

**UNITED WITNESS: A THEOLOGY OF EVANGELISM IN LIGHT OF PARTICIPATION IN
CHRIST**

by

DWAYNE WILLIAM BROTHERS

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SUPERVISOR: Prof MS KGATLE

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DECLARATION

Name: Dwayne William Brothers

Student number: 64124118

Degree: Master of Theology in Missiology

Exact wording of the title of the dissertation as appearing on the electronic copy submitted for examination:

United Witness: A Theology of Evangelism in Light of "Participation in Christ"

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Dwayne W Brothers
SIGNATURE

April 19, 2023
DATE

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Title of thesis/dissertation: United Witness: A Theology of Evangelism in Light of “Participation in Christ”

Summary: Evangelism is tied to the good news that Jesus is Lord. However, because of coercive methodologies of the past or the ties with church expansion and colonialism, many have suggested a great deal of caution concerning evangelism. This research project seeks to contribute to a renewed theology of evangelism. First, three different paradigms of evangelism in current use are evaluated in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses. Second, evidence is given to show that evangelism and mission studies have not kept up with current changes in biblical studies, particularly Paul’s theology. The theme of “participation in Christ” in Paul’s theology is examined to discern the impact it would have on a theology of evangelism. The results show that the theme of “participation” is a fruitful foundation for understanding the gospel, the goal of evangelism, and how evangelism should be practiced.

KEY TERMS:

Evangelism; Mission; Participation in Christ; Union with Christ; Pauline Theology; Cruciformity; Theosis; Theology of Evangelism; Gospel; Conversion; Christian Initiation; Witness

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Relevance of the Study

Evangelism is squarely tied to the announcement that Jesus is Lord. This is good news, according to the Christian tradition, not just for a select few but for the whole world. However, down through the centuries, this proclamation of good news has been complicated. Missionary encounters in and across cultures, have often been accompanied by spiritual sustenance and hope, as well as positive social action and change. At other times the spread of the gospel has been mingled with coercion and colonialism, slavery and oppression, militarism and nationalism (Adeney 2010: 140–151; Jennings 2010; Stone 2007: 115–130). With this mixed heritage, it is important that the witness of the church is continuously evaluated to ensure that it does not betray God’s good news for the world.

1.2 Problem statement

The problem this research seeks to address is the lack of attention mission and evangelism studies have given to the changing landscape of Pauline studies. More specifically, this research will seek to understand the theological structures of evangelism and Paul’s theology of participation in Christ. The central research question is, “How does Paul’s concept of “participation in Christ” impact the theological framework of missiological studies on evangelism”?

1.3 Hypothesis

Given the diversity of opinions on the proper theological structure of evangelism, as well as its definition, goals, and practice, further study needs to be done in order to advance a better

theological basis for witness in our day and age. Also, recent shifts within the discipline of New Testament study should be accounted for if the hope of a strengthened theological structure for evangelism is to be realized.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore Paul's concept of "participation in Christ" and its impact on the theological framework of missiological studies on evangelism. It anticipates interactions within Missiology, more particularly the subset of evangelism; New Testament studies, particularly the theology of Paul; and Practical Theology, particularly the praxis of witness by the church.

1.5 Research questions

Consequently, in order to adequately access the main question, other considerations will need to be addressed:

1. How have the biblical and theological foundations of evangelism been advanced in the past?
2. What is the current scholarship of Paul's theology of "participation in Christ"?
3. How can a theology of evangelism in light of "participation in Christ" enhance the mission of the Church?

1.6 The Objectives of This Study

When adequately addressed, these research questions should outline a path to accomplish the objectives of this study. The central aim of this study is to explore the impact Paul's theology of

participation has on the theology and practice of missiology and evangelism. In doing so, it is proposed that a significant contribution will be made to the field of mission and evangelism by:

1. providing a critical evaluation of the biblical and theological foundations of evangelism that have been advanced in the past;
2. synthesizing the current scholarship of Paul's theology of "participation in Christ" to determine the potentiality of this theme to impact a theology of evangelism.
3. outlining how a theology of evangelism in light of "participation in Christ" can enhance the mission of the Church, particularly in the West, and, hopefully, increase capacity to witness faithfully in a culture that has become more resistant to Christian faith.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Meadows (2011) outlines two paradigms that are currently in play as representative theologies of evangelism. They are 1/ the Inherited-Conversionist paradigm, and 2/ the Emergent-Missional paradigm. Meadows suggests that the Inherited-Conversionist paradigm is based on the gospel of "personal salvation" with the goal of conversion. Also, the Emerging-Missional paradigm, according to Meadows, is based on the good news of the "Kingdom of God" with the goal of initiation into life in the Kingdom, also characterized as "discipleship" (2011: 5–7).

Meadows (2011) then lays out a third option, his own evangelistic theology that he calls the Ancient-Future paradigm. He draws heavily on Wesleyan history and theology in order to describe a gospel of "holy love". The goal of this paradigm is communion with God which is mediated through corporate spiritual direction (2011: 6–30).

Using Meadows (2011) helpful grid enables representative texts to be chosen and evaluated concerning how the biblical and theo-logic works in each paradigm. The primary texts that will be under consideration are as follows:

- The Inherited-Conversionist Paradigm – The primary texts under consideration for this paradigm will be the publications of Mark Dever (2013) and other writings on evangelism from the **9Marks** organization where Dever serves as President (Ortlund 2014; Stiles 2014). This organization is headquartered in the United States, but has a worldwide ministry dedicated to forming healthy churches around nine marks, of which evangelism is one of them. The biblical and theological foundations that lead to the understanding of personal salvation and conversion as the goal of evangelism will be described and analyzed.
- The Emergent-Mission Paradigm – William Abraham’s work will be the primary texts for analysis (1989, 1994). A critical evaluation of his theology of evangelism, particularly his arguments for evangelism as “initiation in the Kingdom of God” and the biblical and theological foundations that support his conclusions, will be crucial for this project.
- The Ancient -Future Paradigm – Philip Meadow’s article will be the primary text for this paradigm since he is the originator and primary advocate of this understanding of evangelism. His understanding of “holy love” as the foundation for evangelism will be described and evaluated. Other resources will be used to enhance the critical discussion of Meadow’s proposal.

Each of these representative texts of the three paradigms will be described and evaluated concerning the Biblical and theological structure of their arguments, with particular attention

given to the *evangel*, *telos*, and *ethos* of evangelism. This will allow a comparative evaluation of the texts which should lead to an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the three paradigms.

1.8 Methodology

This study will be conducted in stages in order to adequately address the research questions and accomplish the objectives. It will require critical evaluations from the field of missiology, particularly evangelism studies, and from the field of New Testament studies, particularly Pauline studies on “participation in Christ”. This methodical analysis will proceed by isolating key texts in both areas of study; developing thematic criteria to assist in correlating “evangelism” and “participation in Christ”; and a constructive theological synthesis of the findings that will contribute to the theory and practice of evangelism.

1.9 Research design

The first stage of the research will be to describe and analyze the predominant paradigms of evangelism and the biblical and theological foundations already in use for constructing these theologies of evangelism. In order to successfully accomplish this section, the use of a model for selecting the texts to study and a preliminary way to analyze the biblical and theological structure will be needed. Philip Meadows (2011: 3–30) has developed a helpful grid in order to discern and evaluate the different approaches in evangelism. He begins by suggesting three basic ingredients that need to be included in a theology of evangelism. He finds that these three ingredients are sufficient and useful to reduce the many variations and complexities of theologies of evangelism to “a small number of common perspectives, thus enabling comparisons to be made, and unlocking the possibility of fresh thinking” (2011: 4). These three essential ingredients are 1/ the *evangel* – what is the gospel that is communicated, 2/ the *telos* – what is the

aim or goal of evangelism, and 3/ the *ethos* – how is this accomplished, who are the actors, and what are the practices involved?

Expanding and modifying Meadow's three ingredients from his short article will allow this research to thoroughly address the biblical and theological logic that creates a workable theology of evangelism. For instance, here are some of the expanded sub-questions that may serve as a basis to describe and critique each evangelistic paradigm.

- The *evangel* – what is the gospel that we seek to communicate?
What Scriptures or themes are primarily used to describe the gospel?
How does the gospel relate to the *Missio Dei*?
How does the gospel relate to soteriology?
How is the gospel responded to and how does it hold promise for those that do respond?

- The *telos* – what is the aim or goal of evangelism?
Is the goal conversion, initiation, discipleship or something else?
Is the goal achieved at a moment in time or it is progressive?
Is there one goal or multiple goals of evangelism?
How do you know if/when the goal is achieved?

- The *ethos* – how is this accomplished and what are the practices involved?
What human actions are contributive to evangelism and who performs them?
What role does the God's grace through the active work of the Spirit play?
What is the role of the church or individuals within the church?
What is the connection between evangelism and the church's social witness?

The second phase of research will include an analysis of select texts on the theme of “participation in Christ”, as particularly described in Paul’s letters. Several substantive resources will be used to introduce and develop a synopsis of the theme of “participation in Christ” and the recent shift toward it as an important theme. The works of Richard Hays (2008), Robert Tannehill (2006), Morna Hooker (2008), Constantine Campbell (2012), Michael Gorman (2001, 2009, 2015), and Grant Macaskill (2018) will be important references to highlight the recent scholarly work in this subject.

However, two sources will be utilized as primary texts for deeper analysis. The work of Constantine Campbell is compelling because of the exegetical work he has done on the theme of participation in Paul’s writings. Also, the work of Michael Gorman will deserve special attention because of his contributions on the connections of Paul’s theology, participation in Christ, and the mission of the church.

These two sources will provide ample possibilities for describing and evaluating Paul’s use of the participation theme. Special interest will be paid to the aspects of how Paul’s use of participation language affects the shape of the gospel, how the gospel is communicated, and how participation language effects spirituality and witness. This analysis of Paul’s theology of participation will set the stage for the final stage of this study.

The description and critical analysis of the biblical and theological paradigms of evangelism, and the description and analysis of Paul’s theology of participation, will prepare for the third stage of correlation and synthesis. This section will address the question, “how does Paul’s theology of participation impact a theology of evangelism”? This correlation will be done by using the same interpretive scheme that was used of evangelism (the *evangel*, *telos*, and *ethos*), in order to ascertain the possibilities of contributions from Paul’s theology of participation. The first step is to determine how Paul’s theology of participation impacts the gospel (*evangel*).

From there, it is possible to address the *telos*, the goal that comes from sharing the gospel from the viewpoint of participation. And then, last of all, one can determine the *ethos* – how is God working through human practices that enable faithful witness in light of participation in Christ.

Using this methodical approach, it will be possible to outline the gains from using the theme of participation in Christ as a framework for a theology of evangelism.

1.10 Literature review

The review of literature will be broken into two parts. The first section will review the current issues in evangelism and mission and the second will review the area of New Testament studies regarding participation in Christ in the letters of Paul.

1.10.1 Evangelism

A call for renewal in evangelism, academic or otherwise, comes at a difficult era in the life of the church, particularly in the West. It is well known that the Christian church in the Western world continues to struggle with loss of attendance and cultural influence. Recent demographic study done by the Pew Research Center (2015) has confirmed the loss of religious affiliation in the United States. In fact, the fastest growing religious segment in the United States is categorized as “nothing in particular”. Philosopher James K. A. Smith (2014: 47) pertinently asks, “how, in such a relatively short period of time, did we go from a world where belief in God was the default assumption to our secular age in which belief in God seems, to many, unbelievable?” Advances in science and technology, demographic changes, and the postmodern turn have left church life in America “disrupted” and “unraveled” (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2018: 13–35). The door has been opened for deep secularization and resistance to Christian faith. This

leads to the harsh reality that the West - the “base of the entire modern missionary enterprise - is slowly, but steadily being de-christianized” (Bosch 1991: 3).

That is not to say that Christianity is receding around the world. In fact, Philip Jenkins (2002) has pointed out the surging growth of Christianity in the Global South. Independent churches and the Pentecostal movement has surged in growth, alongside a steady pace among the traditional churches in the South (Goheen 2014: 189–206). There is much to celebrate. Yet, what is the answer for the struggle in Western Christianity?

Lesslie Newbigin was one of the first missionary scholars to become critically aware of the need of a “genuine missionary encounter between the gospel and the culture that is shared by the peoples of Europe and North America...” (1988: 1). Newbigin’s inclinations that the mission of the church in the Western world is in need of critical reflection and re-configuration has been confirmed by many scholars and practitioners since he penned those words. Missiologist George Hunsberger picked up Newbigin’s challenge in order to expose the “glaring gap in American missiology”. Hunsberger continues, “we have failed to give clear cut attention to the development of a domestic, contextual missiology for our own North American setting (1996: 4). Given these challenges, a renewed understanding and appreciation of evangelism and mission will be critical for a revitalized church.

Attention to evangelism could proceed in at least three different ways. One possibility is to continue the unreflective, popular version of evangelism in hopes of inspiring more evangelists and congregations to share their faith and win more converts to Christianity. Or, a second possibility would be to encourage churches to gain relevancy through utilizing business and marketing strategies that particularly came into vogue during the last part of the 20th century. This approach is lamented by Bryan Stone (2007: 27), that “contemporary evangelism is frequently indistinguishable from activities such as marketing or public relations”. Or the third

more difficult path is to develop a robust account of evangelism that is biblically and theologically informed, yet compelling enough to be applicable to local congregations that desire to point people to the beauty of Christianity.

However, for multiple reasons, the theological study of evangelism has been slow to develop. This sluggishness is partially because the actual practice of evangelism is haunted by the “ghosts” of centuries past where the motivation of “salvation of souls” became an excuse for imperialism, colonialism, and lack of attention to the dignity of others (Johnson 1987: 17–18). Andrew Kirk (2000: 57–58) notes that some church leaders responded to the call for a “Decade of Harvest” in the 1990’s with several complaints. Church leaders feared that a program of evangelism may simply look like self-promotion for a dying church. In addition, they feared that the evangelistic program may come off as intolerant toward other communities of faith and may appear arrogant with its absolute truth claims. These ghosts of the past continue to cause enough distaste for evangelistic programs that the development of theological scholarship on the practice has been slow to blossom.

Despite this sluggishness of modern theology, the groundbreaking publication of “The Logic of Evangelism” by William J Abraham (1989), has been celebrated for opening up a new space for academic conversation concerning evangelism. Before his study appeared, there were a myriad of resources encouraging Christians to evangelize, and manuals and handbooks full of evangelistic techniques, but there was little attention given to the academic theological study of evangelism. In the opening words of William Abraham’s groundbreaking work on evangelism, he laments the “scant attention” modern theology has given to evangelism (1989: 1). Walter Klaiber states that in current theological textbooks “one encounters a curious hesitancy, if not a meaningful silence” when it comes to the topic of evangelism (1997: 19). Likewise, Bryan Stone suggests that the problem with evangelism today is “at bottom a theological failure”

because of the lack of critical reflection given to the subject (2007: 19). One of Abraham's stated goals was to pull evangelism "from the fringes of modern critical theology" and into "an ongoing research program that could well constitute the beginnings of a new field within the discipline of theology" (1989: 2).

But where does one begin in order to make a contribution to the development of the study of evangelism? Where does it lie among the rest of the academic disciplines in theological and pastoral training? And from what theological field should evangelism have roots? Is it part of systematics under the subset of ecclesiology, or more rightly situated within the study of the Trinity and the mission of God, or is it better to think of evangelism as a study in practical theology, or should it, perhaps, begin in biblical studies with priority given to understanding the gospel and how it was communicated by the earliest Christ-followers?

In the midst of these questions, Abraham argues that evangelism must be "studied for its own sake" (1989: 10) yet, correctly, recognizes that a vibrant theology of evangelism will draw from a "whole network of disciplines" (1989: 5). In other words, the practice of evangelism should be isolated in order to give it critical and thorough attention, but in order to thrive, it should draw also from the labors of Biblical scholars, systematic theologians, missiologists, and practitioners of faith. This understanding not only allows, but should celebrate contributions to evangelism from various biblical and theological fields and new creative approaches.

This study intends to specifically highlight the necessary contribution that biblical studies and theology must make to mission theology and the practice of evangelism. Communicating the gospel in word and deed requires an understanding of the Scriptural roots of the good news which is integral to the foundation of a theology of evangelism.

For instance, Walter Klaiber, a New Testament specialist, suggests that there are three basic forms of the gospel message already present in the New Testament (1997: 29). The three forms are 1/ the kingdom message of the synoptic gospels, 2/ the message of the cross from Paul, and 3/ the message of the incarnation from the Johannine literature. If Klaiber's claim is accepted, then there is a case to be made that the field of evangelism will be strengthened by listening for contributions from each of these three biblical/theological themes. However, the overwhelming trend in the past few decades has been to focus on the theological themes in the gospels and not give consideration to the Pauline literature. For instance, in the works of Abraham (1989) and Arias (2001), the Kingdom of God as presented in the gospels becomes the crucial framework. It is this focal point that becomes the driving theological image that controls the definition, the aims, and the practice of evangelism. Scott Jones (2003) uses the "evangelistic love of God", based on Jesus' teaching of love of God and neighbor, as the theological framework for evangelism. Darrell Guder (2004) advances the claim that the incarnation is a good theological starting place for evangelism and mission. As impressive and informative as these works are, the question remains - are there other theological frames of reference that can also contribute to an enriched understanding of evangelism? Has the theology of Paul been excluded from the conversation in recent scholarship on evangelism?

It is likely that academic work in evangelism has not kept pace with the rapid changes that occur in the in other fields, such as biblical studies. In addition, Pauline studies, in particular, has gone through sweeping debates and shifts in the past few decades. It is time for a thorough relook at the theology of Paul in order to find places of new insight to develop a robust theological account of evangelism.

1.10.2 Participation in Christ: The Shift in Pauline Studies

The urgency of the project is not only built on the need for a fresh lens for evangelism, but also the awareness of the revolutionary changes happening in Pauline studies. New Testament scholar, Jouette Bassler (2007: 1) states, “the general agreement about the basic structure of Paul’s theology that prevailed not too many years ago has collapsed and been replaced by the chaos of vigorous debate”. This continuing debate has challenged many of the older assumptions of the center of Paul’s theology, how Paul understands and communicates the gospel, and his mission. These current debates have opened up a path for new opportunities and paths for fresh thinking on Paul’s theology.

Ever since E. P. Sanders’ landmark study (1989) , the field of scholarship on Paul has changed dramatically. One theme that has risen to the forefront is Paul’s concept of “participation in Christ” as demonstrated by the recent works of Richard Hays (2008), James Dunn (1998: 390–412), Constantine Campbell (2012), Michael Gorman (2015), and Grant Macaskill (2018). This concept is now viewed by some scholars as a key theological image in Paul’s soteriology and spirituality (Aernie 2015). Constantine Campbell concludes that union with Christ is “the web” that holds the rest of Paul’s theology together. (Campbell 2012: 442) Michael Gorman, one of the most creative interpreters of Paul states:

It is nearly impossible to engage Paul seriously today without recognizing the centrality of participation to his lived experience (“spirituality”) and his theology. Participation is not merely one aspect of Pauline theology and spirituality, or a supplement to something more fundamental; rather, it is at the very heart of Paul’s thinking and living. Pauline soteriology is inherently participatory and transformative. (2018: 181)

This new wave of research into Paul's theology with its positive assessment of the important theme of "participation in Christ" needs to be accounted for in other fields of study, such as missiology and evangelism. One should not divorce Paul's theology from his missional vocation as apostle, evangelist and church planter. It seems possible that the shape and passion of Paul's vocation as missionary evangelist was nurtured by his theology of "union with" and "participation in Christ".

This aspect of Paul's theology is crucial to understanding the nature of the gospel, as well as, Paul's view of salvation, sanctification, and the corporate functioning of the Body of Christ. It is appropriate, therefore, to discern the impact the "participation" theme would have on a theology of evangelism which is concerned with the church's witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

1.11 Limitations of the study

First, regarding evangelism, this study will focus only on critical literature from authors that have attempted an intentional contribution to the Biblical and theological structures of evangelism. There are a myriad of practical, non-academic manuals and popular works on the subject. These works will not be considered within the purview of this study. Also, methodologically, the study will not attempt to answer every question within the "flux" of evangelism. Instead, the research will limit its reach to answer the central question of how Paul's conception of "participation" can provide another lens for a theological framework of evangelism.

Second, the literature on the letters and theology of Paul the Apostle is already massive and daunting for any researcher. The literature will need to be restricted to manageable size. This will require a centering of the research on the theme of "participation in Christ". It will be necessary to leave aside all the current debates about the center of Paul's theology and about the

“new perspectives on Paul”. Even though there is a lot of current re-construction in studies of Paul, this research will not attempt its own “theology of Paul”. While it will be necessary to understand and summarize the current debates, this study will assume the significance of the theme of “participation in Christ” for Paul and build upon it. Again, this study is not interested in reconstructing Paul’s thought, but it will be an attempt to discern the theological impact of one theme, “participation in Christ”, and its significance for evangelism and mission.

Third, it is necessary for a theology of evangelism to draw some possible connections to the praxis of the church. While this research will focus mainly on the Biblical and theological structures of evangelism, the conclusions will need to be contextualized in order to be helpful to the witness of the church. With that in mind, this current study may be limited simply by the nature of the researcher. The most immediate knowledge and experience of the researcher is the struggles of the church in the “Western world”. This more subjective element will likely provide the context in which the research is made practical. Hopefully, others will be able to take the findings of the research and apply it more fully in their own contextual environment.

1.12 The Outline of the Study

It will take several divisions in this study in order to effectively answer the research questions and accomplish the stated goals. Following is a brief synopsis of each chapter and how the divisions will contribute to the overall study.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This opening chapter introduced the reader to the rationale of the study which includes the background and statement of the problem to be researched. The research questions and objectives are detailed. The need for continuing work of the “theology of evangelism” has been shown. Also, it was argued that the changes in Biblical studies, particularly in Pauline studies,

requires a fresh look at Paul's theology of participation in Christ as a possible framework for evangelism. The method for the study is described as a multi-layered process. It begins with the discovery, description, and analysis of three paradigms already in use for constructing "theologies of evangelism" in order to better understand the Biblical and theological underpinnings of each paradigm. The second methodical step is to describe and analyze Paul's theology of "participation in Christ". The third methodical step is a constructive correlation of evangelism and "participation in Christ" with the hopes of enhancing the biblical foundations of the study of evangelism.

Chapter 2. The Theo-Logic of Evangelism.

This chapter will provide a background to missiological studies in the area of evangelism and evaluate the need for further development in the theology of evangelism by looking at it through a different lens. Three paradigms of evangelism, as suggested by Meadows (Inherited-Conversionist, Emergent-Missional, and Ancient Future), will be described by interacting with representative expressions of each paradigm, and then carefully evaluated in order to focus on the Biblical and theological structures of each paradigm. The chapter will end with a critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each paradigm.

Chapter 3. Participation in Christ.

This goal of this chapter is to outline the recent surge of scholarly appreciation for Paul's theology of participation in Christ, and determine the impact this theme can have on a theology of evangelism. This chapter will begin with a summary of the state of research on this theme. Then, by using the work of Campbell and Gorman more specifically, the study will seek to discover and analyze the way "participation in Christ" impacts the gospel, the way the gospel

story is told, and how Christian life in the gospel is envisioned by Paul. All of these factors will provide the theological background in order to connect this theme of participation to evangelism.

Chapter 4. The Logic of Evangelism and Participation.

This focus of this chapter will be to correlate the work on evangelism with the findings from the previous chapter on “participation in Christ”. While keeping in mind the strengths and weaknesses of the previous paradigms of evangelism, this chapter will seek to advance the Biblical and theological logic of how the theme of “participation” effects the “evangel” (gospel), the telos (goal of evangelism), and ethos (practice of evangelism). This evaluation will serve as the basis for positive contributions to the theology of evangelism.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study.

This concluding section will summarize the points of the study of evangelism as impacted by the theme of participation in Christ. . Then, it will succinctly outline the contributions that this perspective makes to a theology of evangelism. Lastly, ideas and areas of promise for further study and development will be suggested, even though they will be outside the scope of this study.

1.13 Concluding remarks and Clarifications

This research will necessarily engage in a descriptive exercise of various approaches to evangelism studies and also the state of research in the area of “participation in Christ” in Pauline studies. However, the desired outcome of this study is to move beyond a descriptive analysis and into a creative, constructive theology that will enhance the practice of evangelism. Hence, there are several possible contributions, not specifically primary in the research questions, that will be important to sketching a full and robust picture of evangelism.

First, it is assumed that the way “the gospel” is understood has a direct correlation to how evangelism is defined, what its goals are, and how it is carried out. One of the additional goals of this study is to make this connection between “gospel” and “evangelism” more explicit through comparing several approaches to evangelism and determining the correlation between “gospel” and the theology of evangelism. In addition, the insights gained through the study of “participation in Christ” will not only effect advances in the definition, goals, and practice of evangelism, but also help nuance the way “gospel” is understood.

Second, there is often a struggle to outline what evangelism includes or excludes within the practice. As Abraham states, without a clear understanding of how to define evangelism, “we are at a loss to know what to designate as a contribution to the discussion about it.” (1989: 7) For instance, should evangelism be narrowed to the proclamation of the gospel to the non-converted or does it include some level of initiation and discipleship after conversion. Is the church’s witness counted as evangelism only when it is explicitly targeted toward conversion or is the broader social witness of the church within the sphere of evangelism? Should a robust theology account for the inward shaping of evangelistic spirituality within the witnessing community, or is evangelism just concerned with the outward results of bringing more people to conversion? Hopefully, this study will provide some clues for a more holistic look at some of these questions in order to point a clearer way forward for the practice of evangelism.

Also, evangelism has at times been connected in the past with a history of violence and coercion. This legacy has created a concern that evangelism is tainted by an imperialistic spirit. These fears are heightened even further by the postmodern reluctance to endorse a metanarrative approach such as proclaiming a gospel for everyone with the aim of conversion (Yong 2017). This is a serious challenge for any theology of evangelism. A full answer to this challenge is outside the scope of this study, however, it is hoped that some level of insight can be gleaned

from the research outcomes that will point to a more graceful witness and away from the stain of coercion and colonialism.

One clarification must be made about terminology. There has been a recovery of different theological streams that speak in different ways of “participation” in the life of God (Kärkkäinen 2004). Some traditions speak more fully about “union with Christ”. The Eastern tradition has consistently spoken of “deification” or “theosis” as connecting with the life of God through Christ and the process of spiritual salvation and transformation. Ben Blackwell (2016) has also suggested the term “Christosis” as a description of Paul’s soteriology. All of these terms are helpful in their own ways to highlight the nuances of coming to life in God through Christ. While all of these terms may be used and discussed in this study when necessary, the primary overarching term that will be used is “participation in Christ”. “Participation” will serve as the umbrella term that takes in all the nuances of the other terms. The choice of this main theme is predominately due to the nature of Paul’s own use of “in Christ” language. This language, as will be shown, suggests that the Christian life is brought into being and sustained and nurtured by participation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The realization that “participation in Christ” marks a significant theological pathway into Paul’s spirituality, and also a spirituality that Paul urges others to follow, makes this theme a good foundational framework from which to engage the topic of evangelism.

But it is necessary to begin with the description and analysis of various current frameworks for evangelism. It is this topic that will be addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2 The Theo-Logic of Evangelism

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is twofold. First, it is wise to situate the study of evangelism within the context of missiology more broadly. Missiology, like the study of evangelism, has sustained questions and attempted clarifications in response to what David Bosch calls, a time of “contemporary crisis” (1991: 4) in Christian mission due to post-colonial criticism and the process of secularization, among other things. The changes in mission studies closely coincide with the necessary re-evaluation of the foundations of evangelism. Therefore, it will be important to articulate how shifting theological foundations in the field of missiology affects the study of evangelism and vice versa.

The second purpose of this chapter is to describe paradigms of evangelism in order to understand the underlying Biblical and theological frameworks of each. This will set the stage to compare and crucially analyze the three paradigms in order to find the strengths and weaknesses of the theologies of evangelism. As stated in the previous chapter, the study will use Meadows’ “paradigmatic analysis” to organize the approach to the various theologies of evangelism. Meadows proposes three distinct paradigms of evangelism (the Inherited-Conversionist, Emergent-Missional, Ancient-Future) and, for the purposes of this study, these will be accepted as a comparative tool.

2.2 Mission and Evangelism

In the preceding chapter, it was noted that “evangelism” is a relatively new specialized area of inquiry in the theological curriculum. As Abraham (1989: 1–16) has pointed out, modern theology has been slow to adequately articulate a theology of evangelism. Critical study of evangelism has only recently picked up the pace of research due to much of the same concerns

that missiology faces. For the purposes of this study, it is relevant to point out the similar struggles of missiology and evangelism, each striving for better definition, clearer motives, and proper foundations and methodologies.

Missiology, like evangelism, as a distinct area of study is also a recent newcomer in critical theological reflection. As is often the case with new fields, there are many questions and numerous debates concerning the definitions, the methodologies, and the goals within the area of study. Stefan Paas (2016: 37) writes:

Developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century missiology is one of the most recent theological disciplines. This youthful character may be the reason why its tectonic plates are still in full movement, as demonstrated by the ongoing debate about missiology's proper object of study, its methodologies, and even the question of whether it should be called "missiology." Some regard missiology to have an interest in almost everything theological and, therefore, it is more relevant than ever. Other regard missiology as barely having a legitimate area of study, and is a by-product of colonial and imperialistic times. All this raises the issue of missiology's own identity and meaning as a theological discipline.

A sample of definitions of Missiology show the incredibly broad range of possibilities of areas to study and diverse methodologies that can be utilized. One leading missiologist, J. Verkuyl (1987: 5) defines missiology as "the study of the salvation activities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout the world geared toward bringing the kingdom of God unto existence". Andrew Walls (2002: 781–83) provides a succinct, yet broad definition of missiology as "the systematic study of all aspects of mission". Missiology, as in seen in the two examples above, is often considered a "comprehensive term" which includes "theology of mission as well as history of mission, anthropology and inter-cultural studies, mission strategy, world religions, church growth, religious demographics, and other related field of studies" (Ott, Strauss & Tennent 2010: xx). While some would want to to privilege theology, particularly

systematic theology as the home base of missiology (Anderson 2015: 3–18) others deem it proper to envision it as vastly integrative and multi-disciplinary without subordinating one kind of study to the other (Skreslet 2012: 1–19).

In addition, for the purposes of our study, it is important to point out the particular issues surrounding the relationship between mission and evangelism. Some treat the terms as virtually synonymous. For instance, one recent popular textbook in Missiology (Terry 2015), currently in a second edition, includes forty-five chapters representing the topics deemed important for the study of mission, yet it is difficult to find a thorough attempt to distinguish between evangelism and mission, giving the impression that the two terms are virtually synonymous.

Others have carved out space for differentiation between mission and evangelism, although in several different ways. For instance, in Verkuyl's foundational text, he suggests it is common to state the difference between mission and evangelism with a geographical distinction, that is, "evangelism (*evangelistiek*) has to do with the scientific study of communicating the Christian faith in Western society, while missiology centers on communicating it in the regions of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean" (1987: 9). This definition, however, tends to place western cultures at the center of mission that is directed out toward other regions of the world. This view is rarely embraced any longer.

The above examples of understanding the relationship between "mission and evangelism" are just a couple of possibilities. Bosch (1987) in a helpful essay, outlines ten different variations of understanding the relationship between "evangelism" and "mission". Six of the variants understand "evangelism" and "mission" more or less as synonyms, yet in distinct nuanced ways. The other four variations understand the two terms to point to different realities, although in nuanced ways as well. Bosch's (1991: 411–12) own approach to this matter is to resist equating evangelism and mission. He argues that mission is wider than evangelism, yet

evangelism is an “essential” and “integral” part of the overall mission of the church. Bosch connects mission and evangelism clearly in his definition:

We may then summarize evangelism as that dimension and activity of the church’s mission which, by word and deed and in the light of the particular conditions and particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives, a reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing Christ as Savior and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth; and being committed to God’s purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ. (1991: 420)

The point is that due to the close proximity of relationship between “mission” and “evangelism”, it can be safely assumed that a contribution in the area of evangelism will impact a theology of mission, and vice versa.

Another interesting intersection between “evangelism” and mission studies is the renewed interest in a “missional hermeneutic” that would support the whole enterprise of outreach into the world. For many years, the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-29 served as the biblical and theological underpinning of the church’s mission. However, after two world wars and the collapse of the colonial structure, mission as usual was not possible. It was not surprising that a step back to evaluate the biblical and theological foundations of the church’s mission and evangelism was necessary. Goheen (2014: 27) suggests that a fresh reflection on Scripture and mission is one of the urgent issues of mission studies.

In a helpful essay, M. R. Spindler (1995: 123-43) argues for the need, despite the diversity of opinions, for a layered concept of “biblical grounding” of mission which includes three kinds of questions.

1. A biblical grounding of mission consists in giving an account of the *reasons* that, on the basis of the whole Bible, make mission both possible and necessary. An answer is sought in the Bible to the question: *Why* mission?
2. A biblical grounding of mission consists in giving an account of *methods* of missionary action in and according to the Bible. An answer is sought in the Bible to the question: *How* must the church do mission?

3. A biblical grounding of mission consists, finally, in giving an account of the *essence* of mission in light of the whole biblical message. An answer is sought in the Bible to the question: *What is mission?* (126).

Some of the biblical texts and theological concepts that Spindler (127-31) points to includes: 1) Mission as being sent out (John 20:21), 2) Mission as making disciples in all nations (Matthew 28:19), 3) Mission as deliverance, emancipatory action (Luke 4:18f), and 4) Mission as witness (Acts).

Likewise, Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder (2004) make a similar attempt to ground mission in a synthesis of theological concepts that will provide a foundation for mission. They begin by noting the three strains of theological thought that furnished the underpinnings of mission renewal in the previous decades. The first important theological strain is: “Mission as the Participation in the Mission of the Triune God (*Missio Dei*)” (2004: 286–304). This strand draws upon recent trinitarian thought and the fact that Christians participate in the life of God and His mission. It reflects that God is, first of all, a missionary God and desires a people that participates in that mission. According to Bevans and Schroeder, this renewed strand is “the most promising” of the three (2004: 303).

The second important theological strand for mission, according to Bevans and Schroeder, is: “Mission as Liberating Service in the Mission of God” (2004: 305–22). This strand pulls from the witness of the gospels concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’s ministry. They state:

mission, in other words, is what it means to be the church, because to be the church means to share in the mission of Jesus, which was to preach, to serve, and to witness with his whole heart to the kingdom of God (2004: 306).

The third and final theological strand for mission, according to Bevans and Schroeder, is: “Mission as Proclamation of Jesus Christ as Universal Savior” (2004: 323–47). This strand of mission theology is particularly strong in the evangelical and Pentecostal movements because of its Christocentric focus and the absolute necessity of Christ as the universal savior. This strand

draws not only from the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18), but also from other texts that highlight the necessity of proclaiming the gospel all people.

Bevans and Schroder attempt to synthesize these three missiological strands into a workable theology of mission for the twenty-first century. They call this synthesis, “prophetic dialogue” (2004: 348–95). First, mission must be done in a dialogical fashion which points to several characteristics, such as “respect, openness, willingness to hear, attentiveness, vulnerability, hospitality, humility, and frankness” (Bevans & Schroeder 2011: 29). These characteristics are considered essential for a shift in mission from “expansion” to “engagement”. Yet, mission must also be done boldly with a prophetic voice and witness. It is incumbent that Christ’s body must “preach, demonstrate, and embody the Reign of God” (2011: 42). Bevans and Schroder summarize this synthesis this way:

The dimension of dialogue draws primarily from the *missio Dei* theology with its emphasis on the holiness of the world, cultures, religions, human experience, and context in general. Acknowledging these amazing gifts of God, we respect the dignity and freedom of human being and approach them with humility and vulnerability. The dimension of prophecy draws primarily from the Reign of God theology in speaking and acting against injustices and from Christocentric theology in proclaiming and witnessing to the truth of Jesus Christ and his vision for the future of the cosmos (2011: 112).

The above examples of renewed attempts to re-ground mission and evangelism in biblical and theological foundations are a welcomed counter to relying on natural foundations based on Christianity’s missionary success in the past (Bosch 1991: 4–6). This desire to re-ground mission in Scripture and theology beyond just the message of the Great Commission is now evident in many missiological texts. For example, large sections devoted to biblical and theological foundations can be found in the work of David Bosch (1991: 15–178), Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller (1983), and the edited volume by John Mark Terry (2015). There is also a growing emphasis on “missional theology” that connects a missional reading of Scripture with the on-going Christian witness of the church in the diverse cultural contexts in

which the church exists. This re-grounding of mission in Scriptural hermeneutics can be seen, for example, in the work of Christopher Wright (2006) , Darrel Guder (1998), Michael Goheen, (2014, 2016), George Hunsberger (2011) and John Franke (2020), just to name a few.

A return to “biblical grounding” for mission and evangelism is a positive thing. However, it must be noted that even this return to a biblical and theological foundation, is not without its challenges. First, as noted above in this cursory overview, there are multiple foundational concepts that spring from Scripture and theology – such as *Missio Dei* (from a narrative reading of Scripture) , and the kingdom of God (primarily the Gospels), or proclamation and witness (from Acts and/or from Paul). So, how does one adjudicate these multiple and different streams of theological insight into a constructive mission theology?

A second challenge that is closer to the center of this project, is the struggle to find where the letters of the Apostle Paul fit into these missional concepts. Paul’s contribution to missiology is often found in his missionary zeal and strategy that stems from his “conversion” and “call” as an apostle sent to the gentiles, but without much consideration to his theology.

This section has set the stage for the following examination of theologies of evangelism by showing the connections between mission and evangelism. Though separate they are intractably linked through the common interest of witnessing to those not yet convinced of the glory of God. In addition, just like mission theology as a whole, evangelism as a practice still has room for advancing scholarship in deeper and wider foundations from Scripture. To that end, the next section will investigate the “biblical grounding” and theological themes that have been used to undergird current theologies of evangelism. A critical evaluation of these paradigms of evangelism will then serve as informative as we approach the theology of Paul in the next chapter.

2.3 The Three Paradigms of Evangelism Suggested by Philip Meadows

This section of the research will utilize Meadows' suggestion of three "basic ingredients" that make up a theology of evangelism. These ingredients, Meadows argues, can help discern the differences between paradigms. These ingredients are:

1. The evangel – what is the gospel that we seek to communicate?
2. The telos – what is the aim or goal of evangelism?
3. The ethos – how is this accomplished and what are the practices involved?

By probing these ingredients, Meadows outlines two current paradigms (Inherited-Conversionist and Emergent-Missional) that can be discerned in evangelism theologies. He then put forward his own third way of constructing a theology of evangelism (Ancient-Future). Methodologically, an investigation of representatives of these three paradigms should provide ample resources to thoroughly uncover the underlying Biblical and theological underpinnings (theo-logic) of each paradigm.

Representative texts of each paradigm were chosen after consideration of the following factors. First, the texts under consideration need to exhibit an explicit claim to be putting forward a "theology of evangelism". In other words, the topic of evangelism in these representative texts is not a tangential topic of the text, nor is it solely a practical how-to manual for evangelism – but it involves a clear scriptural and theological attempt to advance evangelism. Second, the texts chosen for consideration need to have a clear connection to one of the three paradigms that is suggested by Meadows in order to make comparisons and evaluations possible. With this background, it is now time to begin investigating the first paradigm.

2.3.1 Inherited-Conversionist Paradigm – 9Marks

The 9Marks organization was founded by Mark Dever, who has served as Pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist church in Washington DC since 1994. In 1998, he founded The Center for Church Reform, which eventually became 9Marks. The organization describes itself on its website (“About” 2020) as an “ecclesiological think-tank” which seeks to “equip church leaders with a biblical vision and practical resources for building healthy churches”. To this end, the group produces books, articles, podcasts, and a quarterly Journal that can be accessed on their website.

Of special interest to this study, are the nine particular marks that are chosen to describe a healthy church that is striving for biblical faithfulness, of which evangelism is one of them. Here are the nine marks put forward by Dever (2013):

- Mark One: Expository Preaching
- Mark Two: Biblical theology
- Mark Three: The Gospel
- Mark Four: A biblical Understanding of Conversion
- Mark Five: A biblical Understanding of Evangelism
- Mark Six: A biblical Understanding of Church Membership
- Mark Seven: Biblical Church Discipline
- Mark Eight: A Concern for Discipleship and Growth
- Mark Nine: biblical Church Leadership

For the purposes of this study, it is important to pay close attention to Mark three, four, and five as they relate to Meadow’s Inherited-Conversionist paradigm. In addition, it will become apparent that the logic of these three Marks flows from one to the other.

The Evangel – what is the gospel that is to be communicated? This section will trace the gospel message that is outlined in the 9Marks texts with a particular eye toward the biblical and theological underpinnings for the organization’s conception of “the gospel”. This information will come from Dever’s original work on the 9 Marks, as well as two other shorter works, one by

Greg Gilbert, the other by Ray Ortland, and published as a 9Marks series, both specifically about the gospel.

Dever begins his exposition on the gospel by outlining what it is not (2013: 85–113). One can note the polemical tone from the very beginning. It is not that “we are ok”, and not “simply that God is love”, and not “simply that Jesus wants to be our friend”, and not “simply that God will renew creation”. The starting place for Dever is the awareness of our own sin. He states, “the Bible teaches that in our first parents, Adam and Eve, we have all be seduced into disobeying God”. We are therefore neither righteous nor on good terms with God” (2013: 88). Scriptures to build his case are James 2:10-11 and Romans 6:23. This leads to the conclusion that, “I am myself rightly the object of god’s wrath, of his judgment - that I deserve death, hell, separation from god, spiritual alienation from him, and even his active punishment now and forever (2013: 91). The answer to our dilemma is the death of Christ on the cross. Jesus took the punishment for our sins. Jesus’ work on the cross enacts the actuality of redemption, reconciliation and justification. ”His substitutionary, in our place death on the cross is the heart of the message.“ (2013: 98). The gospel calls for a response to this message of our need, who God is, and what Christ has done. The response is repentance which is renouncement of sin, and belief which means relying on God fully and trusting in Christ alone for salvation (2013: 100). In Gilbert’s short work in the 9marks series, he briefly entertains the question of where in the Bible should one turn to best describe the gospel. The answer for Gilbert is found in Romans 1-4, which “contains a deliberate, step-by-step expression of what Paul understood to be the good news” (2010: 27). This “systematic” approach begins by recognizing that we are accountable to God (Romans 1:18 and 1:21). The second systematic step is the problem of rebellion against God (Romans 1-3). The next step is found in Romans 3 where Jesus’s sacrificial death and his resurrection is presented as God’s solution to humanity’s sin. In addition, the end of Romans 3 and the beginning of Romans 4 (especially 3:22 and 4:5) speaks about how each one can be

included in God's salvation. Gilbert then summarizes this gospel presentation with a basic outline:

- God - who made us, and to whom we are accountable.
- Man - what is our problem? - sin.
- Christ - God's solution to this problem.
- Response - how can I be included in this salvation?

In another place Gilbert, summarizes how he thinks the gospel was shared by the first believers:

“the earliest Christians structured their declaration of the good news around a few critical truths. First, the bad news: God is your Judge, and you have sinned against him. And then the gospel: but Jesus has died so that sinners may be forgiven of their sins if they repent and believe in him” (2010: 36).

In another short volume in the 9Marks series, Ray Ortlund (2014) describes the gospel by using John 3:16. He describes the great love of God for the undeserving, those that love the darkness (by which he means everyone). He continues, “our willful denial of God is the mega-offense about all our others offenses that God challenges by his massive love in Christ” (2014: 29). God's solution is Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection. Christ's work, “fulfilled every demand of God in our place” and “atoned for our guilt”, and “satisfied the wrath of god against us” as “our substitute” (2014: 31). Our response, according to Ortlund, is to “respond to the good news by turning from ourselves and receiving Christ with the empty hands of faith” (2014: 36).

The gospel is clear within the 9Marks organization. It is about a holy God who stands as a judge over all humankind who are lost in personal sin. Yet, God was gracious and sent Jesus Christ to carry the weight of sin and God's judgment as he bore our sins on the cross. Those that repent and believe are afforded salvation.

The Telos - What is the Aim of Evangelism? In this section, the approach is to discover the aim or goal of evangelism as documented by the 9Marks organization. This question is not difficult to discover in this case, since Stiles (2014) in his book on Evangelism has a section on the topic. He begins the section in a straightforward way, “as we teach the gospel, we have an aim” (34). From Stiles perspective, having a clear aim is necessary because everyone that is addressed with the gospel is faced with one of two ends, “eternal life or eternal punishment” (34). Therefore much is at stake.

First, the aim is to persuade. Stiles chooses this word in order to counter against manipulation. It is the Holy Spirit that brings about repentance and the necessary faith. However, the role of the proclaimer is to teach the gospel and persuade the hearer of its truth.

Second, according to Stiles, the aim is to persuade people to convert and follow Jesus. Conversion is born out of repentance and faith both of which are given by God. Lawrence, another 9Marks author states, “if conversion is the result of God’s work of giving us new hearts that repent and believe the gospel, then evangelism is not a sales method” (2017: 90). Evangelism, then is “faithfully communicating an authoritative message from God, one that warns us about our very real need, whether we feel it or not” (Lawrence 2017: 91). The goal of evangelism is to be faithful and clear, so as to persuade someone of the truth of the gospel in order to bring about a response that leads to conversion, salvation and a changed life.

Also, Dever attempts to make clear that the goal of evangelism is not to have hearers make an emotional, momentary decision. Conversion is truly the “result of a supernatural, gracious act of God toward the sinner” (2013: 136). Even though the ultimate goal of evangelism is toward conversion, the proclaimer is to teach the good news of salvation and call them to repentance. Results must then be left to God.

The Ethos - How is Evangelism Accomplished and What are the Practices Involved? The purpose of this section is to describe the ethos of the way evangelism is practiced within the 9Marks organizations. Within the literature of 9Marks, several definitive terms point to the ethos, such as teaching the gospel (Stiles 2014: 26), taking opportunities to challenge people to come to faith (Stiles 2014: 83), telling everyone the good news (Dever 2013: 148), and proclaiming the gospel (Gilbert 2010: 119). This understanding points to the ethos of “**proclamation**”. As Stiles (2014: 29) puts it, “there is no evangelism without words”.

The gospel is a message that has to be shared and shared correctly and faithfully. To quote Dever, “Christianity has a specific, cognitive content” (2013: 101). That content, partially outlined above, contains some variation of 1) God as creator and judge, 2) humankind as sinful, 3) Jesus Christ as Savior and 4) a response of repentance and faith that leads to conversion and salvation. This outline, whether taken from Romans 1-4 or John 3:16, points to the cross of Jesus Christ as the center point for human salvation.

Evangelism within 9Marks is practiced as an activity that every disciple that is expected to learn and to participate. The church teaches disciples, giving them an understanding of the gospel to be shared boldly and faithfully, and the church also becomes a culture of evangelism in order to encourage everyone to become more intentional evangelists (Stiles 2014: 79–98). The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is a “commission for *all* of Jesus’s disciples” (2013: 137). While every disciple is encouraged to share the gospel with others, they are also encouraged to leave the results to God.

In summary, the 9Marks organization and its texts have exhibited the characteristics of the Inherited - Conversionist paradigm according to Meadows’ outline. The *evangel* for this group is found most clearly in places like Romans 1-4, which, according to them, depicts the sinfulness of each person. However, Jesus Christ through his death of the cross is the answer to this dilemma, giving personal salvation to anyone who believes the gospel and repents of their sins.

The *telos*, or goal, of evangelism in this paradigm is conversion where one is persuaded to respond to Christ in faith. The *ethos* is proclamation. The gospel is communicated through words – the telling of the gospel so that others will be persuaded to respond.

2.3.2 The Emergent-Missional Paradigm – William Abraham

This section will investigate the work of William Abraham as representative of the Emergent-Missional paradigm of evangelism. Abraham has taught for a number of years at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. His breadth of contributions include work in areas of evangelism and mission, philosophical theology, and Wesleyan theology. His groundbreaking book (1989) was well received and continues to serve as a foundational text in evangelism studies. As mentioned in the introduction, Abraham sees this work as an attempt to rectify the neglect of evangelism as a topic of study within modern critical theology (1989: 1–16).

This section will trace the theology of evangelism in Abraham's work using Meadow's paradigms as a guide. In addition, the three basic ingredients suggested by Meadows, (*evangel*, *telos*, and *ethos*) will be used to flesh out the biblical and theological underpinnings of Abraham's work.

The Evangel - what is the gospel that is to be communicated? It is helpful that Abraham has a whole chapter on the gospel in his book on evangelism. However, the surprise comes in the first sentence of the chapter when he states that the beginnings of a coherent evangelism must start with “eschatology” (1989: 17–39). He quickly qualifies his insistence on the importance of eschatology by linking the concept to the “reign of God“. Abraham is fully aware of the debate on eschatology. But Abraham affirms that eschatology, rightly understood, is not fully about the

“last things” or “end times”. For the earliest Christians, eschatology was about experiencing God breaking into history through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This experience of God through Christ was none other than the kingdom of God breaking into this world. The gospel narratives give us the evidence, according to Abraham, that “Jesus and the disciples who gathered around him were convinced that the reign of God had already dawned” (1989: 24).

Abraham is also aware of the contested history of thought on the kingdom of God. He concisely reviews the work of Albert Schweitzer and Johannes Weiss, that argued for the position that Jesus and the earliest followers expected the Kingdom of God, yet it never materialized. Hence, the Kingdom of God is yet in the future. Abraham then mentions the “realized eschatology” of C. H. Dodd where the Kingdom was fully present in the life and ministry of Jesus. However, Abraham opts for a third position, one that he calls a “synthesis of these two positions” (1989: 21–22). He calls attention to the work of George Eldon Ladd (Abraham 1989: 22; Ladd 1959) who argued for a present and active Kingdom, yet one that will be made fully manifest at the end of history.

It is this version of the Kingdom, that was announced by Jesus, and made available by the Spirit, that Abraham lifts up for great theological promise. As Abraham closes the chapter on the gospel, he emphasizes the importance of the Kingdom of God in the spread of the gospel by the earliest Christians. They believed in God’s activity in their midst through the ministry of Jesus. This activity continued in the early community through signs and wonders that pointed to the reign of God. This inspiring activity of God is the key to the quick spread of the gospel we find in the New Testament. Abraham states,

evangelism was rooted in a corporate experience of the rule of God that provided not only the psychological strength and support that was clearly needed in a hostile environment but that also signified that active presence of God in their midst (1989: 38).

It is this “dynamic rule of God” that “evangelism should be housed very firmly within”, according to Abraham (1989: 18).

So what is the gospel for Abraham? It is the “message being proclaimed: the coming rule of God” (1989: 59). This dynamic reign of God is available for those who respond with repentance and faith. In another article on evangelism, Abraham describes it this way:

The claim of the church is that God has come to us uniquely to establish his rule in and through Jesus Christ; what began there by the work of the Holy Spirit continues in the world today through the work of the same Spirit; in God’s own time, that word will be brought to a fitting consummation. This is the heart of the gospel. (1994: 121)

The Telos - What is the goal of evangelism? Abraham continues his work by explaining the varied visions on offer that point to a “telos” or goal of evangelism and then outlines his own contribution toward a new definition and focus (1989: 92–115). Some contributors to evangelism point to church planting and growth. Some have pointed to proclamation and converting others to Christianity as the end goal. Abraham also highlights the role of “witness” and “discipleship” as common conceptions of evangelism. Abraham, however, sees a problem with a singular focus whether it be proclamation, church planting, conversion, witness, or discipleship. The problem is that the drive for simplicity negates the breadth of evangelism as it seeks to help people encounter the dynamic kingdom of God. Abraham’s proposal does not seek to negate each of these emphases such as proclamation, conversion, church planting, witness, and discipleship. Instead, he seeks to “draw together the scattered insights available into a unified, coherent whole” of evangelism (1989: 113).

This leads Abraham to conceive of evangelism as “that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time” (1989: 95). The goal of evangelism, for Abraham, is introducing and establishing new believers in the

eschatological rule of God. This goal moves a person toward life in the Kingdom, which will involve instruction, experiences, rites, and other mechanisms of learning a new way of living. This change in the goal of evangelism from conversion, for instance, to “life in the kingdom” has the advantage of pulling together conceptions of evangelism that has been separated in the past. For instance, Abraham desires to connect the beginning of the Christian life (conversion) and first steps of growth in the faith (discipleship), all as part of evangelism. In addition, new converts are not just connected to the mystical kingdom of God, but must be connected to the physical community of the Kingdom, the church. In these ways and others, Abraham hopes to expand the horizons of evangelism, yet still keeping the parameters clear enough to promote further research and better practice.

The Ethos – How is Evangelism Accomplished and What Practices are Involved? A change of focus is necessary, in Abraham’s opinion, to move evangelism beyond just a singular concept such as making converts, or bearing witness, or making disciples. There needs to be an assimilating idea that is large enough to combat reductionism, yet at the same time be clear enough to give definition to what is and isn’t evangelism. For Abraham, the ethos of evangelism is “the intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time” (1989: 95).

This ethos of “initiation” into the kingdom of God requires at least four agents (1989: 103–104). The first is the Triune God that creates human life, provides new life in Christ, and enables full life in the Kingdom. Second, is the agency of the church where life in the Kingdom is nurtured and the work of evangelism is embodied. Third, evangelists are those charged with proclaiming the gospel and overseeing the nurture of new believers. The last agent is the person or persons evangelized, whose responsibility it is to listen to the Spirit and respond to the life of discipleship.

In a particular way, initiation requires the church in this process. Abraham attempts to articulate and emphasize the connection between initiation into the Kingdom of God, and initiation into the community of the Kingdom, the church. Abraham, however, hopes to change the focus of initiation away from a particular church tradition or a particular organization and back toward life in the Kingdom that is brought about by Christ and the Holy Spirit. However, “initiation” will not only include baptism, but also other “appropriate instruction, experiences, rites, and forms” (1989: 96) provided by the church that bring new believers into the moral tradition of the kingdom.

In summary, Abraham has presented an example of what Meadows calls the emergent-missional paradigm of evangelism. The *evangel* is the good news of the Kingdom of God, the proclamation that God’s reign has begun in and through Jesus Christ. The *telos*, or goal of evangelism, is not limited to an event such as conversion, but to introducing new believers to life in Christ and establishing them in a new life of discipleship in God’s kingdom. The *ethos* of evangelism is captured in what Abraham calls “initiation”. The evangelists and the church body play a meaningful role in establishing new believers in the moral traditions of the kingdom through instruction and experiences that ground them in their new life.

2.3.3 The Ancient-Future Paradigm – Philip Meadows

This study is using the paradigms suggested by Philip Meadows in order to compare theologies of evangelism. Meadows currently serves as a Professor of Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary in the U.S.A. Meadows attempts to make sense of the “bewildering array of approaches” (2011: 3) in evangelism by using a paradigmatic analysis. The three paradigms of Meadows are 1) the Inherited-Conversionist Paradigm, 2) the Emerging-Missional Paradigm, and 3) The Ancient-Future Paradigm. For the purposes of this present study the texts of

9Marks, an organization in the U.S.A., is studied as part of the first paradigm; the works of William Abraham is used to study the second paradigm, and Meadows' own theology of evangelism is studied for the third paradigm. It is now time to look at this third paradigm, Meadow's own theological understanding of evangelism.

The Evangel - what is the gospel that is to be communicated? Meadows is clear from the beginning that his construction of evangelism is built on the Wesleyan tradition. He argues that the heart of the *evangel* of the tradition is "holy love" (8-10). This root of understanding then becomes basis for Meadow's use of the image of "divine embrace". He argues that the evangel from a Wesleyan perspective is best understood as "being caught up and transformed by the saving embrace of God" (2011: 8), not allowed to collapse either into "personal salvation" or the theme "kingdom of God". He draws on Robert Webber's book, *The Divine Embrace* (2006) which points to a more primitivist reading of Wesley, one that revives the early church's understanding of the mystical union with God through His embrace. Meadows also mentions the influence of Albert Outler (1984), who asserted the prominence of the theme of "participation in God" in Wesley's theology.

This gospel of holy love and divine embrace is described by Meadows in four movements that make up the evangel. First, it is predicated on the "loving embrace of God, a vision of the possibility of constant communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit. This vision is described in several ways by Meadows, such as union with God, participation, and partaking of the divine nature. In Meadows' words, "the gospel begins with the fact that we were made for the divine embrace" (2011: 11).

The second movement is the recognition of a broken embrace (2011: 13-14). The full gospel message contains the awareness of sin that mars the image of God in humanity. This broken embrace, caused by human hearts of idolatry which is set on "false loves" and

attachments to sinful desires, leads to a state of “spiritual sleep”. God, however, responds to this brokenness with the gift of “prevenient grace” which “imparts within all people a rudimentary state of spiritual sensitivity” (2011: 13).

Prevenient grace makes the path possible for the third movement, which is the renewing of the embrace of God. God takes the initiative through his saving grace to “open spiritual eyes” and “draw human hearts” back to the embrace. People are enabled by grace to respond by repentance which then gives them a spiritual awakening. This awakening results in justification and sanctification of the believer, first to renew our union with God and then to renew and transform human nature through communion with God. Meadows describes this third movement of the evangel as:

evangelical conversion, experienced at the first moment of being seized by justifying and sanctifying grace, is what it means to be born again in the arms of God, and adopted in his family. But this is merely salvation begun (2011: 15).

This brings the fourth and final movement of the gospel, according to Meadows (2011: 15–17), which is a perfecting embrace, or salvation to the uttermost. This occurs through the ongoing constant fellowship with the Triune God by which He continues to breathe grace over the human soul. This grace draws the believer out of sin and restless waywardness and into a new spiritual world where lives are restored to the diving embrace in which all humanity is called.

The Telos - What is the goal of evangelism? For Meadows, the goal of evangelism is bigger than a momentary decision that leads to a conversion experience (2011: 17–22). The goal of evangelism is that people will embark on a journey. This journey begins with union in God and continues through ongoing communion with God. The aim is not to make converts, but to “awaken souls”, who are made ready to passionately respond to all the possibilities of life lived in communion with God.

This journey starts and finishes within the image of God's saving embrace. In this embrace, the believer is invited into a life of repentance where one is constantly giving up anything and everything that is contrary to life in God. This is where God's holy love heals seekers from the addictions to worldly things and sinful patterns and invites the believer to learn how to live in the light of God's continued presence.

This new life is none other than the life humanity was created for from the beginning – the fulness of life as God designed it. If this is the goal then, “the gospel proclaimed is not the conversion of new birth as such, but the full salvation of perfect love” (2011: 19). Put another way, Meadows states, “the experience of evangelical conversion is actively sought, but only as the beginning of life in union and communion with God, filled with the ultimate hope of perfection in love” (2011: 19). Here we see Meadows' construction of the gospel of God's “holy love” that leads toward the goal of evangelism as “communion with God”.

The Ethos - Who is involved and what are the practices of evangelism? Meadows describes evangelism as “the activity of leading people into the divine embrace so that they may journey into the promises of union and communion with God” (2011: 22). This activity involves “human hands of God” whom will show love and mercy to others by drawing them into the “loving embrace of the community” (2011: 23), where spiritual transformation happens. Meadows characterizes this *ethos* as “spiritual direction”.

This kind of *ethos* of evangelism is found, according to Meadows, in the fellowship of early Methodism where believers were equipped and held accountable for living and sharing their faith. Also the small group structure of early Methodism was a vital part of spiritual direction, as members continued on the path of transformation. This ongoing transformation that happens best in corporate spiritual direction becomes the force for evangelism. Meadows states,

the most important form of equipping for evangelism, therefore, is having the presence and power of God at work in the hearts and lives of Christian disciples. Evangelism flows from a life transforming union and communion with God that takes flesh in costly discipleship as the outreach of holy love in the world (2011: 24).

Thus, the early Methodist structures of societies, class meetings, and other small groups not only served the spiritual growth of individual believers, but becomes a way to invite other seekers into the “common goal of entering and deepening the divine embrace” (2011: 26) in the community of faith.

In summary, Meadows’ presentation of the Ancient – Future Paradigm begins with a *evangel* of the holy love of God. The love of God desires to embrace humankind and bring everyone into a transforming life of fellowship. Thus, the *telos*, or goal of evangelism is to bring seekers into the divine embrace, a journey of entering and deepening communion with God. This is possible when a cooperate body is equipped and disciplined to invite other to join with them on the journey. Thus, the *ethos* of evangelism is corporate spiritual direction, were seekers join with fellow travelers toward perfect communion with God.

2.4 Evaluation of the Three Paradigms

The purpose of this chapter has been to describe different approaches to a theology of evangelism in order to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. In order to do so, this study has utilized the evangelistic paradigms described in the work of Philip Meadows as a tool to evaluate the differences between approaches. Also, the study has accepted the use of Meadows’ “three basic ingredients” (the *evangel*, the *telos*, and the *ethos*) as a way to critically examine the theological structure of the different paradigms. To show the logic of the paradigms and ingredients, Meadows states:

Setting out a paradigm in this way can immediately help us account for why there are so many variations in the theology and practice of evangelism. First, there are as many approaches as there are ways to interpret the narrative of Scripture, and the promises of the gospel. Second, there are as many ways to conceive the purpose of evangelism, as there are narratives to support them. And, third, there are as many different emphases in practice as there are purposes and promises to be fulfilled (2011: 4).

In order to better utilize Meadows' "three ingredients", they have been expanded into further sub-questions to help understand and evaluate the paradigms. The ingredients and additional probing questions are:

- The *evangel* – what is the gospel that we seek to communicate?

What Scriptures or themes are primarily used to describe the gospel?

How does the gospel relate to the *Missio Dei*?

How does the gospel relate to soteriology?

How is the gospel responded to and how does it hold promise for those that do respond?

- The *telos* – what is the aim or goal of evangelism?

Is the goal conversion, initiation, discipleship or something else?

Is the goal achieved at a moment in time or it is progressive?

Is there one goal or multiple goals of evangelism?

How do you know if/when the goal is achieved?

- The *ethos* – how is this accomplished and what are the practices involved?

What human actions are contributive to evangelism and who performs them?

What role does the God's grace through the active work of the Spirit play?

What is the role of the church or individuals within the church?

What is the connection between evangelism and the church's social witness?

Now it is time to briefly summarize and evaluate each paradigm according to the selected texts that represent that paradigm.

The Inherited – Conversionist Paradigm – (9Marks) – Critique Selected texts on evangelism from the 9Marks organization were used as representative texts of this paradigm. The texts fit well within the expectation of Meadows’ paradigmatic structure. For instance, the *evangel*, the gospel was clearly presented in the texts as personal salvation from sin. The *telos*, or goal of evangelism, was demonstrably a moment of conversion where one responded to the gospel in faith and received forgiveness of sin. In addition, the *ethos* is “proclamation”, communicating the plan of salvation to others, through words, in order to persuade them of the truth of the gospel.

It should be stated that this outline of evangelism is extremely popular and evident in many circles, especially protestant evangelical and Pentecostal traditions. As Meadows states, “the most common images of evangelism tend to be variations of this paradigm” (2011: 5). It is not without its strengths. First, there tends to be a passion that accompanies this approach in order to rescue unbelievers from their sin-bound lives. It takes evangelism seriously, sometimes through gifted evangelists, but also usually through attempts to motivate and equip every congregant to be able to tell the gospel story to others. Bevans and Schroeder (2004) also recognize this similar strength in the broader missionary strand they call, “mission as proclamation of Jesus Christ as universal savior”. They write:

“The greatest advantage of this strain of missionary theology is to be found in its power to motivate Christians to undertake explicit evangelizing and cross-cultural missionary work. It is not an accident that the majority of mission-oriented congregations and cross-cultural missionaries are Christians who belong to Evangelical or Pentecostal churches – and that these are the churches which are growing most rapidly today. (2004: 346)

However, this paradigm with its Christological focus and soteriological emphasis, is not without its problems. First, as Meadows mentions, this paradigm can be caught “in its captivity to the individualist bent of modernity” (2011: 5). If the evangel is seen predominantly as personal salvation with forgiveness of sins in this life and a promise of eternal life in the future, it creates a very individualized experience of salvation that can become a “private spirituality”. This kind of gospel with the goal of conversion can be lacking any real theological connection to an ecclesial community of faith, other than an option role for encouragement and fellowship. Also, Trinitarian perspectives are weakly developed in this paradigm. Jesus functions as Savior in the sense of dying on the cross for sins. One believes, confesses, repents and puts faith in Christ for salvation. The Holy Spirit is the one who finally convinces one of the need of a Savior. However, there appears to be no larger concept of the *Missio Dei*, other than God preparing a way for individuals to gain salvation.

In addition, the paradigm as expressed in the texts we examined has little theological mechanisms to connect conversion to discipleship. If the goal of evangelism is to persuade people toward conversion as a distinct event, then discipleship can be optional. One can enter salvation without the summons and expectation of deeper transformation. If conversion is the goal, then salvation is too easily perceived as a static state of forgiveness, with little accounting of the rich biblical themes of salvation as life-giving participation in the Triune God, with the ever-increasing capacity for ongoing communion and transformation.

This paradigm can be criticized as a theologically truncated view of evangelism and mission. This does not mean that there is no worth in the clear views it maintains, it simply is a way for noting that the gospel and evangelistic witness is truncated to the lowest theological denominator. The gospel gets no bigger than God sending Jesus to save us from personal sins, evangelism seeks only to convert individuals, and the call to evangelism is personal faith sharing.

But, for the purposes of this study, the biblical and theological structure must also be examined. In the texts we have used from 9Marks, it is clear the biblical foundation for evangelism comes from Romans 1-4. It was expressed in the basic outline of 1) God, the righteous Creator, 2) Man, created yet sinful, 3) Christ, the solution to sin, and 4) Response, the way toward personal salvation through Christ. For Gilbert, Romans 1-4 “contains a deliberate, step by step expression of what Paul understood to be the good news” (2010: 27).

However, a growing consensus of scholars no longer hold that Romans is simply a systematic presentation of Paul’s gospel as if it was unattached to concrete situations in Rome. As K. Donfried states in the introduction to the edited volume, *The Roman Debate*, “without question a consensus has been reached that Romans is addressed to the Christian community in Rome which finds itself in a particular historical situation” (2001: lxix). Scot McKnight (2019) has suggested that all of Romans, especially 1-4 needs to be read in context of the concrete, historical, congregational context of Romans 14-15. McKnight’s suggestion is that we should learn to “read Romans backwards” in order to understand this situational impact of the whole of the letter. This means that the attempt of Gilbert and the 9Marks texts to read Romans 1-4 as a straightforward presentation of the gospel for all times, is over-simplified and is prone to proof-texting.

The Emergent – Missional Paradigm (Abraham) Critique William Abraham’s work on evangelism is used in this study as a representative for this paradigm. Abraham’s theological contributions, though launched decades ago, continues to be a welcomed and profound advance to the study of evangelism. He shifted the foundation of evangelism toward the announcement of the kingdom of God which is already present, yet still awaiting final fulfillment. The goal, or *telos*, of evangelism is not just a moment of conversion, but the goal of new life in the kingdom. This is accomplished through understanding the *ethos* of evangelism as “initiation” into the

kingdom, where the role of the evangelists is to equip the congregation to witness, the baptize, then catechize the new believer into kingdom life.

There is much to appreciate in Abraham's contribution. First, it is more theologically advanced in the use of the theme of the Kingdom of God. Scholars have long suggested that this is a major theme of the ministry of Jesus. Also, Abraham argues convincingly that the goal of evangelism must be larger than conversion in order to shift the theological tide away from the gulf between evangelism and a life of discipleship. These points are certainly worth their weight in a theology of evangelism.

However, there is room for criticism of Abraham's work. First, there is no doubt that the Kingdom of God is a major theme in the ministry of Jesus. But to use this one concept as shorthand for everything one should say about the gospel may be too distilled. Scott Jones (2019: 16–24) argues that Abraham's Kingdom of God concept is built on too narrow of a Biblical base, and does not account for enough of the biblical story. Because of this, Jones suggests that "initiation into the Kingdom of God" can be too vague of a concept to be helpful. Also, Abraham strongly suggests that it is the church that it involved in initiation as agents, in acts such as baptism, moral instruction, and catechism. Jones correctly points out that Abraham lacks any argument of how "initiation into the kingdom" correlates with the "the church". There are arguments to be made, no doubt, for how these relate, but it is unclear how Abraham understands them. So, to simply make "initiation into the Kingdom of God" part of the definition of evangelism would need further clarification.

It is understandable that Abraham has chosen "the kingdom of God" as the theological concept to capture the essence of the gospel because it is prevalent in the Gospels. But that is also part of the criticism. For instance, a cursory reading of Abraham's chapter on, *The Gospel*, (1989: 17–39) helps to better understand the biblical grounding of his concepts. Abraham has over fifty references to Matthew, Mark, or Luke in this chapter. Acts is mentioned twice. The

only other scripture reference is from Micah. One must ask, why references from just the gospels? Of course, the theme of “kingdom of God” is found there. But, how should we read Paul’s missionary efforts and his letters? Is Abraham’s focus on the Kingdom of God too narrow to fully encompass Paul’s missionary work and his theology?

The Ancient – Future Paradigm – (Meadows) Critique Phillip Meadows articulated the paradigmatic framework that this project has utilized in order to differentiate and evaluate theologies of evangelism. In addition, he offered his own theological construction for evangelism, what he calls, the Ancient – Future Paradigm. He envisions the correct starting place to be the *evangel* the gospel of the “holy love” of God that invites all humankind into the “saving embrace”. The goal, or *telos* of this paradigm is “communion with God”. Also, the *ethos* of evangelism is best conceived, according to Meadows, as “spiritual direction” that takes place in the atmosphere of a disciplined fellowship of believers and intentional small groups that seek to be transformed through on-going communion with God.

This paradigm has much to celebrate. First, it breathes with spiritual life that comes from the firm articulation of communion and transformation with the living God. It effectively overcomes the theological stagnation that can accompany an evangelistic vision constructed of predominately a presentation of facts that leads to a one-time response of conversion. Also, the gap between response to the gospel and a life of discipleship is effectively closed such that conversion, discipleship, and transformation is connected in a meaningful way. In addition, the Christian community is drawn into the joy of leading seekers into the fulness of following Christ, which develops a congregational spirituality of hospitality and witness.

However, there are some criticisms that should be raised to this theology of evangelism offered by Meadows. The first, and most obvious, is that it is clearly written *from* a Wesleyan perspective and *for* the Wesleyan tradition to consider. Meadows does not obscure this fact at

all. He is up front and clear that his construction relies on Wesleyan history and theology (2011: 27–30). This does not make his outcomes incorrect; it simply suggests limitations of how other traditions might draw upon it as a theological resource.

Even closer to the concerns of this project, it is rather unfortunate how Meadow's portrayal of "holy love" as the center of the "single gospel message" is given sparse support (2011: 10–17). In fact, there are no overt references to Scripture in the entire construction of Meadows argument. The biblical grounding is, no doubt, in the footnotes where he references the works of John and Charles Wesley. It makes clearer sense when Meadows begins by stating that he is weaving together "the language of John and Charles" (Wesley), to make his case. However, this way of setting up the theological construction of the paradigm seems like a lost opportunity. Not only does it limit the draw of Meadows' insights for other traditions, but it is also a missed opportunity to connect the value of Wesleyan insights to scriptural foundations where love, union, communion, participation, and transformation are located.

2.5 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was two-fold. First, connections between mission and evangelism were discussed in order to place evangelism within the broader field of missiology. Second, the paradigmatic structure of Phillip Meadows was utilized in order to describe and evaluate three paradigms of evangelism. The basic concern was to discover the biblical and theological logic that undergirds current theologies of evangelism.

This process has led to two firm conclusions. First, it is clear that the biblical and theological framework that is used to articulate the gospel (*evangel*) sets the course for the rest of the theology of evangelism. Whether the highlight of the gospel is thought of in terms of individual salvation, the kingdom of god, or God's holy love, this starting point makes the difference of how the rest of evangelism is envisioned.

Second, each of the three paradigms has something of value to offer. The Inherited-Conversionist paradigm ensures that conversion is taken seriously and that following Jesus Christ begins with a decisive beginning point. The Emergent-Missional paradigm points clearly to the theologically profound good news of the Kingdom of God that is presented vividly in Jesus and his ministry. And the Ancient-Future paradigm brings a fresh vision of life in union with God that is open to seekers and believers alike, drawing them ever deeper into the holy love of God.

Based on these insights, it is clear that various points of view on evangelism are possible, each drawing on different biblical and theological lenses to see the gospel and how it is good news to the world. One does not have to throw out all of the insights gained from the three paradigms in order to attempt to see new things about evangelism. However, on the other hand, it is beneficial to stay abreast of new biblical and theological insights that can impact a theology of evangelism. For instance, none of the paradigms reviewed in the chapter make full use of Paul's theology of participation in Christ. Meadows' construction has a good number of traces of participation language, yet fails to connect it thoroughly to clear biblical foundations. In addition, the theme of participation in Christ in Paul's theology is yet to be fully appreciated in mission theology as a whole.

It is now time to investigate the theme of "participation in Christ" as articulated in Paul's theology in order to determine the impact it may have on evangelism and mission. This is the topic to which we turn in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Participation in Christ

3.1 Introduction

Up to this point, this project has argued that a fresh approach to a theology of evangelism is needed. In addition, it has been suggested that a biblical grounding is a right place to start the constructive theological work that goes into a workable paradigm for mission and evangelism. Possibly one could construct an idea of evangelism without a biblical and theological foundation – but then evangelism would be more easily hijacked for any purpose that one desired. The purpose of evangelism could become totally untethered from the foundations of biblical and theological teaching and made completely instrumental to various goals, such as growing a church or denomination without regard to how it is accomplished. These unharnessed purposes and goals would surely provide unsatisfactory long-term results, and could, at worst, once again promote coercive and deceptive methods that betray the goodness of the gospel.

However, the approach suggested in this project not only recognizes the need for adequate biblical and theological foundations, but also supports the ongoing critical reflection that is necessary to adapt and grow as a creative practice of the church. Not only does the church find itself in rapidly changing contexts that require critical reflection, but also the disciplines of New Testament study and theology are constantly moving as well. New developments and approaches in the study of Scripture and theology should be accounted for in mission and evangelism studies. For instance, the “New Perspective” on Paul has had enormous impact on many aspects of understanding the background of Paul’s thought and his theology (Dunn 2008). Another example would be the revival of trinitarian theology that helped shape recent advancements in missiological thought, such as the concept of *mission Dei* (Ott et al. 2010: 55–78).

Consequently, this research project is based on tracing some of the current biblical and theological foundations for evangelism and then advancing new insights from Pauline theology. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight key insights from the recent discussion of Paul's emphasis on "participation in Christ" in order to discern the usefulness of this theme for a theology of evangelism. As suggested in Chapter One of this project, numerous scholars have endorsed the importance of the participation theme in Paul. The literature continues to grow on the topic. It is not necessary to trace all the history and development of this theme here, because that has already been helpfully done elsewhere (Macaskill 2018: 17–41; Campbell 2012: 31–64). Because of the enormity of the current literature on participation, it will be necessary to focus on select key works that will provide a window into the possibilities of this theme as it relates to mission and evangelism.

For this purpose, the helpful work of Constantine Campbell and Michael Gorman will serve as the primary guides into Paul's theology of participation. Both Campbell and Gorman are New Testament scholars that have published major contributions on the subject.

3.2 Union with Christ – Constantine Campbell

Campbell's (2012) work is a substantial study on the theme of union with Christ in the letters of the Apostle Paul. There are several reasons that Campbell's work provides a great starting point for the inquiry of Paul's thought on union and participation with Christ. First, Campbell provides a helpful summary of the scholars that have contributed to the discussion on this topic all the way from Adolf Deissmann who wrote in the early 1900's, to the recent work of Michael Gorman. This section is helpful to better see the scope of the discussion and to understand how the "Pauline theme of union with Christ has risen to prominence in the current world of New Testament scholarship" (2012: 31).

Second, Campbell's book begins with a substantial exegetical section on the Pauline material, particularly around the Pauline idioms of *εν Χριστω* (in Christ), *εις Χριστον* (into Christ), *συν Χριστω* (with Christ), and *δια Χριστου* (through Christ) (67-266). Each occurrence of these idioms is presented with exegetical detail in order to determine the workings of each preposition in relation to Christ. The exegetical section also includes a chapter on "metaphors" that Paul utilizes that connects with union and participation. Campbell includes the "body of Christ", the "temple" or "building of God", the "bride of Christ", and the putting on language of "clothing" in his investigation of metaphors that contain "union with Christ" thinking (2012: 267–324).

A third major positive of Campbell's investigation is found in the theological section (2012: 327–444) that attempts to connect the exegetical work on Paul's union language with broader theological themes found in Paul. For instance, Campbell highlights the connections between "union with Christ" and important themes such as, the "work of Christ", the "Trinity", "justification", and "Christian living".

Both of these major parts of this work, the exegetical section and the wider theological section, sets the stage for Campbell's definition of "union with Christ" and the implications for understanding Paul's theology. But before he offers a definition, he lays out a summary description of the vast "web of connections" between Paul's use of "in Christ" and "union" language and his overall theology. The important observations are listed below with succinct quotes from Campbell:

1. Location – "union with Christ involves our location within the realm of Christ.

Believers are situated under his rule, and our lives are conducted within the spiritual sphere of his dominion" (2012: 408).

2. Identification – “union with Christ involves the identification of believers with Christ. Situated in the realm of his rule, believer’s identity is shaped by the belonging to Christ, the Second Adam” (2012: 408).
3. Participation – “union with Christ involves the participation of believers in the events of Christ’s narrative, including his death and burial, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. Believers are described as having died with Christ, having been raised with him, and so forth, such that the significance of these events pertain to us as it pertains to him” (2012: 408).
4. Incorporation – “union with Christ also involves the incorporation of believers into his body, temple, church and building. Believers are grafted into a community that is founded, shaped, and directed by Christ. Their belonging to this Christ-community affects how they are to live in a way that honors the body. Thus, belonging to Christ means that we belong to one another” (2012: 409).
5. Instrumentality – “union with Christ involves the way in which he effects the will of God toward us. Christ is the instrument of God’s agency for the benefit of humanity, and this role is largely mediatorial. Thus, one aspect of our union with Christ is that it enables us to partake in the blessings of God. Apart from Christ, we are without God and without his acts toward us” (2012: 409).
6. Trinity – “union with Christ involves the inner life of the Trinity. It refers to the Father’s relationship to the Son, and their union in the Spirit; it does not merely pertain to the relationship of believers to Christ. The Father’s will is enacted through the Son, by the Spirit, for the glory of Christs and benefit of humanity. This represents the other side of the mediatorial function of union with Christ; God the Father acts toward humanity through the Son and by virtue of his union with him” (2012: 409).

7. Union – “union with Christ involves an actual spiritual union with him. Believers are described as being ‘in’ Christ and he being in them such that there is a mutual indwelling by the Spirit” (2012: 410).
8. Eschatology – “union with Christ has eschatological dimensions. This is implicit through Paul’s references to the realm of Christ and participation in Christ’s resurrection in particular. The realm of Christ is an eschatological entity in which the future age of righteousness has broken into the present world, set in opposition to the realm of sin and death” (2012: 410).
9. Spiritual Reality – “union with Christ is a spiritual *reality*. It is not merely metaphorical, being understood as a poignant way in which to depict ‘relationship with Christ’ or some other such notion. While Paul employs various corporate metaphors – which we have explored at length – in his discussion of church and union with Christ, these have always pointed to a concrete referent” (2012: 411–412).

These nine observations, distilled by Campbell from detailed exegetical and theological work, is extremely helpful to see the breadth and depth of Paul’s theology of union and participation. Consequently, as will be outlined in more detail in the following chapter, union and participation in Paul forms the webbing that interlocks Paul’s gospel, his soteriology, and his ecclesiology. The language of being “in Christ” captures not only the status of a believer, but describes the mechanism that enables all the benefits of Christ’s work to flow into a believer’s life. It includes the transforming change from a kingdom of darkness to new life in Christ, as well as, incorporation into a new people of God, the church. Thus, participation language lies at the heart of what evangelism sets out to accomplish, namely, bringing people to new life in Christ and positioning them in the Body of Christ.

In addition, Campbell acknowledges that such sweeping observations of how Paul uses this kind of terminology makes defining these concepts extremely difficult to capture fully.

Instead of giving a narrow and concise definition of Paul's theology of participation, Campbell argues that the evidence itself points to the fact that a single term (either mysticism, union, or participation) cannot fully capture Paul's theology on this theme. Campbell, instead, proposes four terms that more fully develop Paul's thought on our relationship to Christ.

These four terms are:

- Union – this term captures the union that is created by faith between believers and Christ. It also functions to name the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son and Spirit and the aspect of Christ indwelling his people, his bride, his body.
- Participation – this term best captures the participation of believers in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By connecting to these narrative events of Christ's life, a believer follows the pattern of dying to sin, being raised to new life, and living a transformed existence marked by the way of Christ.
- Identification – this term reflects the location of believers within the realm of Christ's lordship and their allegiance to the kingdom of God through Christ.
- Incorporation – this term best describes the corporate dimensions of inclusion into the people of God by becoming members of Christ's body. (2012: 412–414)

For Campbell, “these four terms function as umbrella concepts, covering the full spectrum of Pauline language, ideas, and themes that are bound up with the metatheme of union with Christ” (2012: 413). It will suffice to suggest at this point, that these thematic concepts are the fabric of the gospel that Paul proclaims. And if they are the fabric of the gospel, then it places Paul's theology of union and participation at the forefront for consideration as the fabric of a theology of witness and evangelism. This will be argued more directly in the next chapter.

But for now, it is helpful to look at another voice that makes even more direct connection between Paul's theology of participation and mission. Another New Testament scholar, Michael

Gorman, has not only produced an abundance of literature on Paul's participation theology, but has also sketched some possibilities of how these themes connect with the mission of the church.

3.3 Participation and Mission – Michael J. Gorman

Michael Gorman is currently the Raymond E. Brown Professor of Biblical Studies and Theology at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A. He has written extensively on the Pauline letters and theology. The value of Gorman's work is appreciated because of his detailed exegetical work on Paul's letters and the ability to connect the exegesis with broader theological concepts especially in relation to participatory elements in Paul's thought. In addition, he has sketched some significant ways that the participation theme in Paul connects with ecclesiology and the church's mission. Consequently, Gorman's work is of significant value for this project.

Before tracing the details of Gorman's arguments, it may be helpful to state the heart of the matter up front. He summarizes the importance of the theme of participation this way:

It is nearly impossible to engage Paul seriously today without recognizing the centrality of participation to his lived experience ("spirituality") and his theology. Participation is not merely one aspect of Pauline theology and spirituality, or a supplement to something more fundamental; rather, it is at the very heart of Paul's thinking and living. Pauline soteriology (theology of salvation) is inherently participatory and transformative. (2015: xviii)

For Gorman, participation is connected to virtually everything Paul believes, lives, and proclaims to others. It serves a central place in Paul's understanding of how the gospel works to bring salvation. In order to grasp Gorman's argument regarding the centrality of the theme of participation in Paul, it will be necessary to trace his understanding of the concepts of cruciformity, kenosis, and theosis, and how they fold into the theme of participation.

In the book, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*, Gorman argues that Paul's theology is best understood by tracing the narrative spirituality of the cross as found in Paul's letters. For Gorman, it makes sense to attend to Paul's experience of God and Christ. It is this experience that Paul interprets and narrates in order to form the communities with which he corresponds. Gorman explains why it is important to consider Paul's spirituality this way:

The purpose of Paul's letters generally, and of the various kinds of narratives within them, is not to teach theology but to mold behavior, to affirm or – more often – to alter patterns of living, patterns of experience. The purpose of his letters, in other words, is pastoral or spiritual before it is theological. Today we might speak of his goal as spiritual formation...(2001: 4)

At the center of Paul's spirituality, is conformity to the crucified Christ – or cruciformity. In addition, as seen in the quote above, Paul's ministry was shaped by the cross. Gorman approvingly quotes Neil Elliot who described Paul's mission as seeking “to order the lives of Christian congregations by pulling everything into the tremendous gravitational field of the cross” (1994: 93 as quoted in Gorman, 2001: 5).

Deeper still, Gorman argues that Paul's knowledge and experience of the death of Christ had a profound impact on his understanding of God. This God that Paul knew from his Jewish heritage was not a different God, but the same God “now more fully known and knowable” (2001: 16). If the cross is recognized as the revelation of God, then “the cross is the interpretive, or hermeneutical, lens through which God is seen; it is the means of grace by which God is known (2001: 16). So, Paul's experience and theology of God is transformed through the cross of Jesus such that “cruciformity is the character of God” (2001: 18). The cross is not only the way God acts toward creation, but it is the way God is by nature.

Gorman then develops Paul's spirituality of conformity to God's cruciform nature. Drawing from numerous scriptural references in Paul, including the “in Christ”

language with all its variants, Gorman develops his thesis of Paul's spirituality of conformity to Christ. He argues,

...to be 'in Christ' principally means to be under the influence of Christ's power, especially the power to be conformed to him and his cross, by participation in the life of a community that acknowledges his lordship. (2001: 36)

Here, Gorman stresses that Paul understands the way of following Jesus is marked by being "in Him" which entails becoming more like Him (conformed), with the direction of conformity being toward self-giving love (2001: 15–16). It is also important to note the corporate connection – that being "in Christ" is to speak also of the body of believers that live in unity with Christ. Paul's spirituality is not a private affair, it is by nature communal, always situated within the body of Christ (2001: 35–40).

Gorman's next monogram on Paul, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God* (2009), seeks to continue to push further into the concept that "cruciformity is really theoformity, or as the Christian tradition (especially in the East) has sometimes called it, deification, divinization, or theosis" (2009a: 1–2). This work relies heavily on Gorman's reading of Philippians 2:6-11, which he calls, "Paul's master story" (2009a: 9–39). Within this story, Gorman sees fuller evidence of the crucial understanding of cruciformity as it relates to the nature of God. He follows other scholars, such as N. T. Wright and Stephen Fowl, who have suggested that the concept of kenosis, Christ emptying himself found in Philippians 2, is best understood, not as emptying himself of divinity, but rather Jesus exercising his divinity precisely in the way God is by nature, which is kenotic and self-giving. (2009a: 25–29). In other words, Jesus is simply being who God is, which is self-emptying for the sake of the world. This understanding allows Gorman to suggest a flurry of important concepts:

- “Kenosis is thus the *sine qua non* (essential attribute) of both divinity and humanity, as revealed in the incarnation and cross of Christ, the one who was truly God and became truly human” (2009a: 36).
- “To be fully human is to be Christlike and thus Godlike in this kenotic and cruciform sense. Cruciformity, it turns out, is really theoformity” (2009a: 36).
- “*Imitatio Christi* (imitating Christ) is really *imitation Dei* (imitating God)” (2009a: 36). In other words, to be Christlike is, in essence, to be like God.
- “*Kenosis is theosis*. To be like Christ crucified is to be both most godly and most human” (2009a: 37).
- “Theosis is the process of transformation into the image of this God” (2009a: 39).

The statements above help to capture Gorman’s use of language regarding kenosis, cruciformity, and theosis. To summarize so far, Gorman argues that the character of God is seen most clearly through His self-giving acts of love, most specifically in the incarnation and the cross of Christ. God is revealed as kenotic and cruciform. Thus, the call to be conformed to Christ is the call to participate in the kenotic and cruciform character of God. This transformation can be called theosis. These concepts partially form the fabric of what Gorman describes as Paul’s narrative soteriology and its emphasis on participation.

In addition, Gorman suggests another ingredient toward a better understanding of Paul’s soteriology is found in a re-reading of justification language as participatory and transformational. Gorman spends a sizable amount of space demonstrating the alignment of Paul’s justification language within a participatory framework, both in *Inhabiting the*

Cruciform God (2009a: 40–104) and in *Participating in Christ* (2019: 115–208).

Utilizing passages such as Galatians 2:15-21, Romans 6:1 – 7:6, and 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Gorman demonstrates that Paul does not have two models of salvation in mind when he uses justification language and participation language. Paul, Gorman argues, puts the two together in one soteriological model which is “justification by co-crucifixion” (2009a: 45). Thus, for Paul, the restoration of right relationship to God (justification) is through participation in Christ’s death on the cross and finding new life through his resurrection.

Gorman also supports the claim of Richard Hays (1996: 38) that Paul’s gospel is not merely a message of forgiveness of sins, but it is, instead, more centered on transformation. Therefore, a narrow juridical or forensic view of justification that portrays some kind of legal fiction is inadequate (Gorman 2008: 118). Instead of a narrow forensic understanding, it is better to connect justification with the participatory process of theosis. This process is “nothing other than justification properly understood as the restoration of our covenant relationship with God and the image of God (known in Christ) within us and, therefore, of becoming God-like, or holy” (2008: 130).

So, how does the theme of participation in Paul, woven together with the threads of cruciformity, kenosis, theosis, and participatory justification impact the gospel? Gorman begins with a rebuttal of any “narrow, privatistic understanding of the gospel” in Paul (2015: 298). Merely accepting Christ with the view to having sins forgiven and souls prepared for heaven is not the substance of Paul’s understanding of the gospel. Gorman then makes several important moves that pulls together all the ingredients of participation in Paul’s theology and develops it into a robust gospel, one that does not deny forgiveness or eternal life, but thickens the gospel message to its fullest.

First, the central thrust of the gospel is transformation, not simply conversion, forgiveness, or eternal life. Consequently, believers are transformed through participating in the life of God and their transformed lives becomes a demonstration of the gospel. The gospel then, is not only released through words only, but the lives and actions of believers also become the gospel.

Second, Gorman argues that the content of the gospel is shaped by two key elements. The first is the “peculiar Christological shape of this divine activity” (2015: 298), particularly the life and teaching of Christ and especially his death and resurrection, and the second is the Scriptures of Israel which promises a renewed age of shalom that is brought about by the abundance of the Spirit. Responding and participating in this gospel transforms the mind, body, and actions such that it is embodied in the community of Christ. These communities of the gospel become a living witness.

Third, the gospel is tightly interconnected to the understanding of the *mission Dei*. In Gorman’s words:

A thin, lightweight view of the gospel entails a similar then, lightweight understanding of salvation and the *missio Dei*. But a thick, robust understanding of the gospel, involves an equally complex and comprehensive perspective on salvation and the *mission Dei* (2015: 298).

For Gorman, salvation is bigger than confessing sins and forgiveness, bigger than church membership, and bigger than preparing our souls for heaven. In addition, the mission of God is truly cosmic in scope, redeeming the world to Himself, and desiring to transform all things in the new creation. In addition, this cosmic, eschatological scope of God’s mission is anticipated and embodied in the here and now in the Body of Christ, the church. This embodiment of God’s transformational purposes is always partial and provisional in this age where we wait for the full consummation of God’s work. Yet real

transformation is possible and is realized through participation in the life of God made possible through Christ and embodied in the life and witness of God's people.

Fourth, even though the transformation of the church is not complete in this age – the gospel is still the power of God, “unleashed in the world, in the church, and in the lives of individuals (2015: 299). The reality of our participation in this already, but not yet Kingdom, knows that perfection is not yet ours, and this understanding keeps the church from all forms of triumphalism. Yet, still the gospel is powerful and able to transform all who respond to it in faith.

3.4 Summary

It is now time to summarize the findings of this chapter which centered on capturing the essence of Paul's theology of participation in Christ. The work of Constantine Campbell and Michael J. Gorman has served as our guides through this growing area of interest in among scholars. Both Campbell and Gorman served as valuable guides, even as they bring additional benefit because of the different methodological approaches to this topic of “participation and union in Paul”.

Campbell approached the topic through detailed exegetical work on the specific idioms in Paul that express relationship, such as *εν Χριστω*, *εις Χριστον*, *συν Χριστω*, and *δια Χριστου*. Then, he expanded his inquiry into the metaphors that Paul used to express “participation” and “union”, such as the “body of Christ”, “the temple”, the “building of God”, and the “bride of Christ”. After this rich exegetical work, Campbell then proceeded in a more systematic way in an attempt to connect “participation and union” to broader themes in Paul's theology, such as justification. Campbell concludes his study by suggesting that “union with Christ” is “the

webbing that connects the ideas of Paul's web-shaped theological framework", to the extent that "every blessing we receive from God is through union with Christ" (2012: 442).

Gorman's methodical approach to the subject is somewhat different than Campbell's and his project expands through several monographs and articles on the subject. Gorman certainly incorporates an understanding of "in Christ" and other idioms that are important for understanding participation. However, Gorman is more interested in developing a larger project of understanding the broader narrative spirituality that animated Paul's life, calling, and his understanding of the gospel and ministry. Gorman's desires to explicate the "webbing" that runs through the totality of Paul's lived experience (spirituality) and his narration of how the life, death, and resurrection is meaningful for those who participate in Christ, Jew and Gentile alike. Gorman also expresses his work as the attempt "to end the divide between theology and spirituality, as well as the one between justification and participation" (2019: xxii).

Through careful analysis of key passages in Paul, especially Philippians 2:6-11, which Gorman calls "Paul's master story", he articulates the importance of participating in the life of God in Christ. This cruciform existence that transforms lives is the narrative framework for understanding Paul's spirituality and also, importantly, Paul's soteriology. Thus, Gorman books and articles are a sustained argument for understanding Paul's theology as, "a narrative soteriology of Spirit-enabled full identification with and participation in the God revealed in Christ crucified, such that the gospel of God reconciling the world becomes also the story of God's justified, holy, Spirit-led people in the world" (2009a: 8).

Before turning to the next chapter, it is time to draw together some of the threads that come together in the work of both Campbell and Gorman.

- The participatory theme expressed in Paul's letters is an extremely important and helpful way to understand the webbing of Paul's thought that connects all the theological concepts in Paul into a relational framework of being "in Christ".

- Participation is an appropriate theological understanding of Paul's spirituality – his lived experience of God in Christ. It is this experience of the living God, that Paul commends to all through his teaching and in his communication through his letters.
- Participation is a meaningful way to speak of the fountainhead of all the transformational effects that occurs when one enters and remains in union with Christ. The Christian life is bigger than a brief momentary decision or a simple prayer for forgiveness. Life transformation is deep and wide as one becomes open to the communion of God, and conformed to be more and more like Him (theosis).
- Participation is a better way to understand Paul's soteriological narrative. The way of salvation is more than just a declaration of being justified before God. Instead, for Paul, salvation is tied to coming back into communion with God and being transformed by participating in the kenotic and cruciform life of Christ by the Spirit.
- Participation deepens the gospel beyond just a call to have sins forgiven and souls prepared for heaven. The gospel becomes the story of a relational God, one that incarnates His love and reveals His character as kenotic and cruciform. Through the humility of Christ, we are invited to participate in the life of God. Not only do we participate in the blessings of communion with God, we are also invited into the mission of God. The people of God who are being transformed, not only believe the message, they become the good news by embodying the gospel as witnesses to others.
- Participation not only points to individual incorporation into the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, Paul understands participation to involve incorporation into the people of God. Participation is not a private affair only, but it also places a believer into the church, the embodiment of the gospel of God.

The key points above serve not only to highlight the importance of participation in Paul's theology, but also to demonstrate the pervasive reach of this theme into every other area of Paul's gospel narrative. With that understanding, it is now possible to explicate the impact of the theme, "participation in Christ", on a theology of evangelism. That will be the intention of the next chapter.

Chapter 4 The Logic of Evangelism and Participation in Christ

4.1 Introduction

This study is designed to ascertain the impact that the theme, “participation in Christ”, in Paul’s theology, would have on evangelism and mission. Up to this point, we have described three current paradigms of evangelism that were suggested by Phillip Meadows and briefly evaluated their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the previous chapter utilized the primary work of New Testament scholars, Constantine Campbell and Michael Gorman to draw out the implications of Paul’s participatory soteriology. This chapter is designed to bring together the findings in a constructive manner in order to determine if the participation theme has the potential to inform a theology of evangelism and mission in a new and positive way.

4.2 Review of the Three Paradigms

In order to systematically connect the findings of the “participation theme” with a theology of evangelism, this study has utilized Meadow’s conceptual scheme of three essential ingredients that help to differentiate between paradigms of evangelism. He articulates the three essential ingredients:

- First, the *evangel*, which is the gospel that is communicated. This ingredient typically involves an interpretation of the scriptural narrative concerning how God’s promises of salvation and redemption are understood. The first ingredient is extremely important because, “how the gospel is understood will shape any approach to evangelism, both implicitly and explicitly, at every level of engagement” (Meadows 2011: 3).

- Second, the *telos*, which is the aim or goal of evangelism. This ingredient attempts to discern the purpose of evangelism or, in other words, what is the proper response that is hoped for when the good news is communicated.
- Third, the *ethos*, which is the manner in which evangelism is done. This ingredient intends to articulate the way in which human practice cooperates with God's gracious activity in order to offer good news to humanity.

Meadows used these three ingredients to discern differences within evangelistic approaches. Utilizing this method of analysis, he outlined three broad approaches or paradigms of evangelism. The three paradigms of evangelism discerned by Meadows are the Inherited-Conversionist, Emergent-Missional, and Ancient-Future approach. Even though Meadows used this method to articulate differences between commonly expressed theologies of evangelism in the Wesleyan tradition, the paradigmatic approach based on the three ingredients is a helpful way to discern differences in evangelistic approaches within broader Christian traditions.

As already outlined in Chapter 2 of this study, Meadows characterizes the Inherited-Conversionist paradigm as being “rooted in the *evangel* of personal salvation” (5). Based on the gospel of personal salvation, the assumed *telos* (goal) of evangelism in the “Inherited-Conversionist paradigm is “conversion”. In addition, the way evangelism is best practiced (*ethos*) within this paradigm is best described as “proclamation”.

The literature of the 9Marks organization was used in this study as a representative of this paradigm. The definition of evangelism stated in the 9Marks literature includes Dever's statements, “evangelism is simply telling the good news” (2013: 130) and “evangelism is a declaration of the gospel to individual men and women” (2013: 133). In addition, Stiles suggests, “evangelism is teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade” (2014: 26). These definitions pull together the emphasis of the paradigm which includes 1/ the gospel of personal

salvation, 2/ the goal of persuasion toward conversion, and 3/ the act of proclamation through words.

By utilizing Meadow's work and comparing his suggested paradigmatic sketches with actual evangelistic literature, this study has confirmed that the Inherited-Conversionist paradigm is still active in evangelism and mission literature and, furthermore, in the case of the 9Marks organization, this approach is still currently espoused as the best foundation, biblically and theologically, on which to build a theology of evangelism.

However, the main criticism of this paradigm centers around the idea of **truncation**. The key ingredients that go into a theology of mission and evangelism are all defined in the most constrictive way. Here are some of the specific criticisms:

- The gospel is defined in a minimalist way as personal salvation. The gospel appears to get no larger than forgiveness from individual sins and salvation for individual souls.
- Because of this understanding of the gospel, then evangelism is truncated to persuading individuals to embrace conversion. In addition, by shrinking the gospel and the understanding of evangelism, then the act of evangelism is truncated to proclamation or words. There is little consideration in this paradigm for a broader understanding of the work of God in the world (*missio Dei*), nor the idea of the life of the church that points by word and deed toward the goodness of God.
- Evangelism is so tied to a truncated goal of conversion that there is no explicit theological route for discipleship. It may be assumed that connection to the church where nurture can happen is a good thing in this paradigm, but discipleship is theologically separated from evangelism, thus weakening the essential role of the church in spiritual formation.

The second paradigm suggested by Meadows is the Emergent-Missional approach and it is characterized by a "return to the *evangel* of Jesus himself about the kingdom of God" (2011: 6).

The assumed *telos* (goal) of evangelism in the Emergent-Mission Paradigm is beginning the journey of discipleship marked by one's entrance into life in the Kingdom of God. The *ethos* of the Emergent – Missional paradigm is described by Meadows as “initiation into the Kingdom of God which is typically facilitated by the church, a kingdom-shaped community where disciples are formed.

William Abraham's work on evangelism was used as a representative of this paradigm. The definition of evangelism as stated by Abraham is, “that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time” (1989: 95). This definition pulls together the emphasis of the paradigm which includes 1/ the eschatological gospel (*evangel*) of the kingdom of God, 2/ the goal (*telos*) of discipleship, and 3/ the ethos of initiating people into the kingdom through the work of evangelists and congregations.

The main criticism of this paradigm centers around the lack of **clarity about the conceptual theme of the kingdom of God**. The key ingredients that go into a theology of mission and evangelism are all defined around this theme. There is no doubt that the kingdom of God is an important biblical concept; however, some questions still remain to be answered. Here are some of the specific criticisms:

- Does the kingdom of God theme best capture the essence of the gospel as presented in the larger corpus of Scripture? In particular the Kingdom of God theme is highly concentrated in the Gospels, but may not serve as well as a central theme of the gospel in Paul's letters.
- It is still unclear how Abraham relates the concept of the kingdom of God to the church. Or to put it another way, can one be initiated into the kingdom of God without being connected to a local body of believers or is the connection essential? Abraham states that the church is one of the agents in evangelism (1989: 103), but is

still unclear if the concept of the kingdom of God helps make a clear theological connection.

The third approach to evangelism as discerned by Meadows is the Ancient-Future paradigm. Meadows, working within a Wesleyan framework, suggests that “holy love” is the core of the gospel (*evangel*) as expressed within the Wesleyan tradition. The gospel begins with the understanding that humankind was created for the “divine embrace” and union with God involves the restoration of that embrace which brings reconciliation and transformation. The goal (*telos*) of the Ancient-Future paradigm as presented by Meadows is communion with God. The way this is practiced (*ethos*), according to Meadows is best described as “spiritual direction”, a relational process to help people see God at work and respond to Him. The process also involves “ongoing spiritual direction of believers” in order that they may be prepared to direct others toward God and help gather those “awakened” into small groups for continuation into the discipleship process (2011: 22–24). It is within this network of groups that individuals can be brought into a deeper communion with God as they receive direction from others in the group who are also on the spiritual journey.

For the purposes of this study, Philip Meadow’s essay has obviously served as the foundation of the third evangelistic paradigm. Meadow’s does not explicitly offer a definition of evangelism; however, he does come close when he states, “evangelism is the activity of leading people into the divine embrace so that they may journey into the promise of union and communion with God” (2011: 22). This statement pulls together the emphasis of the paradigm which includes 1/ the gospel (*evangel*) of holy love, 2/ that draws people into communion with God (*telos*), and 3/ as practiced (*ethos*) in a network of relationships that provide spiritual direction for seekers.

The main criticism of this paradigm centers around the lack of scriptural foundation. While Meadows' approach certainly advances an understanding of evangelism along the lines of union, participation, and communion, it fails to link these concepts deeply within Scripture.

Here are some of the specific criticisms:

- Is it adequate to say that the essence of the gospel is “holy love” or “divine embrace” without the articulation of a scriptural foundation? The case could possibly be made for such a description of the gospel, but Meadows utilizes Wesleyan history and doctrine instead of biblical resources. That decision might limit the power of other traditions from using Meadows' insights.
- Although, Meadows understands the church (specifically small groups) to be the foundation of spiritual direction from which evangelism flows, it is still unclear how this paradigm biblically and theologically connects the church with evangelism and mission. More specifically if the goal (telos) of evangelism is viewed as “communion with God” as Meadows asserts, then isn't this still another version of individualizing salvation at the expense of the corporate notion of “participation in the body of Christ”.

4.3 The Logic of Evangelism and the Participation Paradigm

Now it is time to investigate how “participation in Christ” can serve to enhance our understanding of evangelism. Thus far, this project has focused the works of Constantine Campbell and Michael Gorman as our guides into Paul's understanding of “participation in Christ”. Campbell has written one study on the subject, and speaks of union and participation with Christ as “the essential ingredient that binds all other elements together; it is the webbing that connects the ideas of Paul's web-shaped theological framework” (2012: 442). Gorman, over

his wide scope of writing on the subject, constructs his understanding of Paul's theology from a larger narrative framework that places "participation in Christ" and a transformative soteriology (theosis) at the center of Paul's thought. This section of the research will attempt to connect the theme "participation in Christ", as mediated through these two authors, to evangelism. This will be done by utilizing the three essential ingredients, suggested by Meadows, that help articulate an evangelistic approach paradigm, namely, the *evangel*, the *telos*, and the *ethos*.

4.3.1 *The Evangel and Participation*

Campbell spends little time addressing the specific nature and content of Paul's gospel. However, his exegetical and theological work demonstrates the profound links of union and participation to the work of Christ which impinges on all the promises held out by the good news (2012: 327–368) Through "participation in Christ" believers are transferred from the old age of sin and death and into a new domain of life in the Spirit and righteousness by Christ (2012: 333–349). Moreover, Campbell stresses the total theological reach of the participation theme in Paul when he states:

Virtually every element of Christ's work that is of interest to Paul is connected in some way to union with Christ. Salvation, redemption, reconciliation, creation, election, predestination, adoption, sanctification, headship, provision, his death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, self-giving, the gifts of grace, peace, eternal life, the Spirit, spiritual riches and blessings, freedom, and the fulfillment of God's promises are all related to union with Christ (2012: 331–332).

In addition, Campbell suggests four umbrella terms that capture the breadth of Paul's thought on being in Christ; union, participation, identification, and incorporation. Each of these terms get to the heart of what it means to respond to the gospel. Campbell connects these threads in this way:

A believer is united to Christ at the moment of coming to faith: their union is established by the indwelling of the Spirit. The person united to Christ therefore enters into participation with Christ in his death, resurrection, ascension, and

glorification. As a participant in Christ's death and resurrection, the believer dies to the world and is identified with the realm of Christ. As a member of the realm of Christ, the believer is incorporated into his body, since union with Christ entails union with his members (2012: 414).

Thus, for Campbell, the gospel is deeper and wider than personal forgiveness. That understanding is too static and non-relational. Instead, the gospel an invitation to a new life, lived in a new way, with a new community of believers.

Gorman larger corpus of work on Paul's theology shows in even greater detail the connections between "participation in Christ" and the gospel. Gorman offers several summaries of "the gospel of God" according to Paul throughout his writing with some wording differences, yet all very consistent in thought. In *Reading Paul*, he writes, "the gospel of God is not a set of propositions; it is the account of the planned, executed, and soon-to-be consummated benevolent intervention of God into the history of Israel, human history more generally, and the entire cosmos to set right a world gone awry" (2008: 44).

It is important to unpack several themes that arise out of this understanding of the gospel. First, Gorman argues that the gospel shared by Paul took on a clear narrative shape. (Apostle, 120-139). This narrative shape of the gospel dictates that the story is not just about individual salvation, but concerned with the redemption of all creation as well. Paul's gospel "is a story of salvation for the human race" (2008: 54).

Second, the gospel takes on a particular shape in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' life and death is not merely a response to the grip of evil on the world and individual lives, but it should be seen primarily as "a deliberate self-revelation and an effective salvific act" (Gorman 2014: 19). Thus, the cross of Christ not only becomes the effective means of salvation to which the gospel points, but it also become a marker for who God is (self-giving). Here it is important to note again Gorman's use of cruciformity. By understanding the revelation of who God is in the cross, believers are invited to participate in Christ's life and death and take

on a cruciform spirituality. Thus, the gospel points not only to sins forgiven of an individual, but to a way of life that conforms the cruciform God as found in Christ's life and death (theosis).

Third, the gospel found in Paul's narrative soteriology must be embodied in flesh and blood as the church (Gorman 2015: 15–20). This means that the participatory gospel of God that Paul preached creates a corporate body of believers that are shaped by the Spirit to be a part of the *missio Dei*. As Gorman puts it, "Paul wanted the communities he addressed not merely to *believe* the gospel but to *become* the gospel and thereby to *advance* the gospel" (2015: 297). Consequently, a reading of the gospel from the perspective of "participation in Christ" situates the "evangel" into the broad sweep of salvation history, one which draws on the missional nature of God who is at work redeeming the world through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Becoming part of this missional story certainly involves an individual response to the good news, but, in addition, participating in Christ involves a transformation of belief, behavior, and belonging.

This BIG GOSPEL clearly contrasts to a truncated gospel primarily viewed as personal salvation. The good news is not just about private salvation when one dies, but also about life that is marked by the self-giving love of God in Christ, and placed into the body of Christ that embodies the social fabric of the gospel in such a way that the good news is seen and heard in an attractive way to a watching world. Thus, Meadows is on the right track when he captures the gospel is about "Holy Love". But a participation paradigm would require that more be said. The gospel is about God's love that is expressed most profoundly in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the gospel speaks powerfully of new life that can be found when one participates in Christ with all the benefits, blessings, and expectations that comes with that relationship.

4.3.2 The Telos and Participation

This section will briefly outline that telos or goal of evangelism as it is impacted by the theology of participation in Christ. As noted above, If the gospel speaks of new life found by participation in Christ with all its implications, then how does that effect the goal of evangelism?

First, it is important to remember that both Campbell and Gorman express the broad reach of participation in Christ in Paul's theology as it touches upon soteriology and ecclesiology. Once again, Campbell says the participation theme is the "webbing" (2012: 442) that holds Paul's theology together, and Gorman speaks of participation as the "very heart of Paul's thinking and living" (2019: xviii). So, in contrast to a truncated view of evangelism's goal as conversion, represented by the Inherited – Conversionist paradigm, the reception of the gospel must serve a bigger vision. It will not suffice to envision the goal of evangelism as responding to a gospel presentation at a particular point in time in order to receive forgiveness of sins. Instead, "participation in Christ" signals a larger umbrella of entering into a relationship with Christ that is transformative because one's life is now shaped in a cruciform and relationally connected way – patterned after Christ and also formed together in the Body of Christ.

Abraham's suggestion that the aim of evangelism is "initiation into the Kingdom of God", at least moves the conversation forward and lessens the overly constrictive nature of the Inherited-Conversionist paradigm that is laser focused on "conversion". The suggestion of "initiation" by Abraham allows a more natural bridge between the decision to follow Christ and the process of initial steps in discipleship as within the proper purview of the goal of evangelism. However, as noted before, there remain deficiencies in Abraham's suggestions. Initiation into the Kingdom of God, while a powerful Biblical concept, suffers from lack of clarity. In addition, the "initiation into the Kingdom of God" is less powerful in describing the aspect of relationality that is actually present in Paul's language of union and participation. Paul goes to

great length to describe being in Christ as communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, and with the body of Christ. In other words, it is harder to describe how such an intense and transformative relationship occurs within Kingdom language alone. For Paul, life in the kingdom seems best articulated around a particular narrative of participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ which transforms individuals and builds a Christian community.

Meadows's articulation of what he called the Ancient-Future paradigm moves the theological concepts undergirding the practice of evangelism into an even closer resonance with "participation" language. Meadows clearly articulates the telos of evangelism as hope "that people will embark on a journey of entering into God's saving embrace" (2011: 17). His argument, however, fails to incorporate the growing body of literature of Biblical scholarship on the theme of participation.

For Paul and his participatory soteriology and spirituality, the goal of evangelism is entering the kingdom of God, and into communion with God, but it is envisioned IN A SPECIFIC WAY! By responding the gospel, one begins a new life that is centered around participating in the life of God by being transformed into a cruciform way of life. By participating in Christ, one also is drawn into the life of the church, Christ's body. In addition, participation involves living the gospel – becoming a part of the *Missio Dei* – as a member of the church that points to the Kingdom of God. Thus, the goal of evangelism from a participatory standpoint is to be transformed in character, transformed by community, and transformed by God's mission.

4.3.3 The Ethos and Participation

This section will outline the "ethos" of evangelism as it is understood from the theology of participation in Christ. The "ethos" attempts to articulate the manner in which evangelism is done, by describing the human activities and practices involved that cooperate with God's

gracious activity to draw people back to Himself. How can these practices best be described from the standpoint of Paul's understanding of participation in Christ?

Campbell's rich exegetical and theological work on the theme of union and participation in Christ in Paul offers some insights and implications that can be drawn in relationship to the "ethos" of evangelism, particularly in the four umbrella terms that Campbell uses to describe a believer's life based on participation in Christ. These terms are: 1/ Union – communion with Father, Son, and Spirit with all its benefits, based on faith 2/ Participation – living the narrative elements of connection with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus 3/ Identification – location in the realm of Christ and allegiance to his Lordship, and 4/ Incorporation – brought into the people of God as a member of Christ's body (2012: 413–414). It may be best to start with Campbell's suggested fourth term – incorporation into Christ's body. If the reception of the good news entails a living relationship with Christ AND an ESSENTIAL relationship with His Body, the church, then it makes sense to firmly locate the ethos of evangelism within the church. The practice of evangelism, then, springs out of the corporate body of Christ in a profound way. The ethos cannot properly be conceived as only an individual exercise of sharing the gospel presentation to other individuals (even though that may be part of an evangelistic process). But if the church ONLY becomes an instrument that trains individuals in faith-sharing, then that conception more than likely will short-circuit the corporate nature of the gospel.

In the same manner, Gorman stresses the full circle of participation that brings people into new life in Christ, communion with God, AND participation in the church. Furthermore, the church not only proclaims the word of Christ, but the church is called to live the gospel. In Gorman's words, "the church is to become the gospel by participating in it" (2015: 109).

How does the church "become the gospel" in such a way that it connects with the ethos of evangelism? First, Gorman's work shows that "justification" in Paul is not merely about individual salvation or individuals being made right with God, but also includes the participatory

elements of communion with God because of being “in Christ, AND connecting to Christ’s body, the church (2009a: 40–104). Second, it is through this community of Christ where mission is faithfully practiced. Hence responding to the gospel, not only transforms individual lives, but the church of Christ is transformed into a people that participates in the *Missio Dei*. As Gorman puts it, it is this transformed community that becomes “a living exegesis of the gospel” (2019: 28). Based on Paul’s participatory soteriology, the ethos of the gospel is carried out by a transformed community, the church in Christ, that lives, loves, proclaims, acts, and serves in order to demonstrate the goodness of God to a watching world.

4.4 The Conclusion to the Chapter

As viewed through the theme of “participation in Christ” in Paul, the gospel is constricted when it only refers to individual salvation. In addition, the gospel needs more specification when it is linked to the concept “Kingdom of God” as in the work of William Abraham.

The gospel names all the ways that God is at work reconciling the world back to Himself. It refers to the narrative story of Scripture where God is actively stepping into creation, through the story of Israel, and, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel also entails the invitation to step into this narrative story of communion with God individually through Christ. In addition, those “in Christ” are necessarily connected to a community that is participating in Christ by becoming His body.

This view of participation also includes the idea of transformation. Michael Gorman refers to it as “theosis” (2009a). It is this participation personally and corporately that transforms the body of Christ into a specific pattern – the way of cruciformity. Thus, the way of the people of God is marked by participating in Christ who gave Himself for us.

This pattern of participation, naturally draws the people of God into the *Missio Dei*. Mission and evangelism is done in a particular way marked by the kenotic way of God as demonstrated in Christ. Gorman summarizes these highlights by pulling all of the threads into a statement about the core of Paul's theology being, "a narrative soteriology of Spirit-enabled full identification with and participation in the God revealed in Christ crucified, such that the gospel of God reconciling the world in Christ becomes the story of God's justified, holy, Spirit-led people in the world" (2009a: 8) .

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This project began with the acknowledgement that evangelism is squarely tied to the announcement of Jesus's lordship. It is good news indeed. However, there have been points throughout history where the church's mission and expansion has been complicit with coercion and violence. The fact of the mingling of the gospel and the fact of colonialism has created a mixed message about mission and evangelism. Particularly in the West, this dissatisfaction with the past missteps of church expansion has been a part of the struggle with loss of attendance and cultural influence. This mixed heritage of mission and evangelism has also produced multiple reactions from church leaders and denominations. First, this has led some to downplay evangelism or to call for a moratorium on efforts of conversion. And second, on the other hand, some have tried to find a new way to express the church's role in sharing the gospel, ways that are less prone to misuse and abuse. This study has tried to contribute in this second way, by offering a new framework in order to help renew efforts of evangelism.

A reminder is in order that this study was primarily framed within the challenges of western cultures, particularly Europe and North American churches, to find a new theological background for mission and evangelism. However, it is important to realize that the "center of gravity" in the Christian world has shifted southward to Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Jenkins, 2002: 2). Much of the explosive growth in these areas are driven by Pentecostal movements. Part of the reason for this growth is due to "the experience of the Spirit and belief in world evangelization" that Pentecostal theology is built upon (Anderson, 2013: 1).

Pentecostal mission is marked by profound spiritual experiences, relational networks, and a sense of missional urgency (McClung, 1994). At the center of Pentecostal worship is an encounter with Jesus and a robust empowerment of the Spirit that fuels the urgency of mission (Kärkkäinen, 2018). While this project was not focused on a Pentecostal perspective and does

not advocate for all the Pentecostal distinctives, this charismatic movement does share the same sense of encounter, spirituality, relationality, and profound sense of transformation that is found in Paul's theology of participation.

This research project has argued that this renewal of mission is best accomplished by returning to biblical and theological themes that can nourish a better framework for evangelism. More specifically, the problem that this project addresses is the lack of attention mission and evangelism studies has given to the changing landscape of Pauline studies. The central question that has animated this study is, "How does Paul's concept of 'participation in Christ' impact the theological framework of missiological studies on evangelism"?

5.1 Summary of the Project

In Chapter one, the documentation was presented in order to show the complexity of thinking about the proper starting place for the development of a theology of evangelism, especially after the reckoning in the 20th century with church expansion and colonialism. The case was presented that a renewal of evangelism should start with a return to Biblical and theological themes. In addition, various Biblical scholars were mentioned who have indicated the importance of the theme "participation in Christ" in the theology of Paul.

In Chapter two, content analysis was utilized to compare and contrast the publications of various authors that have written of the subject of a theology of evangelism. We used Philip Meadows' (2011) inciteful article in order to evaluate three paradigms of evangelism (Inherited-Conversionist, Emerging-Missional, and Ancient Future) according to the basic ingredients of the *evangel* (the gospel), the *teleos* (goal) of evangelism, and the *ethos* (the practices used for evangelism). Accordingly, the literature of the 9Marks organization was used to study the Inherited-Conversionist paradigm (Lawrence 2017; Ortlund 2014; Stiles 2014; Dever 2013). The Emerging-Missional paradigm was represented by the important work of William Abraham

(1989, 1994). The Ancient-Future paradigm was advanced by Philip Meadows (2011). The chapter concluded with a critical assessment of each paradigm.

Chapter three intended to outline the key insights of two New Testament scholars who have undertaken important exegetical and theological work on the concept of “participation in Christ” in Paul’s spirituality and theology. Constantine Campbell’s (2012) work was utilized because of the detailed exegesis of passages in Paul that express “union” or participation”. In addition, he conceptualized a theology of participation to the extent that he calls it the “webbing” that holds all of the other Pauline themes together. The second scholar, Michael Gorman, has written extensively on the theology of Paul and the theme of participation (Gorman 2009b, 2015, 2019). Gorman suggests that the concepts of cruciformity, theosis, and transformation, are all key participatory ideas that make up Paul’s spirituality and narrative soteriology. As such, participation is a key concept in understanding Paul’s theology.

Chapter four focused on constructing a framework for evangelism on the foundation of the theme, “participation in Christ.” By assessing the impact this theme makes to the *evangel* (gospel), the *telos* (goal) of evangelism, and the *ethos* (practices) of evangelism, it was determined to be a helpful foundation on which to build a way forward for mission and evangelism.

5.2 The Findings of the Research Project

Now, it is time to declare the findings of this research. First, it has demonstrated “participation in Christ” as a key theme within current scholarship on Pauline theology that has recently been taken more seriously by various scholars. It has been described as a key concept within Paul’s narrative spirituality and soteriology. It has been described as the “webbing” that

holds all other Pauline themes together. For Paul, participation in the transformative communion of God through Christ is the key to spiritual life.

Second, the gospel that Paul proclaims is certainly centered on Christ. However, the good news was not just declaring the facts of Christ's death and resurrection. The good news includes the invitation to respond to a transformative encounter with Christ and the Spirit by participating in his death and resurrection. Thus, the gospel is not just about finding forgiveness of sins, but it also includes communion with God through participating in Christ's death and finding new life in him. This new life is marked by following in the way of Christ (cruciformity) and the way of transformation (theosis). Within the grain of the gospel is the understanding of communion (participation) with God through Christ and the expectation of a transformed life through constant spiritual growth and discipleship. Thus, the gospel itself contains the seeds of discipleship when viewed through the lens of "participation with Christ".

Third, the goal (telos) of evangelism is bigger than a momentary decision to follow Christ. It may begin with a response to the gospel message, but it aims for a bigger life-giving relationship with the triune God that draws one ever deeper into communion with God.

Fourth, the ethos (practices) of evangelism for Paul is not primarily an individual matter. It is not centered on individuals that find personal salvation and then learn to present gospel truths in some mechanical way to other individuals. For Paul, the gospel draws one into communion with God through Christ, and into participation with the members of Christ's body. The ethos of evangelism is more primarily centered in the body of Christ which embodies the gospel as a redeemed community, witnessing by living in love, truth, and the beauty of communion with God. Consequently, evangelism should be approached more holistically than individual believers proclaiming the gospel to other individuals. Evangelism will include words (proclamation) that describe the work of Christ, and good works (deeds) that point to Christ, and the collective witness of the body of believers living together in communion, unity, and worship.

Fifth, as viewed from the vantage point of participation in Christ, evangelism is rightly more viewed in a relational mode. If the goal of evangelism is to establish renewed communion with God through participating in Christ, and to be transformed by the Spirit of Christ, and embedded in the community of Christ, then evangelism must be viewed as a communal endeavor that is best practiced through relational hospitality with those who are not yet part of the Body of Christ.

Sixth, if evangelism is practiced in light of participation in Christ, then it already and always has an ethic built into the evangelistic endeavor. Christ is the one who gave himself in loving service, and this provides the Christian community with the parameters of ethical possibilities for evangelism. Evangelism and mission cannot be coerced or enforced in any overpowering way. Evangelism and mission must be conducted within the frame of cruciformity, where witness is always marked by participation in Christ's death and resurrection, thus, in humility and love.

Paul's vision of the transformative power of participation in Christ is a profound key to evangelism and mission. Being united with Christ is more than praying a prayer of salvation in order to go to heaven, or learning the creeds of the faith, or expanding the membership of the church. Participation implies an ever-deepening experience of learning to walk in communion with the goodness of God brought to us in Christ. It also means being united in the life of His people, the church and experiencing the deep communion with brothers and sisters who are committed to the spiritual flourishing of one another. If we wish to proclaim with our words, and demonstrate with our actions the good news of God in Christ, then we must participate fully in Christ, the one who draws us deeper into his love and service.

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