and end. Rather, through its prophets and literature, Israel was aware that God created history as the platform to execute his battle against the adversaries, and the outcome of the battle, which was anchored in creation, was certain. History was a growth, the apostasy of Israel itself, and the threats from without led those who were witnessing the divine drama to view the struggle as not yet completed. A time would come when a solution to the apostasy, oppression from other nations and divine leadership would forever alter the present situation. Both Joel (2:28) and Isaiah (53; 65:17-18; 66:22) express these eschatological hopes, from the pouring out of God's Spirit to the restoration of creation and the divine rule of the Messiah.¹⁵⁹ When one sees a prophetic view of history it is difficult to reject the conclusion that Daniel 7 and the book of Revelation are similar. It becomes clear that we cannot understand the proclamation of the New Testament if we ignore what the Old Testament is pointing to.

Within the New Testament we find the phrase "latter days" as it is found in the Old Testament prophecies except for one difference. In the New Testament the end-times predicted from the Old Testament are seen as beginning their fulfilment with Christ's first coming. All that the Old Testament foresaw occurred in the first century and has continued to the present day. Redemptive history is therefore the very stage on which God reveals his plans. This means that the Old Testament prophecies of the great tribulation, the deliverance of Israel from oppressors, God's rule over the Gentiles and the establishment of His kingdom have been set in motion by the life, death, resurrection of Jesus, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the formation of the Christian church, and the inauguration of Christ's rule through the church (see Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-43). Boer

¹⁵⁸ G.K Beale, *The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology*, 14.

¹⁵⁹ Of course it can be argued that the earlier prophets saw the kingdom of God and the Messiah as a future reality on earth and in history, and that, especially in the apocalyptic literature, the kingdom was seen in a new dispensation which could only become a reality once there was a break with the present age. It seems to me that if one understands both apocalyptic and prophecy as similar, then the differences that exist are merely differences of emphasis. The prophets spoke primarily to the unfaithful nation (unbelievers) calling for them to repent, while the apocalypses are esoteric, bringing comfort and hope to

expresses this truth by highlighting the significance of Pentecost in Acts 2:17 in the movement of redemptive history, by saying:

It is significant that the very first word he [Peter] spoke about it declared it to be an event of profound eschatological import... It would be difficult to find a biblical passage that indicates a greater cleavage between what had been and what became than is found in the first thirteen verses of the second chapter of Acts. The extent of this cleavage is indicated by the difference between John's 'For the Holy Spirit was not yet' ch. 7:39, and Peter's 'Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this which ye see and hear' Acts 2:33. This cleavage is at the same time, however, the deepest point of continuity between the old and new dispensations. Pentecost is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Spirit and it marks the incipient realization of the promise given to Abraham, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed' Gen.12:3. At Pentecost a distinct period in the divine economy of redemption was introduced, the characteristic feature of which is the presence of the Holy Spirit. We may therefore say that after Creation and Incarnation the outpouring of the Spirit is the third great work of God.¹⁶⁰

The coming of Christ into the world has therefore formed the central fact of history, and, as Cullman says, the primary difference between the Old Testament understanding of history and New Testament is that the midpoint of history has moved from the future to the past. For the New Testament believer, the coming of Christ is the midpoint, and, therefore, he is conscious of living between the midpoint of history and its culmination, which is the Parousia of Christ.¹⁶¹

Hence, the new age has been ushered in, as Scripture attests, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20; Matt. 12:28); (Luke 12:49-56) "...How is that you do not know how to discern this time?" On the other hand, persecution of both Jesus and the church indicated the beginning of the final tribulation. Hence, all those who become members of Christ's kingdom thereby begin to live in the new *aeon* and are recipients of both liberation from sin and the persecution of the tribulation.¹⁶² Beale comments:

God's faithful remnant who are reminded that despite their present conditions, "the righteous shall live by faith," in times of persecution and the perversion of his Law (Hab. 2:4, cf. Rom. 1:17).

¹⁶⁰ Harry R Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1961), 66.

¹⁶¹ Cullman, *Christ and Time*, 81-83.

¹⁶² The Apostle Paul stressed these facts in Colossians 1:13, where he says that God "... has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." This implies that we have been delivered from the power of the old *aeon* of sin (Gal.1:4). In Ephesians 2:5-6, we are told that by faith we have entered into the new age, and in Romans 12:2 we are told, as believers, not to be conformed to this world, *aeon* in the Greek, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

What the Old Testament did not foresee so clearly was the ironic reality that the kingdom and the tribulation could co-exist at the same time: for example, John says in Revelation 1:9, 'I John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus.' Therefore the latter days do not take place only at some point in the future but occur throughout the whole church age, which means we in the twentieth century are still experiencing the latter days, as strange as that may sound to some people.¹⁶³

These "last days" which begun by virtue of Christ's birth,¹⁶⁴ death and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the struggle which accompanies the beginning of the end, are the very woes that Jesus knew would precede his triumph. Likewise, Paul in his letter to the Ephesians in 1:7-10; 20-23 refers to the "fullness of the times," alluding to when believers were redeemed and Christ began to rule over the earth as a result of his resurrection. And writing to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1) he uses the expressions "the last times" and "end days" to refer to the presence of tribulation and its accompanying forms of false and deceptive teachings. It is clear from these above mentioned texts that the term "latter days" has no reference to only a distant date set on the horizon of future history. This is evident by the false teaching that already found its way into some churches and by the tribulation that the Ephesian believers were encountering for their faith, leading to an apostasy.¹⁶⁵

Further, in the Pauline corpus, the Epistles and Gospels we read of a "two ages" model as opposed to Plato's irrepressible "two worlds" accentuated again in Kant. Paul has asserted an eschatological dualism with "its present age" and "the age to come," as opposed to the ontological dualism with its "true world of eternal perfection" versus an "apparent world of temporal change." His very thoughts are systematically structured throughout his epistles, and we read in 1 Corinthians 10:11 how the Old Testament was written to instruct Christians to live in the end-times, since "the ends of *the ages* have come" upon them. "The disputer of *this age*" and "the wisdom of the world" are made foolish by the "wisdom of God" through the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:20-21); "However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom *of this age*, nor of the rulers *of this age*, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of

¹⁶³ Beale, *Eschatological Conception*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ See Galatians 4:4 wherein Jesus Christ's birth is referred to as occurring "when the fullness of time came."

¹⁶⁵ See 1 Tim. 1:3-4,6,7,19-20; 4:7; 5:13-15; 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:16-19; 2:25-26; 3:2-9.

God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before *the ages* for our glory” (1 Cor. 2:6-8). Demas is said to have deserted Paul because he was in love with this present *aeon* (2 Tim: 4:10). The author of the book of Hebrews echoes the same theme in the opening two verses of the first chapter; “in these last days” the Son of God would judge the wicked kingdoms and receive the earth as an inheritance from his Father (cf. Ps. 2:1-12). In similar fashion in Hebrews 9:26 the author repeats, “at the end of the consummation of *the ages* He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” James in his letter warns his readers not to trust in earthly riches because the *last days* have come. His exhortation to his readers is due to what God has accomplished through Christ in these *last days* (5:1-9). The apostle Peter also states that Christ who has died and been resurrected, did so “in the *last days*,” and by doing so inaugurated the final phase of history; this final chapter of the play introduces the “*last days* mockers” (1 Peter 1:19-21, cf. 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1). Peter is aware of the false teaching these mockers are spreading within the churches under his care (2 Pet. 3:16-17), and Jude expresses the same concern in (Jude 18, cf. 4, 8, 10-13). John also recognises the tribulation that has come upon God’s people and writes, “Children, it is the *last hour*; and just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the *last hour*,” (1 John 2:18).

False teaching is indeed a strong indication of the latter-day tribulation, and it is a pervasive tool that continues in the inter-advent period to erode the foundations of the covenant community. This short survey demonstrates precisely what the Old Testament predicted with Christ’s coming.

It seems to me that by and large Paul and the apostles stress a tripartite eschatology: “before the ages” (1 Cor. 2:7), “in this age” (Eph. 1:21), and in the “age(s) to come” (Eph. 1:21). And as Horton says, “the eternal decree (‘before the ages’) is realized historically in the two ages. ‘In the present age’ believers ‘wait for the blessed hope and the manifestations of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ’ (Tit. 2:12-13).”¹⁶⁶ Hence, as stated earlier, the great end-time predictions have already begun the process of fulfilment. Beale says, “Christ’s life, death and resurrection and the

¹⁶⁶ Michael S Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology, The Divine Drama*, (Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 32.

establishment of the church community have ushered in the Old Testament prophecies of the tribulation, the Messiah's conquering of Gentile enemies, Israel's deliverance and the long expected kingdom. In this initial phase of the end-times, Christ and the church begin to fulfil the prophecies concerning Israel's tribulation and end-time kingdom because Christ and the church are seen by the New Testament as the true Israel (see Rom. 2:25-29; 9:6, 24-26; Gal. 3:29; 6:15-16; Eph. 2:16-18; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 3:9; 5:9-10)."¹⁶⁷

The world is not the same place since Christ entered it, and the New Testament believer has been liberated from the slavery of sin and is free to live to the praise of God. Therefore, in contrast to popular belief, Pauline eschatology insists that the new age actually has arrived in Christ as the "first fruits" which are the beginnings of a full cosmic salvation. Hence, Paul's eschatological dualism is nothing like the gnostic or even Platonic myth of redemption from external law, nature, creation, matter, and history. Nowhere is this entire concept made more obvious than in Romans 8:1-25, which states: "In Christ" there is "no condemnation," because the era of the Spirit of Christ "has set [believers] free from the law and death." "For what the law could not do," because it was weakened through flesh, "God did by sending His own Son." This very Son is not beyond good and evil; instead he submits to God the Father in his active obedience as the prophesied Messiah and Second Adam, who fulfills the requirements of the law on behalf of his new humanity. He does not destroy nature, but instead redeems it by eradicating sin. Hence, Paul continues, to encourage believers that their minds are to be set on the Spirit where life and peace is found, for the carnal mind which is set on the flesh is hostile to God – in fact Paul says, the flesh cannot submit nor please God (vv. 6-8).¹⁶⁸ Horton says, "The Spirit is the presence of Christ by his Spirit through the Word and sacrament the age to come dawns in this age; and hope not only in God's future, but from God's future, already begins to make all things new, albeit in a sense that cannot be compared to the kingdom's consummation."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Beale, 16.

¹⁶⁸ To avoid the conclusion that by the word "flesh" Paul really meant the natural, physical existence as opposed to the heavenly, spiritual existence, he continues expressing his thought in (v. 9) "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." Hence, to be "in the Spirit" is not to be ontologically spiritual as opposed to physical, but is rather to be in Christ as opposed to being in Adam, and to belong to the "age to come" as opposed to the present evil age. Finally, it also means to be children of the resurrection of whom our Saviour and Lord is the "firstfruits." (See p.43).

¹⁶⁹ Horton., 33.

We can thus say that all of history is moving toward a goal, that is, the new heavens and the new earth. Though Christ ushered in a new age, the final consummation is in the future, and it includes the Second Coming, the general resurrection, the Day of Judgment, and the new heavens and new earth. This implies a full restoration of the cosmos from the affects of sin (Gen. 3:17), under God's dominion and rule.¹⁷⁰ As Boer confirms referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in this new age:

Redemption means redemption of *creation*. The Spirit who brooded over the face of the waters in the beginning is the same Spirit who is the life of the *new* creation. The work of the Spirit in creation and redemption is *one* work that brings the whole of created reality to its ultimate destiny...The movement of the Spirit in the discharge of His redemptive function pursues a course consisting of a process of contraction followed by a process of expansion, culminating in His indwelling of the universal church as the manifestation of the new humanity...The central point of the movement is Christ. *To* Him all the work of the Spirit tends, from Him the Spirit and His work flow to effect the regeneration of men and the cosmos.¹⁷¹

Therefore Christ's resurrection places him at the beginning of the new creation¹⁷² and he is the door opening to a new era, and the Holy Spirit is the "central wonder of the new aeon,"¹⁷³ whose enduring influence will be exercised upon the new creation. Eschatology was therefore understood by the apostles to mean, not merely a futurology, but instead the climax of redemptive history and for understanding the present, complete with its sufferings, frustrations and victories.

Berkhof correctly says that Christ's coming as the Suffering Servant (Matt. 3:10) postponed judgment and allowed the creation of a new history consisting of grace and patience because of the temporary form of the kingdom.¹⁷⁴ It is through this kingdom that God pervades time with the presence of his love and dwells amongst a guilty creation. Christ's suffering and death becomes, therefore, the catalyst which drives the church and

¹⁷⁰ The cosmic dimension of redemption is clearly taught in Ephesians 1:9-10 and Colossians 1:19-20. Nothing short of the total deliverance of creation from its bondage to decay (Rom. 8:21), will satisfy the redemptive purposes of God.

¹⁷¹ Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, 66-67.

¹⁷² Christ's death and resurrection are explicitly stated in the following texts as part of the new creation: (his death) Gal. 6:14-15; 2 Cor. 5:14-17; (his resurrection) 2 Cor. 5:14-17; Col. 1:15—18; Rev. 1:5 & 3:14.

¹⁷³ Boer, 68.

¹⁷⁴ Berkhof, 78.

is also the very analogue through which the “Christ-event ...is being realized throughout the world.”¹⁷⁵

We are told that this kingdom which has come is ever growing and it starts off resembling the insignificance of a mustard seed, which becomes a tremendous tree, and leaven that leavens all the meal, penetrating into the darkest corners of society, uprooting and creating a new order of life.¹⁷⁶ But these changes first occur within the church (for judgment first begins in the house of God), and this is made clear by the requirements for godly households and disciplined Christian lives; “If then you were *raised* (italics mine) with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (see also Eph. 5-6; 1 Peter 2-3). Then “[as] soon as the Church begins to exert its influence outside herself as a creative minority, the Kingdom also begins to uproot the life of an entire nation or a culture.”¹⁷⁷ But the point to not forget is that the kingdom must go through a process of development. And this development has manifestations of both positive and negative signs as it grows into a mighty force, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it; nonetheless, it is persecuted down the arduous road of history. This suffering which the Church experiences is not a set back which prevents the kingdom from expanding, rather it is an undertone of deep joy. Matthew makes this point, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (5:10). Instead of wallowing in a pessimistic mood of defeatism and waiting for the rapture, believers are to count it worthy to suffer dishonour for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41 see also 1 Thess. 3:2; James 1:2). Christ’s suffering does not exempt believers’ suffering, instead it authenticates and sanctifies (Rom. 8:17; Col. 1:24). Therefore the Church represents the Lord to the world through their suffering – it is a vital part of being in fellowship with him; “a slave is not greater than his master” (John 15:18-20).

The Church (those who enter the kingdom, and become part of the *new creation*, Matt.5) is, therefore, the visible form and first phase, depicting the enthronement of the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 87.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Son of Man as he sits at the right hand of Power exercising his dominion over the hearts of humanity in these *last days*.

In order to see history in its totality, we must see the two lines of historical development: the development of Christ's inaugurated kingdom and the development alongside of the kingdom of evil (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). Both these lines will reach a final crisis before the end of human history. This ambiguity of history does not reveal a triumph of God over evil or a victory of evil over good. They exist in parallel and exert conflict over each other in the present age, but since Christ has won the victory, the ultimate outcome is the final victory of Christ over the enemy. Hence, the Christian's view of history is basically optimistic, for God is in control of history and Christ has won victory over the powers of evil. This means that the ultimate outcome of things is bound not to be bad but good. As Christians we ought to believe in a God who continues his work victoriously in this new *aeon*. This is ultimately what true faith is. It is based on the fact that Christ was raised from the dead in the old *aeon*. It is never disturbed by the fact that experience often seems to contradict this faith, for it knows that to God the facts are in agreement with this faith; in other words all things come from God and all things return to him according to his purposes in glory.

In conclusion of this section, it is important to state that the kingdom which has come by virtue of Christ's manifestation is not a noetic piece of information lost in our hopes for a future utopian city on earth, but has appeared as an actual/historical event. And therefore God has revealed himself as both the "Alpha-Creator" and "Omega-Consummator"¹⁷⁸ who has effected a "linear-protological" return of his creation to the "Sabbath."¹⁷⁹ Therefore by raising Jesus from the dead, the Spirit granted him life as a

¹⁷⁸ These titles were mentioned by Meredith Kline in his self published notes "Kingdom Prologue" (1:26-27). See Horton's end note 82, 285.

¹⁷⁹ I am referring to Jesus Christ who is often mentioned throughout the Gospels, Colossians and Hebrews, as humanity's "rest from sin." When one reads Scriptures redemptive historical plan, one cannot help but see a diachronic timeline, which leads from the Fall of humanity and the proto-evangelion, through the covenants (the covenant of Noah which promises God's providential continuation of the earth as the stage for his redeeming work until its completion; the covenant with Abraham, which provides for the formation of God's people; the covenant with Moses, which provides for the setting apart of God's people as a distinct and identifiable people; and finally the Davidic covenant, which provides for the rule of God's people under an appointed king whose throne would be established forever by God himself.) Of course these covenants found their fruition in Jesus Christ, who is portrayed as living, dying and being resurrected by the Spirit on the same plane of *chronos*/history as the Davidic theocracy. This very history is the conduit

forerunner for all those who would be coheirs (Eph. 1:19-2:2). Horton correctly sums up everything already stated:

The resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of believers at the end of the age ought not, then, to be regarded as two separate events, but as the beginning and consummation of one single event. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 ‘the outer man is said to be decaying, while the inner man (cf. Rom. 7:22; Eph. 3:16) is being renewed daily’ ...In effect, then, Paul is saying: the resurrection of the inner man is past; the resurrection of the outer man is still future (cf. v.14). This should not be understood, however, in the sense of an anthropological dualism. Rather the dual aspect of the *whole* man is in view. The dualism, once more, is eschatological rather than ontological, since the whole person lives ‘in Christ,’ ‘in the Spirit,’ dominated by the age to come, and yet is still dogged by voluntary capitulation to ‘this evil age,’ which was once the believers habitat. No less than the soul, the body is called to participate in this new creation even now. The flesh-Spirit antithesis ‘is not to be taken as metaphysical or anthropological, but as a redemptive-historical, contrast, namely, as the two dominating principles of the two aeons marked off by the appearance of Christ.’¹⁸⁰

Hence, heaven and earth, the invisible and visible, all that is above and below become both christologised and eschatologised.¹⁸¹ Gone, therefore, is the concept of time versus eternity antithesis, which is so prevalent in many modern day views of eschatology, along with its bedfellow components of Platonic dualism. Instead, Paul depicts history as a linear progression of redemption, with divine, vertical intrusions, not as progressions of disconnected dispensations and historical epochs. The upper and lower worlds are no longer differentiated as evil and good, superior and inferior, but instead, “Spirit and flesh, represent that eschatological newness promised and effected in Christ versus being under the dominion of the older aeon.”¹⁸²

So when the Word is preached and the ordinances are performed then the *age to come* is no longer anticipated, symbolized or represented, but has already begun to dawn (Heb. 6:5). It is the very reality of the cross which keeps all of redeemed creation, which still struggles under the bondage of decay because of the curse, to groan, long, and strain

within which all phases of history are connected, past, present and future, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, whose very gift merges all believers across the span of salvation history.

¹⁸⁰ Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 38.

¹⁸¹ Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 40. Vos argues “What gives rise to misunderstanding at this point is the confusion of eschatological two-sidedness with the philosophical bisection of the universe into a higher and lower sphere.” For Vos, heaven has received both time and history into itself, and when Christ entered into heaven, he carried with himself all the “historical time-matured fruit of his earthly stage of work,” and now guides “the two lines of terrestrial and celestial development of the church.” Now the “Spirit holds the two aspects of the Christian’s double life-process together.”

¹⁸² Horton, 40

forward in hope for the end of chronological history. Hence, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). Therefore, “[t]he new person is not on a pilgrimage from this world to another, but from this world under the reign of unrighteousness to the newness that has already dawned in Jesus Christ.”¹⁸³

4.3 The Church as New Humanity and its Function.

4.3.1 *The interim eschatological community:* It is vitally important based on the above thesis of *time* and *history* to understand that the Bible has a very definite historical character. Without any grounding in history of God’s salvific plan amongst the nations, Israel is seen as merely an isolated nation that God has chosen and exercised a peculiar affection upon, and the Church becomes merely an alternative “gap-filler.”

When viewed this way, history becomes nothing more than various ahistorical epochs with perpetual discontinuity. Yet a careful reading of the Old Testament reveals a strong missionary significance of God’s dealings with the generations of Israel. Abraham’s call prior to the formation of Israel as a nation indicates God’s precise intentions (Gen. 12:1-3). From the time the patriarch leaves his Sumerian roots, we read of God embarking upon history and forming it through his very loins. Bosch says; “Yahweh creates history by breaking out of the circle of eternal return and going with his people, into the future, with Abraham out of Ur, with Israel out of Egypt, en route towards the nations.”¹⁸⁴ However, they are a nation surrounded by hostile empires, and the struggle for their existence and disobedience seems to overpower their role as God’s people – to impart the message of God’s covenants and love.¹⁸⁵ Politics drove national Israel, and the distinctive lines of politics and religion faded under the agenda of secular

¹⁸³ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸⁴ Bosch., *Witness To The World*, 62.

¹⁸⁵ In Isaiah 40-55 Israel is depicted as the servant of the Lord. They are the nation God has elected and extends his grace through in reaching the world. Israel is called “a light to the Gentiles.” Hence, they are more than just a nation that needs regrouping. Rather they emanate the light of salvation that should be known to the “ends of the earth.” Hence, when Israel remained true to God, as a nation it would also remain true to its purposes of witnessing to other nations. However, Israel’s obedience and faith is not the attraction, rather it is God’s faithfulness to Israel that draws the nations to Zion, and at the same time sends Zion out to the nations by virtue of Israel going forth and declaring the wondrous works of God. It is always *missio Dei*, God involving himself with people and directing the historical character of the play.

determination. This led to what Bosch calls the “two faces” of Israel which was difficult to detect (the remnant Israel amongst the national Israel, Rom. 9:6) and the missionary dimension of the calling and existence of “true Israel.”¹⁸⁶

The apostasy amongst Israel did not end the promises made by God to his people. Despite their lack of faith and righteousness, God enters history through his Son and concentrates all history, past, present, and future in this second Adam. His entire ministry is concentrated within national Israel (John 4:22) and the specificity of his work has historical and universal missionary significance. Bosch says:

‘Geographically’ Jesus journeys to the temple, to Jerusalem and his death; ‘theologically’ he is bound for the nations. In the final analysis he himself would take the place of Jerusalem and the temple (John 2:19-21). As the ‘New Jerusalem’ he himself becomes the place of encounter with the nations. ‘The Old Testament Scriptures locate the meeting with the nation in Zion, since the age of promise, God appointed Jerusalem to be the scene of His revelation. The Gospel teaches us that God calls us to meet Him in Jesus Christ. Messiah has taken the place of His City.’¹⁸⁷

By his very ascension and impartation of the gift of the Holy Spirit descending upon the disciples, the present becomes filled with a “time between times” which unfolds a mystery that has welded Jew and Gentile into a single organism called the *ekklesia* (Eph. 2:12-16). This Church has a significant role to perform in the restoration of the whole cosmic reality, and although this mystery is not completely resolved, it nonetheless stands in the kerugmatic context making itself known to all nations (Rom. 16:26). It fulfils its good works ordained by God for his people to walk in (Eph. 2:10) by declaring the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 3:16). It would accomplish geographically “greater” things than Jesus himself (John 14:12).¹⁸⁸ “She” is the *mater*

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 63.

¹⁸⁸ The “greater works” that Jesus predicts is not what certain groups today would like to believe, that is performing greater miracles than raising people from the dead and walking on water. I believe the context of the statement is made clear in the latter part of (John 14:12) “...because I go to the Father.” These “greater works” are made possible because Jesus has entered into the presence of the Father, and he has become the object of believers’ prayers, and therefore grants them their requests from his exalted position of power. This entire statement has an eschatological reference. The “greater works” that are performed are done so because the work of the Church is very much based on the finished work of Christ. Hence, the death and resurrection of Christ is the very condition of the Church’s mission, and this mission includes a broader stream of God’s life giving powers (17:2). Whereas Jesus’ mission was particular the Church’s mission is universal, gathering in the elect (11:52), and also judging the disobedient and unbelieving world (16:8-11). Therefore, salvation and mission are not mutually exclusive concepts, rather Jesus’ death and resurrection are the very context for both. Christ was the sower of the eschatological

*fideliūm*¹⁸⁹ (Gal. 4:26) which continues to grow from generation to generation and by its nature participates in God's *new* history and mission as a witnessing body (Acts 1:18) introducing the new *aeon* and announcing the quickening and renewal of the old, through the last Adam who has restored what was lost by the first.

The Church expresses the truth through the Word which is said to be the "incorruptible seed" which "lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23, 25), and it labours to secure the acknowledgement of Christ's dominion. Within this dominion is the Church's very membership who are called a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9) and it "own[s] all things" (1 Cor. 3:22; cf. Rom. 8:7; Heb. 1:2) and even now is exercising its millennial reign with Christ (Rev. 20:4)¹⁹⁰ that is hidden from the eyes of the world.

We can thus correctly say that the Church's missionary activity is characteristic of the time between Christ's first and second coming. Oscar Cullman expresses this thought in these words: "The missionary proclamation of the Church, its preaching of the gospel, gives to the period between Christ's resurrection and Parousia its meaning for redemptive history; and it has this meaning through its connection with Christ's present Lordship."¹⁹¹ Christ's Lordship¹⁹² is seen in the promulgation of the Great Commission. He spoke consciously as Lord of lords and King of kings under whose aegis His subjects would herald the reign that had been inaugurated. Harry Boer echoes these statements:

At Pentecost the power of Christ's resurrection, the Spirit which He received at His resurrection, and the task of proclaiming Christ's lordship were given to the Church in the outpouring of the Spirit. Pentecost concludes the complex of redemptive activities that was immediately initiated by the resurrection. It is the last act in the majestic fourfold movement of Resurrection, Ascension, Exaltation at the right hand of God, Pentecost. It mediates to the Church the benefits of the others. The Great

harvest (4:34-38), yet within this very same eschatological framework, it is the age of the Spirit that enables disciples to gather in the end-time harvest. It is God's mission, and the disciples are sent forth seeking his aid through prayer, and in response God glorifies himself by answering their prayers in allowing "greater works" to be accomplished. John's gospel wonderfully portrays the messianic community as doing, then, the work of the risen Christ.

¹⁸⁹ Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, 126.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Cullman, *Christ and Time*, 157.

¹⁹² It must be noted that in Matthew 24:14; cf. Isaiah 9:1-7, Jesus stated that the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. This statement was made by our *sovereign* Lord who had all authority over heaven and earth. With this authority vested in the Prince of Peace and *El Gibbor*, there would be the knowledge by all his disciples throughout the ages that nations would bow to his sovereign love and purposes. Hence, the centrifugal motion of mission would be one that would move from the heart of Christendom (Jerusalem) to all the nations and unto the entire world (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 2:17).

Commission was given by Christ in the power of His resurrection lordship. It is the supreme expression of His lordship. . . . Central in the period between resurrection and ascension stands the promulgation of the Great Commission. It is not one act among many of the risen Lord, it is the essential expression of the lordship that was conferred on Him at His resurrection. The execution of the Great Commission is the central task of the Church, for by means of it the Spirit transmits to men the life that shall make possible the lordship that is Christ's.¹⁹³

This truth is further expressed throughout the book of Revelation. John's apocalypse is often seen as a dark one-sided picture of history, but the contrary is true for it reveals very explicitly the certainty that the resurrected *Lord* Jesus Christ reigns with all power on earth. All of history is under the aegis of his rule (chapter 5), and this is seen in the Lamb opening the book of history. He both explains and introduces the end, and that he is history's alpha and omega. The following chapter sees seals being opened, and with it calamities and persecutions. These, however proceed from the *Lord* Jesus. The chaos that envelops the world is as a result of the Lamb's wrath (6:17). These events are set in motion and led by the prayers of the saints (8:3). After every stage of history, songs of praise accompany the events, once again indicating the sovereign authority exercised behind global events. But even then we read of a "restraining" behind every judgement, indicating a powerful, but compassionate rule because only a third of the world is destroyed (8:7; 9:15), and that with the intention the rest of the world will repent (9:20). Further compassion is shown in that those who have the seal of God are kept safe through it all (9:4). In chapter 11 the restraining power is further evidenced in the form of the two witnesses¹⁹⁴ as they perform their task undisturbed for three and a half years. Then the antichrist replaces their work for the remaining three and a half years. In chapter 12 we read of the child escaping, and the woman is protected for the same duration of three and

¹⁹³ Boer., *Pentecost and Missions*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, WM. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 149.

¹⁹⁴ Revelation chapter 11:3-6 primarily explains the presence of God among his people, ensuring the triumph of their prophetic witness, which is a result in the inaugurated judgment of their oppressors. In other words, God establishes his presence among the end-time community as his sanctuary to ensure the effectiveness of their prophetic witness. They are to be prophets like the great prophets of the Old Testament, namely Moses and Elijah. It follows then that the "two witnesses" are not individual prophets (speculative combinations include: Elijah and Moses; Enoch and Elijah; Paul and Peter; and even the two Jewish high priests killed in A.D. 68). Rather they represent the whole community of faith, whose primary function is that of a prophetic witness. They are called "lampstands" because their word is to burn like a lamp, just as it is said, Elijah's "word burned like a lamp" (Sir. 48:1) and as John the Baptist's who was depicted as "the burning and shining lamp" (John 5:35). The witnessing community has the prophetic mantle of these two prophets given to them by virtue of the "poured out Spirit" (Joel 2:28-32; cf. Acts 2:17-

a half years, indicating the same time period as the witnesses. The beast rises from the sea in chapter 13 indicating persecuting power, and then the sounds of praise and songs in chapter 14 followed by a threat for the enemies and an encouragement for the people of God as the immanent judgement is coming. It is only in chapters 15-16 with the description of the seven plagues that the world becomes dark and negative. But from the beginning to the end, it is clear that God is the one who stands behind everything, discipling and bringing people into his arms of salvation. Joy fills the air in chapters 17-18 as the adversary of the saints, Babylon, falls. The tone again returns to triumph, which is short lived as the temporary rise of Gog and Magog take the stage of history (20:7-10). They are immediately defeated, which signals the arrival of the heavenly Jerusalem. These events are a clear indication and an encouragement to all believers of the witness and power of the resurrected Christ over the world.

Even when it seems that Christ is no longer in control of world events and the plight of Christians. The message in Revelation is clear: God's kingdom is active in this world, through suffering and judgement, restraint and triumph.¹⁹⁵

It is clear from what is said above that a new standard has been set for all believers to live in, and it is within this new age that the context for mission should be seen. Of course we cannot be rigid and emphatically state that the apostles and early Church viewed mission in the same light, as more than two thousand years of dynamic history is retrospectively easier to interpret.

In summary of the Church's character, it can be said that the very revelation of its character forms the foundation for mission. Pentecost marked the introduction of the Church into the new *aeon*. The Spirit birthed the Church out of the Old Testament promises and covenants as a fulfilment of God's word and placed it at the "beginning" of the New Testament salvation history. The inauguration of the kingdom of God and the birth of the Church was the very death knell of the Jewish way of life, i.e. the Temple and its sacrifices and ceremonies made way for the preaching of the gospel and the ordinances that bore witness to the completed work of Christ. Boer says: "At Pentecost a

21), and this prophetic gift would be the means by which the entire church would "witness" to the whole world (Acts 1:8).

¹⁹⁵ Berkhof, *Christ The Meaning Of History*, 127-128.

reconstitution of the Church took place which changed the Old Testament sacerdotal *kahal* into the witnessing *ekklesia* of the New.”¹⁹⁶

Hence, the life of the Church is derived from the “poured-out” Spirit, and its central expression is mission, which is comprised of proclamation (i.e. witnessing to the crucified Lord and Saviour) and social concerns. Both these are services of reconciliation which Christ entrusted to the Church. Hence, both these characteristics make up her conduct in convincing the world of their ignorance and foolishness (1 Peter 2:12-15). Her proclamation is the triumph in Christ, because he has called them “out of darkness into His marvellous light,” because they were once not a people, “but are now the people of God” (v.9). It is this fragrance of the Church’s character that permeates the world, filling profane history with the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 2:15).

4.3.2 *The Church’s function as an eschatological community:* The function of the Church in mission and society is very much dictated by its view of eschatology. I believe if we view the eschatological character of mission endeavour as a centrifugal phenomenon then we will see how it naturally moves away from a Jewish/Rabbinical view of the end. This view perceives the beginning of the Messiah’s reign to be when Israel has fallen to its lowest spiritual and political ebb. These occurrences are accompanied by the end-time signs, which are famine, war, pestilence, apostasy and even the dissolution of nature (the moon turning to blood and earthquakes etc.). The present age finally ends at the coming of the Messiah who will restore ethnic Israel and reign for a thousand years, and this leads into unending bliss. This is a common view held today by many evangelicals with slight variations and modifications. It is believed that the kingdom of God is an event that will suddenly erupt within history from without. The average Christian does not expect to see any positive signs working out within society of Christ’s present reign in the world. The general conception of the end times is that the world will become far worse as it spirals down into the arms of the anti-Christ. God allows this interim period, and only in the distant future will he interfere. Christianity is viewed through individualistic eyes and Christ is present only in a believer’s personal life, comforting in adversity and allowing prosperity. However, this individualistic pietism creates a sense of depression and fear when the television is switched on and

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 113.

believers think about the current world circumstances and the future of their children. This view leads many believers to view a relationship with Christ as limited to no more than a personal relationship with the believer, and no connection is seen between Christ and world-events or public institutions. Mission is seen as a condition or as a precursor to the revealing of the Messiah. To the other extreme, we have the view that assumes a millennial reign can be accomplished through the joint efforts of people, bringing about moral and social progress (social gospel). Recently there has been a recognition of other views that make more use of the full spectrum of Scripture (these were briefly pointed out in the first chapter) and assert that the universality of mission is not only a sign of the end that is to come, but that it is evidence that the end has come. Therefore, mission *must* be seen as an eschatological reality, which finds its character in Pentecost. At Pentecost the new *aeon* became a reality in the life of the Church, and it was there that the old age became conjoined with the inaugurated new age to establish the *now*, the time between times.¹⁹⁷ The end is no longer a point in the distant future, but a period of time, extended between the first and second coming of Christ. Therefore, the proclamation of the gospel and the church's social action manifests the power of the eschatological glory in which Christ now dwells. Due to the conjoining of these two *aeons*, tension is created, and woes and catastrophes are the result of the old age being locked into a death struggle with the new age. Boer states: "During this period the Rider on the white horse goes forth conquering and to conquer, but there follow him the riders on the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the pale horse of death, Rev. 6:1-8. The end has come but it has not yet worked out its full implications; it is here, but it awaits consummation."¹⁹⁸ For the believer who lives between the already and not yet, the experiences of an eschatological relationship with Christ as Saviour and Lord brings blessing which the Old Testament believer never knew (1 John 3:2). However, since the final consummation has not yet taken place there will be much in history we do not understand, and history will continuously be marked by ambiguity – the already fulfilled and yet not consummated.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 149.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 151.

¹⁹⁹ This ambiguity can be seen in Paul's use of the word "now" as a designation for the period of the last days, within which believers have come alive and would never die. He uses "now" in a threefold sense. In Ephesians 5:8 it is used in reference to the past, believers were *once* in darkness, "but *now* you are the light in the Lord." In Colossians 3:5-10, Paul uses the word "now" to show what believers have become

In the light of this ambiguity, the question is how does the Church *act* out the drama on the stage of the world? We know the script has been given in the form of a mandate, but how is it to be interpreted and expressed?

4.3.3 *The church's first function is a mission to "all"*: It has been briefly intimated that the responsibility of mission is one that is shouldered both by its Author and the Church. The latter is given the privilege of partaking in his mission. Mission, as it has always been, is *missio Dei*, and as an end-time phenomenon it is no different. The Church, in Scripture, is depicted as God's fellow worker (1 Cor. 3:9) not as a competitor. Bosch correctly asserts, "[to] put God's work over against man's, we soon land ourselves in one of two untenable positions. If we emphasise only one side, our faith adopts the blind unbending characteristic of fate; if we emphasise only the other side, we become fanatics and arrogant zealots."²⁰⁰ Instead there is a dialectical mystery that exists between God and his kingdom citizens as they function in the world, and this mystery finds its expression in Christ.²⁰¹

Since both Israel and the Gentiles exist in the eschatological union of Christ, which is the universal church, there remains no reason for believers to act as if they are separate from the world. Bosch says, "[t]he church already belongs to the redeemed world; it is the segment of the world that is obedient to God ... then, church and the world are joined together in a bond of solidarity. The church, as the already redeemed creation, cannot boast in a 'realized eschatology' for itself over against the world. It is

since they are part of the new creation. Their present reality is defined as "new." They *once* walked in the ways of "the sons of disobedience" and were subject to the wrath of God, but "now" they "[have] put off all these, anger, wrath malice...and have put on a new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." In the third sense the contrasts of the past and future are seen explicitly in 2 Corinthians 5:16, "Therefore from *now on*, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet *now* we know him thus no longer." Here we see the parallel of the old age versus the new age. In a paradoxical manner, what believers were once is still a present reality, however, they have the knowledge that it has been overcome and one day will disappear into the realms of history. It is this truth that has all redeemed creation (that includes the saints who are the first fruits) longing and groaning until *now* (Rom. 8:22-23). Each day draws the new creation closer to its full salvation, and yet Paul reminds us that "[t]he night is far spent..." (Rom. 13:11-12). Within this "now" our knowledge and understanding are obscured, "[f]or *now* we see in a mirror, dimly, but *then* face to face. *Now* I know in part, but *then* I shall know just as I also am known." Here again we see Paul expressing the ambiguity of the two ages that are conjoined in the inter-parousia period. As believers we are reminded that this ambiguity is an overlap which is a passing phenomenon, and soon the new *aeon* will exist as an unbridled and unchallenged reality.

²⁰⁰ Bosch., *Witness To The World*, 80.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

placed, as a community of hope, in the context of the world and its power structures.”²⁰² Although there is a distinction between the world and the church, this distinction can be overcome by the active participation of the believing community in the lives and establishments of the world. Then in turn by faith the world can become the people of God. By the participation of the Church as a distinctive group within the world, God will call people which are not his people, “and beloved who is not beloved” (Rom. 9:25).²⁰³

This means that God’s eschatological community reaches to all the inhabitants of the world bringing with it hope. However, there is the understanding among certain groups to interpret *panta ta ethne* as referring to all other nations except the Jewish people, but this is a gross misunderstanding in my opinion.²⁰⁴ This notion is founded on the idea that they once had the spiritual mandate but accomplished nothing with it.²⁰⁵ However, I am convinced the contrary is true; the Jews are very much included among the table of nations, “no longer, however, as a specially privileged people.”²⁰⁶ Instead, as I have presented above, a *new community* is ushered onto the stage of history, and its function is universal, i.e. all inclusive in its approach to all the people groups of the world.

It is interesting to note that the churches that came into existence through Paul’s missionary labours experienced deep cultural, religious, economic, and social factors. These were evidenced through their disunity and bickering. However, despite these

²⁰² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 150.

²⁰³ I do not want to give the impression that I see no distinction whatsoever between the world and the Church. By virtue of the Church turning to the world (Eph. 3:1-10; 4:17-24; Col. 1:15-29; 2:20-23) and fulfilling its role of intercession, the Church does for the world, what it cannot do for itself. Never should the Church become so enthralled with its work of renewal that it forgets the reason for its establishment. If the Church is allowed to do this, it will simply dissipate into the fabric of secularism and become a hollow entity.

²⁰⁴ John Piper, in his book “Let The Nations Be Glad!,” makes an interesting assessment of the combination of words *πᾶς* and *ἔθνος*, both in their singular and plural forms. According to Piper “[t]he singular use of *ethnos* in the New Testament always refers to a people group. The plural use of *ethnos* sometimes must be a people group and sometimes must refer to Gentile individuals, but usually can go either way. The phrase *panta ta ethne* must refer to Gentile individuals only once, but must refer to people groups nine times. The remaining eight uses may refer to people groups. The combination of these results suggest that the meaning of *panta ta ethne* leans heavily in the direction of ‘all the nations (people groups).’ It cannot be said with certainty that it always carries this meaning wherever it is used, but it is far more likely to than not...” (See pp. 178-180). According to his evaluation, if it is *all people groups* who are incorporated into the purview of the Great Commission, then certainly as a people group, Israel is a legitimate recipient of the mission enterprise.

²⁰⁵ According to those who hold to this position, Israel’s hardening which is grounded in Romans 9-11, is due to the providential work of God, and thus any missionary endeavours to Israel are futile.

²⁰⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 64.

differences Paul never succumbed to the infighting. Instead, he chose to speak into these concerns with theological truth that taught, once people are baptised in Christ they are no longer to continue in their sectarian fragmentation. Instead, they have “put on Christ,” hence, there can no longer be any separation between the Jews and Gentiles, Greek and Barbarian, slave and free, and men and women. Therefore, all who have received the Saviour have received their new identity by virtue of being “one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27). Christian baptism was the outward symbol of the new humanity reconciled in a single body (Eph. 2:15) and the values espoused by this “new man” are absolute respect for “all.” Henceforth, any segregation that dared to raise its ugly head was met with disdain and was immediately dealt with by the apostle.

It is for this reason that mission should impact the relationship the church has with Israel, and all missionary endeavours should continue. The truth is the church is an extension of Israel, or what Bosch calls “an enlarged Israel.”²⁰⁷ And it behoves the church to continue with an open dialogue with Jews who see no distinction between the covenant made with Abraham and his *spiritual seed*, and the modern political state of Israel, which was formed in 1948. To marry the ancient covenant to an indifferent secular Jewish State, I am of the opinion, misses the understanding of Paul’s arguments in Romans 9-11.²⁰⁸ It

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 173.

²⁰⁸ The contentious “All Israel” statement of Romans 11:11-32 is important to consider in relation to my statements above. Many consider “all Israel” to mean the whole ethnic people of Israel who in the last days will turn to God in repentance. I believe that there are two important points to consider in drawing a conclusion to what this phrase could possibly mean. First, the promise of God to Abraham concerns the *spiritual offspring* of Abraham, not the ethnic.

Paul goes into great detail to explain this in chapters 9-10. Second, Paul remarks that God always has his elect who are within ethnic Israel and therefore he has never rejected his covenant people. Paul is proof thereof, and in spite of many Jews having rejected the Messiah due to spiritual blindness and heart-hardness (John 12:37-40), the remnant chosen by grace (11:1-10) continue to receive salvation. However, this hardening that has come over the majority of Israel is not the final goal of God. Instead it means that the *plērōma* of the Gentiles receive an opportunity for salvation, and in turn their salvation rouses Israel to jealousy (vv. 11-15). Just as it was the Gentiles who were hardened, now it’s the Jews who receive the same. The Gentiles were first disobedient and now receive mercy, so now Jews also are disobedient that through the mercy shown to the Gentiles, they may receive mercy as well. This is implicitly inferred in (Rom. 9:6) wherein Paul explains that the promises of God have not failed because they concern the spiritual offspring of Abraham.

It is highly unlikely that Paul meant the promises of God would only be fully realised in the salvation of both spiritual Israel and national Israel. It would also seem odd that Paul would indeed mean that ethnic Israel will finally *all* repent and become God’s spiritual people once again. The construction of Romans 11:26 bears this out, for Paul does not say once the fullness of the Gentiles have come in *then* “all Israel will be saved.” Rather, “*And so* all Israel will be saved....” Or the construction could also be read as (*και ουτω πας Ισραηλ σωθησεται*) “*And in that way* all Israel will be saved.” Paul makes it clear that this hardening has only come upon a part of Israel, because some Gentile believers are beginning to think

is clear by Israel's current theological belief system that an evangelistic missionary endeavour to Israel remains a task of the worldwide Christian church. Regardless of the various conclusions concerning Romans 9-11, as an eschatological community of faith (Gal. 3:7; Rom. 4:11; 9:8) we should desire the elect of Israel's regrafting into the olive tree (Rom. 11:3-10; 23).²⁰⁹ This desire should be manifested in an active missionary endeavour.

The above truths are further espoused by Bosch who says, "[t]he various parallels to Matthew's fourfold use of *panta ta ethne* also evoke universalist imagery: *hole he oikoumene* (the whole inhabited world), *holos (hapas) ho kosmos* (the whole [human] world) and *pasa he ktisis* (the entire [human] creation). It is clear, then, that Matthew was simply trying to say that Jesus was no longer sent *only* (italics mine) to Israel but had, in fact, become the Saviour of all humankind."²¹⁰

Nowhere within the chapters of twenty-four to twenty-five is there any hint of a complete rejection of effort from the Christian community toward Israel. Bosch continues:

Therefore despite his strong views on the hardheartedness of Jews, Matthew never doubts the continued validity of a mission to his compatriots. This remains the inalienable task of himself and his community; they continue to regard themselves as inwardly and outwardly tied to Israel... Yet he is equally committed to the Gentile mission. Between the two missions there exists a unity full of tension, a kind of contrasting interdependence... to which Matthew remains obligated, since it is the only way in which he can hold on to both his 'text' (God's promises to his covenant people in the Old Testament) and his 'context' (God's obvious endorsement of the Gentile mission).²¹¹

Mission is therefore Jesus' reign extended via his hand of grace (the proclamation of the gospel unto salvation) and love (kindness expressed in seeking justice and mercy

the way Israel once thought, that is, that they alone were the elect people of God, and that Israel has been totally rejected. But Paul denies this, because even now among Israel there are God's elect.

Thus, with the fullness of the Gentiles, the fullness of Israel will also come in and *in that way all Israel is saved*. *All Israel* is therefore not *all of Israel* who will be converted at the end of time. Nor is it the church consisting of the Jews and Gentiles. But it is the *plērōma* of God's elect that throughout the course of History will be brought in from Israel. The church on the other hand will be gathered from all the peoples, nations, and tongues. This combination is *πας Ισραηλ*. I do not believe that Paul conceived of a time period between the *plērōma* from the Gentile world coming to salvation and the end of the ages. If this is the case then one wonders whether any Gentiles living in this period will come to salvation.

²⁰⁹ Bosch offers interesting insight on this point in *Transforming Mission* (pp. 172-174).

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

for one's neighbour) for all nations and people groups, unreservedly through his new creation (the church). These facets are necessarily the foundation of missionary orthopraxis. To divorce them from the Messianic community is to confine mission to only "making individuals new creatures, of providing them with a 'blessed assurance' so that come what may, they will be eternally saved."²¹² Hence, orthopraxis of mission naturally should entail a comprehensive approach, not simply providing "medicine for immortality."²¹³ As people enter into the kingdom of God, they in turn also become sensitive to their fellow human beings' plight, a situation that they recognise is one they have been delivered from, and yet still find themselves amidst. However, they now are empowered to facilitate change in situations that promote or simply ignore injustice, oppression and suffering. Bosch argues this point well quoting Jaques Matthey:

It is unjustifiable to regard the 'Great Commission' as being concerned primarily with 'evangelism' and the 'Great Commandment' (Mt 22:37-40) as referring to 'social involvement.' ...it is not possible to make disciples without telling them to practice God's call of justice for the poor. The love commandment, which is the basis for the church's involvement in politics, is an integral part of the mission commandment. To become a disciple means a decisive and irrevocable turning to both God and neighbor. What follows from there is a journey which, in fact, never ends in this life, a journey of continually discovering new dimensions of loving God and neighbor, as 'the reign of God and his justice' (Mt 6:33-my translation) are increasingly revealed in the life of the disciple.²¹⁴

Thus salvation becomes more than just a saving of the soul but also a saving of present conditions. And this point is taken further within the Sermon on the Mount. For within it we find great insight into the proper understanding of what it means for a disciple to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8, cf. 12:33). It seems to me that Matthew depicts a hypocrite as a person who produces no good deeds (fruit), and therefore an absence of righteous works is a clear indication of the absence of a righteous heart, and this, according to Matthew, is *anomia* (iniquity). Hence, one who fails in righteous conduct, fails to obey God's will and therefore lives outside of the covenantal relationship and are no longer heirs to God's reign.²¹⁵

²¹² Ibid., 81.

²¹³ Ibid., 198.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 81-82.

²¹⁵ Matthew expresses this understanding of sin or moral failure in the parable of the wicked vinedressers (21:33-46). He takes the metaphor of "bearing good fruits" from (3:8; 7:16-20; 12:33) and elaborates the concept to illustrate the evil-doing of hypocrisy.

Although the reign of God and the kingdom of heaven are filled with concepts of salvation, it is also closely connected to the “gospel of the poor.” It is in the nature of the case that insight into the kingdom and who constitutes the poor will provide a better understanding of the Churches function.

It seems the reign of God is mysteriously linked with the concept of *dikaiosyne*, and to properly understand how this word functions within the covenant community, we need to examine some comments pertaining to this subject. The word “righteousness” has many English meanings; for example, it could refer to a forensic justification (a declaration of a persons judicial status before God); an imputed righteousness (this is an attribute of God’s character given to a believer); or finally it could have reference to social justice (this can be defined as a person’s conduct in relation to their fellow human beings).²¹⁶

Ridderbos makes an interesting analysis of the ethical demand placed upon the eschatological community. He argues that the *ptoochos* (poor of Luke 4:18; 6:20; 7:22) and the *ptoochos tooi pneumati* (poor in spirit) are equivalent and find their parallel in the Old Testament words of *āni*, *ānāw*, and *ānāwin* (Isaiah 61:1, cf. Matt. 5:5; 11:5). These words refer to an external kind of distress or oppression. He says: “These ‘poor’ or ‘poor in spirit’ (meek) occur again and again in the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms and in the prophets. They represent the socially oppressed, those who suffer from the power of injustice and are harassed by those who only consider their own advantage and influence. They are however, at the same time those who remain faithful to God and expect their salvation from his kingdom alone.”²¹⁷ For Ridderbos the nucleus of God’s people is the *ptoochoi* who have been the bearers of God’s salvation throughout history. They are those who live out the qualifications of Matthew 5:3-10. He rejects the idea that *dikaiosyne* must be interpreted in the Pauline sense of imputed forensic righteousness. Instead, according to him the “righteousness” of (Matt. 5:4, 6, cf. Luke 6:21) must be interpreted as “kingly justice” that will bring to light the salvation of the oppressed and outcasts of society. He says:

²¹⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 71.

²¹⁷ Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), 188.

It is true that many writers think of such righteousness as a subjective agreement with God's demand, and explain 'hunger' and 'mourn' as sorrow about moral imperfection. To our mind such a view must be decisively rejected. For, in the first place, Luke 6:21 does not mention 'righteousness' at all, but only speaks of 'ye that weep' and 'ye that hunger.' In the following text in Luke, 'But woe unto you,' the opposite to 'those that weep and hunger' is 'those that are full' and 'that laugh now.' In our opinion it is clear that these words refer to the *social position* of 'the laughers' etc. in the world (cf. John 16:22, 20) and their overboldness based on their position (and not on their moral qualities). In contrast to them are the 'poor' that 'hunger now' and 'that weep now,' i.e., who look forward to God's redemption of his people from the power of oppression and injustice that is continued for the present. And it is this longing for deliverance which is indicated as 'hunger and thirst after *righteousness*' in the beatitudes in Matthew.²¹⁸

Although this is an excellent argument grounded ultimately in God's relationship with his covenant community, it lacks the emphasis which addresses the inward spiritual change required for the outward conduct (5:21, 22, 27, 28), which I believe Jesus was ultimately addressing. The demands of the Sermon on the Mount are so strict (5:48) that no one can properly obey them, and therefore people are driven, in view of their spiritual poverty, to the grace and mercy of God. In some cases Jesus uses obviously exaggerated language to illustrate the absolute requirements of God's law. Hence, it is at the foot of the cross that people find themselves desiring to live out the requirements of the Law, and in turn they will experience the very persecution spoken of. Therefore, I am convinced that Bosch has struck a good balance between Ridderbos' position which stresses that Christian's are the "socially and spiritually poor" seeking redemption from social oppressive and unjust powers, and the idea that in order to be part of this community that experiences such persecution, requires the characteristics of justification and internal righteousness. Bosch calls this concept a "justice-righteousness"²¹⁹ which is a concept developed by Michael Crosby whom he quotes. Although I quote Bosch in great length, I believe his statements on this issue are invaluable, he writes:

Michael Crosby, for instance, translates *dikaiosyne* alternatively as 'justice', 'holiness', 'piety', and 'godliness'...He believes that *dikaiosyne* contains both a 'constitutive' and a 'normative' dimension. "With the Spirit of the Lord God anointing us (Is. 61:1), we are clothed with a robe of justice; we are wrapped in a mantle of justice (Is. 61:10). The robe and the mantle enable us to experience God in the depths of our being as *our* justice". This is the *constitutive* dimension: God justifying us, making us righteous and holy in his sight. Once constituted in God's justice, "God uses us 'to make justice and praise spring

²¹⁸ Ibid., 190.

²¹⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 72.

up before all nations' (Is. 61:11)". This is the *normative* dimension: God raising up people who become ministers to others of the same justice they have experienced from God... *God's* justice then, is his saving activity on behalf of people. *Human* justice is the effort *we* make to respond to God's goodness by carrying out his will... If Matthew's Jesus calls his disciples to the practice of *dikaiosyne* it is primarily in the second dimension he has in mind, but in such a way that the first dimension remains constitutive... To emphasize only the ethical aspect would hardly be in keeping with Matthew's fierce polemic against legalism... *Dikaiosyne* is *faith in action*, the *practice of devotion* or, as Matthew 6:1 suggests, an act of right conduct "before your Father."²²⁰

The entire ethic of mission work is illustrated in Matthew 9:35-38. Christ saw the crowds as sheep without a shepherd, and changing the metaphors, Jesus calls for leadership in the image of the harvest that was in abundance, but the labourers were few. The disciples were then exhorted to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers amongst the "harvest field." Clearly the disciples of Jesus who span across this new age of triumph in which the King has come, ought to heed to this exhortation and react accordingly by sending missionaries. When we read Matthew 9 as the "harvest reaping" text and combine it with chapter 25 wherein we read of the "sheep and the goats," we see in a striking way how God expects his kingdom citizens to behave until he comes. In fact, we expect the Lord to be explicit in terms of what his will is on earth. And we are not disappointed, for we read, "for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" (v.35). All these matters concern the Christian social ethic, and each is the natural outworking of the Great Commission manifested in our actions of loving our neighbour and treating him as if he was Jesus himself. Evidently we can never play off Matthew 9 against Matthew 25. Jesus had no intention of playing one against the other, instead for all intents and purposes, he was explaining that harvesting and caring for the world are very much part of what it means to be a disciple.²²¹

In the light of the above understanding of the Church's ethical function as a

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ There are many more passages to substantiate the social implications of this point, namely, (Matt. 5:44) "Love your enemies;" (Matt. 6:19) "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth;" (Matt. 18:35) "So my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." The picture that emerges of the kingdom citizen is one of a person whose entire life has been transformed, they are a member of the new humanity, and are willing to share their faith, time and money in the network of their social relationships all for the glory of God.

“justice-righteousness community,” I believe a new depth of functional missionary endeavours may be achieved when as a consequence of the inward change, we become a community of *faith in action*, bringing with it a *theology of hope*.

This paves the way to discuss the *second function of the Church*, which is a *mission of hope and healing*. The perennial question of every Church that lives amidst the transformation of any society and culture is, “how do we as a covenantal community understand and evaluate how we *do* church in the twenty first century?” Much of the Church today is content with the last twenty centuries of missionary orthopraxis. By and large the Church today is a student of church history as opposed to becoming a church of the future, and as the saying goes, “any church married to its age will be a widow in the next.” Through lifeless traditionalism of our assemblies and the lack of orthopraxis we have become a widowed Church. The covenant community has deferred its hope, and embraced a dualistic view of salvation, the resurrection life and the kingdom, and it has produced a disjointed and schizophrenic behaviour. We have a Church that praises God with its lips, but our heart is far from him. This fundamental truth should compel us to properly understand that the Church must hold onto the *hope that was realised*, in the early first century, not the sixteenth. If the Church of the twenty first century finds its comfort in the history of the first century (in which the restoration of this world took place) it will become the church of the twenty first century and beyond.

Let me enumerate: the early church was waiting for “the hope of righteousness” (Gal. 5:5), and they knew that while they had salvation in promise without the consummation of the Law and Prophets (Matt. 5:17-18) that hope would only be a future prospect. This *hope* had its roots in a long history, which was the very soil for fertilising the seeds and germinating the very hope that the saints of old and the first century saints were waiting for. David proclaimed that his hope was invested in God, and therefore he would be delivered from all his transgressions (Ps. 39:7). He knew that this promise of God would uphold him and that he would not be “ashamed of [his] hope” (Ps. 119:116). This hope David speaks of was nothing more than salvation in Jesus Christ (Ps. 119:166). This same truth is conveyed by Jeremiah who saw this future salvation as the “hope of Israel” (Jer. 14:8). It was this hope that was promised by God “before time began” (Titus 1:2) and would gather up in the promises of Abraham that through him all nations would

be blessed (Gen. 12:1-2; 22:15-18). Finally, this hope would find its culmination through Christ, the singular seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16) who would extend his salvation also to the Gentiles (Matt. 12:21; Rom. 15:12).

The mystery of the gospel was the bringing of the two into the “one hope” of their calling (Eph. 4:4) and through obedience they were born into the “living hope” (1 Peter 1:3); hence, this hope is Christ (1 Tim. 1:1) who was reigning in heaven (Col. 1:15-18) waiting to appear a second time, apart from sin, unto salvation (Heb. 9:28). Now concerning this appearing, the writer of Hebrews says that this appearance will be *very soon* (Heb. 10:37). This first century appearance of Christ was vitally important for the primitive saints as it was the very event that constituted the bringing in of a “better hope” (Heb. 7:19). This better hope was expressed in terms of a better covenant that is faultless because it presides in better promises, hence there is no need to look for a second covenant (Heb. 8: 6-7). The old covenant was dissipating and the new was establishing itself wherein both Jew and Gentile would see the coming of Christ, the salvation of all humanity, as a present reality.²²² To remove this hope from the first century saints and defer it to some nebulous future is to ignore the “very soon” occurrence and misses the reality of the resurrection life and the only hope that God intended for the world. Postponement or otherwise known as Futurist theology, misses the only hope for the world intended by God, that is life in his presence – the One who is “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28) and substitutes it with a surreal hope. This is hope deferred and it makes the heart sick (Prov. 13:12). However, the remainder of the text reads “but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.”

The world is heartsick and in desperate need of God’s cure, and the Church is the world’s only *hope* and “cure.” Thus salvation is not a gnostic saving of a soul and treating material realities with indifference, as I have reiterated in the body of this paper.²²³ Rather the world is a place of involvement. The establishments and the

²²² I believe the Preterist position has much to offer in its understanding of covenant theology at this point. This position sees “the already and not yet” fulfillment as the occasion of the Cross, and the fulfillment of the New Covenant at the destruction of Jerusalem (68 -70 A.D.). It is at this destruction of the Temple/Jerusalem that the dissolution of heaven and earth (2 Peter 3:10, cf. Is. 51:15-16) is understood to mean the end of the Mosaic Covenant (see also Deut. 32:22; Heb. 8:13, cf. 1 John 2:17-18; 12:26; 1 Cor. 15:56, cf. 1 John 3:9; Matt. 5:17-18).

²²³ Augustine portrayed the City of God as everything which the City of Man is not, and in like manner most Christians today divorce the relationship between the inner life and the outer life of a

philosophies of this world should be a challenge for the people of God, for Christ has risen, and nothing should remain the way it used to be. Bosch says:

It was a stupendous victory of the evil one to have made us believe that structures and conditions of this world will not or need not really change, to have considered political and societal powers and other vested interests inviolable, to have acquiesced in conditions of injustice and oppression, to have tempered our expectation to the point of compromise, to have given up the hope for a wholesale transformation of the status quo, to have been blind to our own responsibility for and involvement in a world en route to its fulfilment.²²⁴

When Christ stated that our mission was to make disciples of all nations, he did not imply simply *just* witnessing to the nations. The *discipling* of *all* nations was included in the imperative. “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,” (Rev.11:15) hence, nations are to be discipled and made obedient to the faith. This essentially means that every aspect of life throughout the world is to be brought under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This includes individuals, the family, corporate life, science, agriculture, arts, law, education, philosophies, politics: all spheres of human thinking and involvement. Christ “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). It is clear that the eschatological community has been given the responsibility of praying, seeking, and working towards the conversion of the world and the structures that hold it in place. Even though this world is to some extent enemy-occupied territory, he has no property rights. He is a thief and liar, and the responsibility of Christians is to be good stewards of the King’s property. Hence, we cannot turn a blind eye to government and social structures that malpractice.²²⁵

Paul outlines a plan in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 for Christians to address such concerns: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

Christian, between heaven and earth. This point was stressed in the first chapter. However it is vitally important to see that our spirituality is lived out in a series of actions and a sense of duty to God and his kingdom, which is a present reality. Hence, we must reject the perceived chasm created by Augustine’s dualistic cities as an either/or, when it is clear that believers have not changed dimensions, but instead ages or what has been called “covenantal worlds.” God’s people have moved from death to life, and in a true sense all believers have experienced a Biblical resurrection. This holds tremendous implication for the believer, for now they no longer live in a yearning for escapism, instead they are “new every morning” and have a passion and purpose as they approach each day with the gifts of God. I believe that only this perspective will purposefully reconstruct present and future communities.

²²⁴ Bosch., *Transforming Mission*, 509.

²²⁵ Bosch, *Witness To The World*, 174.

casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Paul correctly observes that Christ is invincible, as are those who are in him (Eph. 6:10-18). With the divine weapons at our disposal (the Word of God, prayer and the investment of the Holy Spirit), the Church is able to destroy everything that raises itself in opposition. As the Church advances, the kingdom of God will be acknowledged as reigning over every human activity, and as every thought is brought captive to the obedience of Christ, then victory becomes a present reality. This is the root of any genuine programme of Christian reconstruction. Chilton says:

It is important to note... Paul does not begin his work of reconstruction by fomenting a social revolution. Nor does he begin by seeking a political office. He begins with the Church, and will move out to bring the rest of the world under Christ’s dominion ‘once the Church’s obedience is complete.’ The center of Christian reconstruction is the Church. The River of Life does not flow out from the doors of the chambers of Congresses and Parliaments. It flows from the restored Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Church of Jesus Christ... From that will flow social and political reconstruction, indeed a flowering of Christian civilization (Hag. 1:1-15; 2:6-9, 18-23).²²⁶

Chilton rightly stresses that more than anything the Christian life is a constant act of *worship* or *devotion*. Christian faith, therefore, can never be reduced to a personal experience or academic discussion – the essence of biblical religion is worship (congregational prayers, praise and the partaking of ordinances). This is what Moses conveyed to Pharaoh in requesting the desire for the people to go and celebrate a feast for God in the wilderness (Ex. 5:1; 7:16). In setting apart his people, God was going to provide a foundation for a social order and a judicial system.²²⁷ But more importantly God was to be the centre of their existence. True Christian reconstruction is far from merely electing Christian parliamentary members who will pass the right bills in parliament; instead, it is the worshipping of God. Chilton makes an interesting case for considering the book of Revelation as a template for understanding the proper concept of ecclesiastical worship and its outward effects on society. Within its pages, he says, is a repeated pattern of organised worship to which God always responds by bringing

²²⁶ David Chilton, *Paradise Restored, A Biblical Theology Of Dominion*, (Ft. Worth, Texas, Dominion Press, 1987), 214.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

judgment unto salvation (6:9-11; 8:1-8). He sees this structure as “an inseparable connection between liturgy and history.”²²⁸ He continues; “When the Church, in her official capacity, pronounces lawful judgments, those declarations are honoured at the Supreme Court of heaven (Matt. 16:19; John 20:23), and God Himself executes the Church’s verdict.”²²⁹ Chilton argues this form of involvement is a crucial lesson for the modern day Church. “Our primary response to persecution and oppression must not be political,”²³⁰ he says lest the Church puts its trust in the State. Rather, he believes that the Church’s primary response should always be liturgical in the face of oppression and persecution. He states:

Jesus in fact, had specifically commanded His people to pray for the Mountain of Israel to be cast into the sea (Matt. 21:21-22), and that is exactly (figuratively) what happened... We must pray about it, personally, in families, and in organized, corporate worship of the Church, whose officers are divinely empowered to bring judgments... this means that the Church must return to the orthodox practice of singing and praying *Imprecatory Psalms* against God’s enemies... Christians must follow this up with faithful prayers that the oppressors will either repent or be destroyed.²³¹

Although I agree that fervent prayer is vital for a change of oppressive political and social structures, as well as the removal of those who institute and approve of these heinous acts, I disagree that it ends there. The Church should actively involve itself in its public forums by allowing its voice of disapproval of oppression and injustice to be heard. It has the voice of true moral conscience²³² and this powerful voice *will* dissuade any form of oppression because of its *support in prayer* and *active involvement* of its members in the structures of society. In other words, the Church’s central response is not only to be social and political action, because in principle this would be atheistic, rather

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., 216.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² The Church’s sphere of authority relates to the civil government at the level of morality. Therefore it has the responsibility to comment on the morality of governments and their policies on the basis of God’s word, but it should never appropriate to itself the power to enforce such policies. But should a government forbid what God requires or enforce what God forbids, then Christians cannot submit and civil disobedience becomes a reasonable option (Acts 4:18-31; 5:17-29). Fostering political action is a viable and biblical way the gospel works through moral persuasion and the working of grace amongst citizens. As citizens of the inaugurated kingdom, Christians are to fulfill their proper role by praying for and obeying their governments, and yet watch over them by reminding them that God ordained them to rule, keep in order and protect its citizens (1 Tim. 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13,14).

the Church, *undergirded by its liturgy*, confesses its faith in God who uses human action as the ultimate determiner of history.²³³

This truth is evidenced in Revelation when the faithful Church calls upon God to respond to the evil concerns of the world, God responds by commanding the heavenly host to cast fire upon the earth and the wicked are consumed. Chilton correctly says; “[b]ut we must remember that the coals of God’s vengeance must come from the altar... [therefore] A ‘resistance movement’ that is not centered in worship will come under the judgment of God.”²³⁴

The Church’s worship is not primarily negative but positive, and the dominating theme of the eschatological community is offering petitions for the conversion of the world. This entails having a *desire* to see the lost and the structures of society saved and filled with “the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9). This is the whole reason for Jesus Christ coming into the world, not to condemn the world (for the world was already condemned) “but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). In Matthew believers are taught that Christ is the Head of the individual, Church and cosmos, and “the concept of the ‘cosmic Christ safeguards an element of truth. ‘Full authority in heaven and on earth’ has been committed to him (Matt. 28.18).”²³⁵

Therefore without reservation we can pray “Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). This is the reality that Jesus overcomes evil wherever it has established itself by virtue of the Church being obedient. But if the Church rejects Christ as Lord of our entire lives then he will refuse to be our Redeemer. Bosch says, “After all, on the Cross ‘he discarded the cosmic powers and authorities like a garment; he made a public spectacle of them and led them as captives in his triumphal procession’ (Col.2:15). The ‘authorities and cosmic powers’ in the Pauline letters allude to the way in which supernatural beings, as it were, incarnate themselves in structures – political, religious and intellectual structures (-ologies and isms) – which hold man in

²³³ Chilton., 216.

²³⁴ Ibid., 217.

²³⁵ Bosch, *Witness To The World*, 208.

bondage but over which Christ has triumphed and which he now wants to employ in his service on earth.”²³⁶

Knowing this truth, the twenty first century Church, says Chilton; “needs to stop acting as if we are forever destined to be a subculture. We are destined for dominion; we should straighten up and start acting like it. Our life and worship should reflect our expectation of dominion and our increasing capacity for responsibility. We should not see ourselves as lonely outposts surrounded by an increasingly hostile world; that is to bear false witness against God. The truth is just the opposite of that. It is the devil who is on the run...”²³⁷

Anything else is hopeless croaking of a defeated church that is heading for decline to which Augustine commented, “The clouds roll with thunder that the House of the Lord shall be built throughout the earth: and these frogs sit in their marsh and croak – We are the only Christians!”²³⁸

I believe that Chilton’s thesis²³⁹ is invaluable, in terms of true worship, steering our social concerns because too many churches today have acquiesced the seat of their moral voice and given up on praying for the problems in their communities and societies at large because as far as the modern Church is concerned, the governments of this world belong to the dominion of Satan, and yet the opposite is taught in God’s word (Proverbs 21:1; Isaiah 9:6-7). The Church is the reflection that God is within us and that we live in the ever-present eternity of God. As an eschatological community we dwell in the midst of the New Covenant and have become the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”

²³⁶ Ibid., 210.

²³⁷ Chilton, *Paradise Restored*, 218.

²³⁸ Ibid., 219.

²³⁹ Ibid., 220. Chilton is a strong proponent of dominion theology and expresses a strong Theocratic mandate. Matthew 6:10 is perceived as God’s will being obeyed on earth as it is in the heavenly realm. Hence, the Lord’s Prayer is a prayer for worldwide dominion of God’s Kingdom. He is careful not to stress that the Kingdom is a centralised world government run by church ministers. Rather, for Chilton a theocracy is a government ruled by God, and one that has inscribed within its law the laws of the Bible. Hence, the leaders of the country are to be “God’s ministers” as much as pastors. Further, the laws of the Bible are perfect and hence, cannot be improved on. Therefore as a standard of morality and ethics, God’s law espoused through a country’s law, is the ultimate value system under which a nation will prosper. Anything else will disgrace the people (Prov. 14:34). For Chilton the key to understanding history is judgment, and God evaluates every nation in each generation according to his prescribed law. Obedience brings blessing and disobedience curses (Deut.28:1-68). According to Chilton, dominion theology espouses that history is a series of judgments leading up to the Final Judgment, and God assesses and evaluates nation’s responses to his Word. As he says, “He shakes the nations of the world back and forth in the sieve

(Matt. 5:13-14) through which the Father continues to make all things new, proclaiming “the excellencies of him who has called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The consequence of obedience is that the world will see the Church’s good works and glorify our Father in heaven (v.16). It is by acting as salt that we *preserve* and *heal* the world by reflecting the knowledge of truth into the world’s conscience. To fail in our task is to be “good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (v.13). This is the *hope* we preach, that light has come into the world, and this “hope can heal a divided spirit and usher in a renaissance the kind the world has never known.”²⁴⁰

This is precisely why everything a believer does in this world continues into the next – we are already working today for a better world. For the world to come is not an absolutely new creation but a renewal of the present earth. That being the case, there will be conformity as well as discontinuity between our present culture and the “culture” of the world to come. Berkhof speaks of this continuity:

The Bible... presents the relationship between now and later as that of sowing and reaping, ripening and harvest, kernel and ear. Paul states that a man can build upon Christ, the foundation, with gold or silver, so that his work will remain in the consummation and he will receive a reward (1 Cor. 3:14). The book of Revelation mentions the works which will follow the believers in the consummation (14:13), and twice it is said in the description of the new Jerusalem that the glory of the kings of the earth (21:24) and of the nations (21:26) will be brought into it. For us who must choose and labour in history it is of great importance to try to understand more clearly the meaning of this figurative language which speaks so plainly about a continuity between present and future.²⁴¹

Thus, for Paul there never was an escape from the drama of history into the ideal world of heaven. For him, both vertical and horizontal planes meet in a promise and then, ontologically, in the person of Jesus Christ. He incarnated the “age to come” and, through his death and resurrection, brought with him the firstfruits of salvation that will be completed when he comes in the future to end the drama of history. Thus, we are not waiting for “the great escape,” but for the great return, the coming of the God-Man who will complete what he started.

of history, sifting out the worthless chaff and blowing it away, until nothing is left but His pure wheat. The choice before any nation is not pluralism. The choice is obedience or destruction.”

²⁴⁰ Timothy R. King, “Recovering Humanity’s Hope,” n.p. [cited 19 March 2003]. Online: <http://www.livingpresence.org/journal/Recovering.html>.

²⁴¹ Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History*, 189.

The implication for the mission of the Church is both *teleological* and *healing*, as I mentioned above. By teleological, I mean the dimension of our heritage is so precious, and we as believers can have uttermost confidence in both the present expansion of God's kingdom here on earth *now* and the future vindication of God's way with evil. The redemption of the world enables us as a community of faith, hope and love to put ourselves collectively on the line for the struggle against corruption and decay. It also enables us to enter into the struggle vigorously without despair, for the evangelical struggle is vouchsafed by the Cross and resurrection, hence a joyous conviction is manifested for we know that God's redeeming plans cannot be thwarted.

Through healing, the Church must recover the core value of its existence – mission to the world. There are many in the West and particularly in America who believe the West is successful because it is faithful and religious. And because of this belief it makes it easier to sleep at night knowing that the West consumes the majority of the world's resources for a small minority of its people. Meanwhile, the rest of the world lives in poverty. This in no way can please God. The Church exists for mission, and as Emil Brunner stated, “the church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning.”

Timothy King quotes from Bosch's book *Believing in the Future*, five important ingredients of missiology for Western culture, which I believe is vital for church growth and a change in the Western churches perception of the rest of the world. First, our missiology must include an ecological dimension due to the exploitation of the environment of our economic demand in the West. It is abundantly clear that we have come to regard nature as nothing more than an object of exploitation. Vast areas of rain forests are being cut down purely for profit, large parts of the world are being poisoned and changed into dead moonscapes where neither plant, animal nor human life can flourish. Everyday children are dying because of the West's lack of concern, and only the gospel can effectively communicate true compassion and return an appreciation for this planet. Second, missiology must be countercultural. King states, “For a Western society that is hedonistic, this means that we must begin to take seriously the sacrifice, delayed gratification, self discipline and modesty that goes against the grain of everything for which our country has traditionally stood.”²⁴² By and large vast numbers of people are

²⁴² King, *Recovering Humanity's Hope*, 8.

trapped in acute physical distress – they suffer hunger, thirst, poverty and are homeless. Millions of people are displaced from their homes and countries because of war and the “financial interests” of the North Atlantic bloc. They are plunged into misery, distress and hopelessness “not because they have sinned and are guilty, but only because they live with Lazarus outside the rich man’s gate (Luke 16:19-31). They are those who suffer for the sins of others, those who are sinned against.”²⁴³ Third, the Church in its nature must be ecumenical. How can we as God’s eschatological community bring healing to the world when we are scurrying around trying to build denominational empires? The early Church spoke as a witness that was undivided, and her “undivided voice” spoke into being an undivided Church throughout the Roman Empire. It is clear that in our day the witness of the Church is divided throughout the world, and denominational missionary efforts bring forth further divided and sectarian churches. This is so contrary to what the early Church was. Paul knew of only one body, one Spirit, one hope of his calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and one Father of all (Eph. 4:4-6) whom we serve as members of many Churches. Believers today liturgically confess “I believe in a holy catholic Church,” yet we practice denominationalism with strict sectarian principles to isolate and “protect” ourselves from the liberals. Boer is correct in saying, “In examining the concept of the ‘glory of Christ’ John 17:22, it became very evident that the unity which the glory of Christ brings into being is not only a spiritual but also, and very emphatically, a *visible* unity. It is a unity which the *world* must be able *to see*.”²⁴⁴ As Christians who belong in *one family*, we have no right to see the World Council of Churches as the “false prophet” and create an unnecessary dilemma. To decry the WCC as a “synagogue of Satan” with seats filled by liberals in its official assemblies is naïve and proof once again that biblicists are unwilling to see *all* things under the rule of Christ. There is no good reason why conservative Churches should not join the WCC and voice their concerns and possibly even gain a majority in the council, sending a message to the world that “we *can* get along and *will* get along for your sake and God’s glory.”²⁴⁵

²⁴³ F.J. Verstraelen and A. Camps (eds.) J. D Gort, *Missiology, An Ecumenical Introduction, Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity*, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 203.

²⁴⁴ Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, 244-245.

²⁴⁵ I realise that there is more to this statement than just wanting unity for the sake of unity. There are legitimate reasons that create disagreement such as cultural and historical background of the Churches, credal differences, and church polity and liturgy.

Fourth, the Church must have mission theologies that are contextual, not theologies that offer hope deferred or theologies packed and parcelled in manifest destinies and Anglo-Saxon colonialism. Lastly, missionary encounter should also be the ministry of the laity. King states, “Only a grassroots movement and ministry of the laity can rejoin what traditional secularized religions have driven apart.”²⁴⁶

Neither nihilistic despair nor romantic idealism are proper responses to the declaration of God’s purposes in Jesus Christ. Rather, we work to make visible in the world the reality of God’s love, which is graciously transforming us even now, and we should continue to declare the good news that in Jesus Christ the future is secure. Therefore, just as our small gains in holiness in this life do not relieve us of our responsibility of constantly striving for that which lies in the future, our contributions to the justice, goodness, preservation and beauty of creation may not, for their meagreness, be considered unimportant to God, the One who has brought us from darkness to light to show forth his love for the world.²⁴⁷

The connection between the Church’s worship and missiology is of utmost importance to consider because even when the church advances victoriously, it should never do so under a banner of arrogance.²⁴⁸ This is the final consideration of the church: an attitude of *humility and weakness*. The stage upon which God’s historical purposes are performed are very much within the structures of pain, frustration and hardship, and therefore mission is always done in *weakness*. Paul never allows any of his readers to fall prey to any delusions of escaping this world of “suffering and weakness, and death of the present hour by means of the ‘enthusiasts’ proclamation that Christ has already won the ultimate victory. Nor may his readers, with the apocalypticists, interpret the pain and misery they encounter as evidence of God’s absence from the present evil age – which

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 9.

²⁴⁷ Horton, “Eschaton or Escape?,” 12.

²⁴⁸ Often those who are involved in mission, especially those who come from the American Biblicist churches, usually view mission as only taking the gospel message combined with the culture of the “Christian West,” and graciously offer this export to countries who are regarded as not worthy or “blessed by God.” They have no intention of Christianising the nations, instead their only agenda is to preach the gospel as a witness, so that the world will have no excuse, and their blood will not be upon the hands of the “evangelising church” (Ezekiel 18). I am of the opinion that this form of missionary endeavour shows no true compassion for the lost world, because the matter of saving people from “the world,” in order to precipitate the end of time is of more importance to these churches.

fortunately will not last much longer.”²⁴⁹ Instead what is evident for all believers is the dialectical tension of the Christian life between living in the present sinful reality (which consists of the forces of God subduing the forces of darkness) as well as the victory obtained but yet not fully realised. This is what has been described as Paul’s “near vision” which enables him to see the war raging between God and the powers of death, and his “far vision” which allows him to see the rejoicing at the outcome of the battle.²⁵⁰

Paul presents to the reader in 2 Corinthians 1 – 12:9 a dialectical tension between these two “visions” by bridging the reality of both in the life of a believer. Humility, weakness, service, sorrow and affliction are connected with power, joy, and boasting.²⁵¹ The crescendo is reached in 12:9 wherein Paul writes, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly will I rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” These same truths are expressed by Paul throughout the body of his letter, sandwiched between chapters 1-12.²⁵² This point should speak succinctly to the modern church, for Paul never bunkers down in his “Christian fox-hole” passively waiting to be delivered by some uncertain intrusion of Jesus who will swing the tide of battle against the onslaught of the powers of the world. Instead, in power and joy he advances the kingdom of God, and the outcome, which is suffering, is “also, and perhaps primarily, as an expression of the church’s active engagement with the world for the sake of the world’s redemption.”²⁵³ Elsewhere Paul continues the idea that to become a servant of Christ is inevitably to suffer for him (Gal. 6:17; 2 Cor. 1:5). And to live the “humble” life of an active believer, who willingly sacrifices all for the world’s sake, is to see them come to faith through the Christian life which is a reflection of the believers’ relationship with Jesus (2 Cor. 4:9, 12). Paul’s words in (2 Cor. 12:15) epitomises the attitude of how mission is always to be done, “and I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.”

²⁴⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 176.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

²⁵² See 4:8 and 6:8-10.

²⁵³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 177.

To willingly offer your life in the service of Christ for the sake of the world, to be the “Samaritan” who is prepared to always give whatever is required even when the opposition is unrelenting from within our own ranks, is what true love for the Lord is. It is this attitude of humility and weakness combined with love and joy that seeks Christ’s kingdom and righteousness, and his will on earth *as it is done in heaven*. A Church that does mission with an attitude of weakness is a Church that has compassion on the “crowds” of the world.

In conclusion to this section I have encompassed various aspects of mission work. In short I have argued that mission work is an *all* inclusive function of the Church. Every human being is to be the recipient of the *good news of acquittal* and enveloped in this proclamation is *justice*, which seeks to bring *hope* based on the promises of God. This hope becomes a functional manifestation when the Church, undergirded by its liturgy seeks to speak into the unjust and oppressive structures of its age. However, the Church is never to be an arrogant and defiant entity, rather its entire ministry is communicated to the world in an attitude of *humility and weakness*.

Conclusion

Researching and writing this dissertation has been a tremendous challenge for me, for at the beginning of it I held to a pessimistic amillennial position. Since reading David Bosch, I have been tremendously challenged, especially by his earlier writings and his rejection of the apocalyptic, to appreciate the positive side of eschatology and world history. This challenge forced me to reconsider many ingrained ideas concerning missiology and essentially forced many “paradigm shifts” in my thinking. Without a doubt David Bosch’s work has been a catalyst for change in my eschatology and mission thinking. To give a reasonable account for his own change is difficult, as I explained in chapter 2, but to continue with and expand his work is a privilege of any student who takes the time to read all his writings.

The contribution he has made is tremendous, and in agreement with Bosch, I believe it is important to let theology nurture our worldviews and reflect upon our praxis in order for us to understand our historical situations.

Overall, I conclude with Bosch that Greek philosophy has created an unnecessary dualism in understanding history, and this, by and large, affected the modern Western churches entire structure of missionary thinking, particularly in American churches as many succumb to a distinction of this world and the “one to come.” Throughout, I have argued against this notion by presenting the idea that history and eschatology *do not* lie parallel, and neither are they antithetical poles and gnostic trajectories. Rather the Bible shows evidence of a unified understanding in which history is viewed eschatologically, while still remaining history. History is the forward development of divine and human interaction, while eschatology is the constant vertical intrusion. Therefore, in contrast to Plato, the Bible looks for the true knowledge of God in the realm of history, particulars, and flux, rather than in an ostensibly higher realm of rational certitude based on transcending all these factors (Gnosticism). God may not change in his essence, but we know that he changes in his relationship to nations, history and our destiny.²⁵⁴ Hence, contemporary believers do not look for the restoration of an earthly Jerusalem, instead they join the one above, and the “expectation” is the anticipation of the day when the

²⁵⁴ Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 230-231.

heavenly city descends and consummately fills the world. This future consummation is the present reality “above,” where believers are seated with Christ, and it by no means extinguishes our hope, rather, it injects a “new ethic” which recovers humanity’s hope by spreading the flame of the first century’s hope in the twenty-first century believer’s heart. Therefore, redemptive history should not be reduced to a past, present or future, but to the unfolding of redemption in all three tenses.

In the light of the above, the Church has no reason to have a negative view of the world and history. For it is this very creation that God has covenanted with and promised not to destroy again, “I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth” (Gen. 9:13). This planet becomes the everlasting stage of God’s providence and love toward his creatures as they enter and exit history (Eccl. 1:4) and those who by his sovereign choice enter into his kingdom are called to exhibit their righteousness by seeking the expansion of the kingdom by asking God to bring individuals, communities and civil structures within the boundaries of Jesus Christ’s rule. This entire commission is done with a humble heart, a graceful attitude, and love which surpasses all understanding as the eschatological community gives a reason of the hope that is within them (Eph. 1:18). This entire endeavour is undergirded by the knowledge that “all the promises of God in Him are Yes and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us” (2 Cor. 1:20).

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