

Historical Paradigms of Christian Mission

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+ Approaches to Missions' History

- Geographical Expansion (K.S. Latourette)
 - Roman Empire
 - Christianizing Europe
 - From Europe to the World
 - Worldwide missions
- Cultural Diffusion (A. Walls)
 - Jewish
 - Hellenistic-Roman
 - Barbarian
 - Europe
 - Cross-cultural transmission
- Successive Overlapping Paradigms (D. Bosch)
 - Early Church
 - Eastern Church
 - Catholic/Medieval
 - Modern Missionary Movement
 - Postmodern Paradigm
- Turning Points (A. Ott)
 - Embracing Ethnic Diversity
 - Beyond the Empire
 - Accommodating Culture
 - Mission Movements
 - Breaking the Chains of Slavery
 - The Era of Imperialism
 - Majority World Missions

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+ Biblical Principles: Gospel/Christ & Culture in Tension

- Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*
 - **Indigenous Principle:** Christ is King; domestication of the Christian faith; Christendom; Christianity becomes normative; dangerous when the gospel loses its prophetic voice (danger of syncretism)
 - Missional dimensions of the Gospel (L. Newbigin)
 - **Pilgrim Principle:** Christians are sojourners; no abiding home; citizens of heaven; this earth is not our home; (danger of isolation and irrelevance)
 - Missional intentions of the Gospel (L. Newbigin)

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+ Biblical Principles: Mission as Translation

- Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message*
 - For the early Christians there were two basic ways to proceed. One was to make the **missionary culture** – in their case, the Mosaic code – the carrier and arbiter of the message. This we might call mission by **diffusion**. By it religion expands by means of its founding cultural warrants and is implanted in other societies primarily as a matter of **cultural adoption**.
 - The other way was to institute the **recipient culture** as a valid and necessary locus of proclamation, allowing the religion to arrive without the requirement of deference to the originating culture. This we might call mission by **translation**, and it carries with it the need for **indigenous theological inquiry**, which arises as a necessary stage in the process of **reception and adaptation**.

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+ Eclectic Approach: Four Historical Paradigms

1. The Paradigm of Mission in the Early Church
 - The Church of the East
2. The Paradigm of Mission in the Era of Western Christendom
3. The Paradigm of Mission in the Wake of the Enlightenment
4. The Paradigm of Mission in the Age of World Christianity



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+ Mission in the Early Church

- **Positives:**
 - The role of the local congregation
 - They broke down the barriers erected in the Roman Empire: rich/poor, male/female, slave/free, Greek/Barbarian, etc.
 - They addressed competing worldviews and subversive interpretations of biblical faith (i.e., Sanneh's "mission by translation")
 - They engaged all spheres of culture
- **Negatives:**
 - Capitulation to a dichotomous Greek worldview
 - A slow turn inward; fixated on its own inner life; lost the flexibility of earlier ecclesiastical forms
 - An understanding of the Spirit that slowly lost its connection to God's broader mission; mostly relegated to salvation
 - Growth in some quarters of anti-Jewish sentiment (Antisemitism)



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+ Select Readings from Mission in the Early Church

- Apology II, xiii – Justin Martyr
- The Prescription Against the Heretics – Tertullian

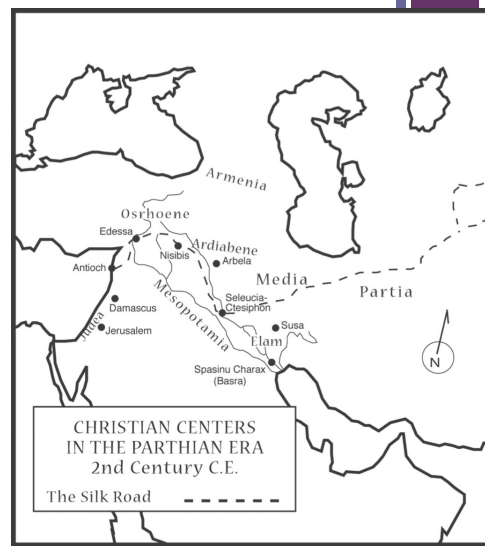


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+ The Church of the East

- **Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 AD)**
 - Post-Pentecost, Persian Jews take the Gospel into the Parthian Empire
 - Thomas (Didymus)
 - Addai (Jude/Thaddeus; one of the 70/72?)
 - Mari (one of the 70/72?)
- **Sasanian Empire (224 - 637 AD)**
 - 260 – Antioch conquered; Greek Christians deported
 - 313 – Constantine's Edict of Toleration (Byzantine Empire)
 - 309-379 – Widespread persecution by Shapur II; Zoroastrianism becomes state religion; *Acts of the Persian Martyrs*
 - 410 – Synod of Isaac, convened by Yazdegerd I, in Ctesiphon
 - 635 – Syriac Persian Bishop Alopen reaches the Tang Dynasty Imperial Court in China
- **Under Muslim Empires**
 - Periodic persecution
 - Continued expansion into C. Asia, China, and India until the Mongol invasion of Timur (i.e., Tamerlane, d. 1405).

Thomas, *Restless Search*, 21 (Figure 2.3)



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+ Reception of the Nicene Creed by Persian Syriac-Speaking Christians

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (325/381)

We believe in **one God**, the Father, Ruler of all, maker of heaven and earth, and of **all things visible and invisible**. And we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the **only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all time; Light, from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father...**

Synod of Isaac (410)

We believe in **one God**, Father, who **in his Son** made heaven and earth; and in him were established the **worlds above and that are below**; and **in him he effected the resurrection and renovation for all creation**. And in his **Son, the Only-Begotten who was born from him, that is, however, from the essence of his Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; he was born and was not made; who is of the same nature as his Father...**

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+ Early Chinese Christianity

- **635**: A small band of Persian missionaries, led by the monk **Aluoben**, arrive at the Tang dynasty capital **Xian**.
- **638**: **Emperor Taizong** builds a translation center for the Christian delegation, who immediately sets to work "translating" (adapting) the scriptures they brought into Chinese. Four different manuscripts are produced.
- **640**: The first Christian monastery is built in China, referred to in historical writings as the **Da Qin Monastery**.
- **720**: Chinese monks start writing their own Christian sutras, which have a liturgical focus.
- **752**: The Church in China is now essentially cut off from its Mother Church in Persia, due to Muslim control over old travel routes.
- **781**: The **Stone Sutra Stele** is erected to celebrate the building of the **Da Qin pagoda**. The Chinese Church is now well-established and widespread, and still imperially supported.
- **795**: Persecution begins under the Taoist/Confucian bureaucracy.
- **841-845**: The Chinese Court dissolves all Christian monasteries so that it can confiscate their land and wealth; imperial edict orders this action on the grounds that this new religion "adulterate[s] the customs of China."
- **1005**: The Jesus Sutras are sealed up in a **cave at Dunhuang**, 1,000 miles west of Xian.
- **1623**: The Stone Sutra Stele is discovered by gravediggers documenting 150-year history of Christianity in China, from its beginnings in 635.
- **1907**: The cave at Dunhuang is rediscovered and its contents scattered by Western explorers and Chinese antiquity robbers.
- **1920s**: The Jesus Sutras are purchased by Japanese and European collectors from antique dealers around Beijing.
- **1998**: The still-intact Da Qin Pagoda is discovered by **Martin Palmer** and his team of researchers. Inside are statues, underground passageways, and artifacts related to the rituals of the early Chinese Christians.
- **2001**: *The Jesus Sutras*, written by Martin Palmer, is published.

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+ Select Readings from Mission in the Church of the East

- The Story of Mār Mārī the Apostle
- The Apology of the Patriarch – Timothy of Baghdad
- Jesus Sutras – Xian Stele



Xi'an Stele erected in 781 documenting 150 years of Christianity in China

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+ Mission in the Era of Western Christendom

- The shift came from two factors:
 1. Domestication of the Christian faith within classical Greco-Roman culture
 2. Constantine's conversion
- Political and cultural control eventually resulted in a loss of missional focus
 - Positive side
 - Negative side
- Monastic mission



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+ Select Readings from Mission in the Era of Western Christendom

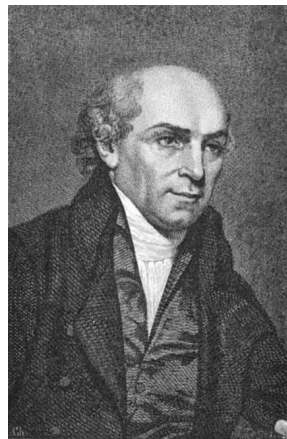
- The Russian Primary Chronicle
- The Heliand



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+ Mission in the Wake of the Enlightenment

- The shift came from the cultural conversion of Europe to the Enlightenment's secular humanist worldview
- This modern missionary movement



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+ Select Readings from Mission in the Wake of the Enlightenment

- “An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens” – William Carey
- “The Social Impact of Christian Missions” – Robert Woodberry



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+ Mission in the Age of World Christianity

- The shift came from the collapse of colonialism, the decline of the church in the West, and the numerical growth of the church in the Global South (i.e., the Majority World). Mission now takes on several meanings depending on the emphasis:
 - Mission as the church-with-others
 - Mission as *missio Dei*
 - Mission as mediating salvation
 - Mission as the quest for justice
 - Mission as evangelism
 - Mission as contextualization
 - Mission as liberation

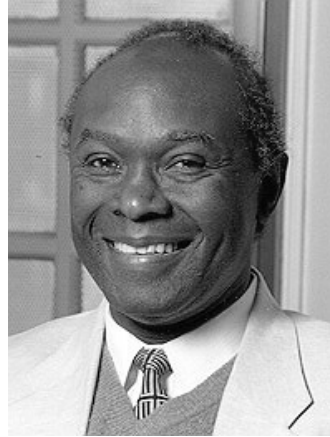


- Mission as enculturation
- Mission as common witness
- Mission as ministry by the whole people of God
- Mission as witness to people of other living faiths
- Mission as theology
- Mission as action in hope
- Mission in Western culture
- Mission as service

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+ Select Readings from Mission in the Age of World Christianity

- “Christian Missions and the Western Guilt Complex” – Lamin Sanneh
- The Lausanne Covenant of 1974



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+ Takeaways of Kingdom Advance in Missions' History



- Translatability and the cross-cultural intentionality of God in the Gospel
 - Mission as Diffusion
 - Mission as Translation – Indigenous Theological Inquiry
 - Pilgrim Principle
 - Indigenous Principle
- There is great freedom within historic and biblical Christian orthodoxy for linguistic and cultural variation
 - Language/Vernacular Principle
- Indigenous leadership committed to advancing biblical purposes
 - Faithful
 - Meaningful
 - Dialogical

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