

CHAPTER VII

PAUL'S UNIVERSAL PERSPECTIVE

As we approach the New Testament with our kingdom horizon, we find an even greater concern than in the Old Testament. Our narrowness is challenged. God's concern for his world is not limited and hence any restrictions we impose are broken down to accommodate his kingdom plans for the entire world. The past and the present horizons along with the overriding kingdom concern horizon meet together to actualise Christ's lordship.

Interestingly, the early Christians had restricted their vision of God's total mission. Being a predominantly Jewish congregation, their attitude was an exclusivistic understanding of God's mission. God had to break this down, and following this, we discern a movement away from this Jewish to a worldwide perspective. The people of God had to be continually reminded that God's concern was universal.

Once this wider perspective is accepted, there is an even greater challenge that pushes God's mission to its widest possible extent in keeping with Jesus Christ who has been raised "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the age to come" (Eph. 1:20). When mission is considered from this perspective we cannot limit God's authority and concern to anything less than what God's word demands.

It is instructive to note the overwhelming influence the future horizon has on Paul's missiology. All the expectations over the history of the people of God have been actualized in Jesus Christ. The three horizons merge into

one, expressed in the total lordship of Jesus Christ. This is the horizon that the Church needs to accept. Let us consider these two movements that helped to gradually widen the horizon of the early church to embrace God's kingdom perspective.

The First Movement: Salvation for All People

The early Christians struggled to accept what the Gospel writers had captured as the universal dimension of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. The Christmas message announced peace on earth and goodwill to all men. There is no hint that this was for the sole benefit of the Jews. The righteous and devout Simeon confirms the fulfilment of Israel's longings as he joyfully bursts out, ". . . my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Lk 2:30ff.

Luke's concern for an "orderly account" (1:3), having "carefully investigated everything from the beginning" captures the fullest possible revelation of God to humankind. In his two contributions to the New Testament, he attempts to depict this first movement i.e the movement of mission from a narrow Jewish perspective to a worldwide kingdom perspective. This is the perspective implied in John the Baptist's words in the opening pages of the gospel—"all mankind will see God's salvation" (3:6).

And later, when Jesus announces his mission, all barriers are broken as we hear the dramatic declaration of his coming to fulfil God's total mission:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim
freedom for prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (4.18ff.).

Luke emphasises this limitless mission that Jesus has embarked upon—"a stunning crossing of a social and religious barrier in the patriarchal society of his day."¹ Conservatives are shocked that tax collectors, sinners, even women are recipients of the salvific potential of Jesus' mission. "There is little doubt that Luke sees the connection between this expansive dimension of Jesus and the efforts of the church to move beyond its own frontiers.² It is perhaps natural to continually seek to interpret God's mission from our human perspective. One can see the need even today to give to mission its limitless dimension so that the sovereign control of God can be seen to embrace all of his world.

The early church struggled with its Jewish pre-conception that excluded everyone outside their select community from God's redemption. Had not Jesus made it amply clear that they were to "make disciples of all nations"? How else could the church attest that "all authority in heaven and in earth" truly belonged to Jesus? The Old Testament prophecies had clearly pointed to this endtime demonstration of the widest possible horizons of God's mission, yet restrictions are humanly imposed. We face a continual temptation to appropriate God's revelation for ourselves. Like the Jews, we too would wish to make the eschatological fulfilment our own. The church's struggle to submit its own self-centred desires to Jesus' explicit commission to share it with the whole world unfolds graphically in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts begins with Jesus' reaffirmation of his intention for the Church's ministry to extend to the ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit comes down to seal the fact of the universality of God's redemptive purposes. We have today restricted the gift of tongues to individualistic interpretations, ignoring the fact that the pentecostal experience is recorded clearly within the context of universalizing of God's mission. The fact that God enables each one of the hearers to *hear* the message "in his own native language" is the emphasis, rather than the fact that the disciples

began to *speak* in other tongues. God in his sovereign control will use any legitimate means in order for his redemptive message to be heard by all. In fact some even in their hearing will not hear and in seeing will not see, as Isaiah had prophesied, but that will in no way hinder God from continuing to speak to them.

Peter has his own struggles, and receives an individual vision which helps widen his conception of God's concerns. His obedience is the turning point in the whole movement of mission away from the limits imposed on it by Israel. In obedience to the command of God, he goes to Cornelius, a Gentile centurion. On finding the large gathering of relatives and close friends he confesses, "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean" (Ac. 10:28).

Two facts need to be underlined. First, God is not restricted. He even bypasses the apostles, sending an angel directly to deal with Cornelius. But, secondly, Cornelius needs to relate to the church, the community that God has already started building through his apostles. He cannot act on his own. Having sent for Peter, he now declares, ". . . we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

God can use all means to declare his message, whether it be in the God-Church-World direction or the God-World-Church direction. He can certainly act in the world today, even bypassing the Church. If God is truly sovereign he must have the liberty to choose the manner in which he desires to communicate his concerns. However, his covenant assures us that he will not eventually ignore the church. The Kingdom Community has already been appointed to be the vehicle through which he will continue to achieve his purposes. In all that is happening, God is preparing his "bride" for the culminating event when all things will be new (Rev. 21:1-5).

With this powerful illustration, even his Jewish background does not hinder Peter from accepting God's widening purposes. He responds to Cornelius' testimony with an even more clear testimony—"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation . . ." (10:34). Peter spells out the continuity of the message from its Jewish origins to the whole world, for "everyone who now believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name"(10:43).

Luke records that Peter's Jewish "circumcised" companions still had difficulties accepting this fact. They were "astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles" (10:45). Probably, these skeptics take back the news to Jerusalem, where Peter is confronted by the criticism—"You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them"(11:2). The struggle is obvious, despite the fact that God openly poured out his Spirit for them to behold.

It is clear that Peter did not take for granted that everyone will accept what he has now accepted. He took time and carefully "explained everything to them precisely as it had happened"(11:4). He concludes with a powerful testimony, ". . . if God gave them the same gifts as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think I could oppose God"(11:17). A dramatic turn in the minds of the critics leads them to conclude, "God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (11:8).

There are prejudices that the Church must shed even today. Sadly, caste and racial barriers divide the Church into high and low, black and white and even rich and poor. One can hardly blame the early church which struggled out of their deep rooted traditions and convictions rather than on whims and fancies that appear to condition some of our prejudices today.

Without undermining the centrality of God's choice of his Church, we need to challenge ourselves to move beyond our limited perspective of the Church as God's people. Our

institutionalised patterns, denominational distinctives and static sacramental views have hindered us from recognising what God is continuing to do through his people outside the four walls of the church. When we widen our views to see the church as a worshipping and a witnessing community we will break all our restrictions.

Luke portrays Paul's progression from Jewish to Gentile mission very clearly. In fact the entire second half of the book of Acts is concerned with this aspect. Put in another way,

Rome is the goal towards which the whole of the book of Acts tends. The gospel spread out from Palestine in every direction, but the direction in which Luke is interested is the road that leads to Rome. Hence he emphasizes the rise of Gentile evangelization³

Paul had to wait for the Church at Antioch to commission him, despite the fact that God called him directly to carry the name of the Lord before the Gentiles (9:15). Here again, is the emphasis on the role of the Church that one tends to neglect. Paul must relate to the church. But even more significantly, the Church has matured to the state where it recognizes that God's mission knows no bounds of caste, colour, race or sex. God's purposes had to be accomplished and the Jews were only the vehicle that he had chosen to use at a particular time in his sovereign plans for the fulfilling of his ultimate purpose.

The "Jerusalem to Rome" picture of the movement of mission from the Jews to the Gentiles is graphically depicted in the book Acts as Paul heads towards fulfilling his God given desire:

As Rome draws near, the interest thickens, and the climax is reached when Paul is established at the heart of the empire. 'proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the story of the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness, without let or hindrance—the triumphant peroration *akolutos* expressing Luke's exultation over the situation with which he concludes his work. Here is the final apologetic: not only do the provincial governors place no obstacle in the way of the Gospel, but in Rome itself the chief exponent of the Gospel is allowed to proclaim it unhindered.⁴

However, Paul has in no way divorced himself from his burden for the Jews. His intense longing for them to be saved is seen in his epistle to the Romans. But, this longing makes his burden for the Gentiles even more emphatic—there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him (Ro. 10:11). This conviction brings to the whole Jew to Gentile movement an even greater significance.

The movement is clear and we need to capture its relevance to our discussion. All through the history of his dealings with his people, God challenges them to move forward so that they could come closer to his ultimate vision for his world. The struggles of the Church in the book of Acts are symbolic of the deeper struggles that the Church faces today. The barriers erected are human and these need to be constantly knocked down. But some biblical criteria will be needed.

First, the mission of God calls men and women into a relationship with Jesus Christ, and through this reconciled the world to himself. Secondly, he has raised his Church, a community of men and women bound together in their relationship to this one Lord, so that through this Church he will continue to unfold his mission. In other words, in calling the Church to move beyond its boundaries to be involved in the fullest concern that God has for the world, he is not undermining the people he has already called to be the focal point in fulfilling this mission. He reminds them of the purpose of this calling. We get pre-occupied with the *channel*, but need to look beyond to the *purpose* for which this channel has been chosen.

The Second Movement: The Reconciliation of All Things

With the first movement accomplished, God takes his people towards the second. Paul emphasizes a movement from God's mission to the world to a mission that will give God sovereignty over all his creation. We note this in his letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians in the reference to God's "plan for the fullness of time" (Eph. 1:10). Even the

movement to the Gentiles seems far too small, for now God's mission is conceived of as total concern for the whole universe.

The fact underlined is that sin has universal ramifications. In portraying even the universe as needing reconciliation Paul asserts that the whole universe is separated from God because of sin. Peace must be made, oneness must be restored—only on grounds of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 1:20). For Christ's work to be total, God's mission must reach to all of his created order. Nothing is left untouched.

There is no hint of any universalism implying that all will be absorbed into Christ. On the contrary, the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ to whom all will be submitted is asserted. The entire universe depends on this Saviour, and on no other, for its salvation. The total submission of all creation will bring about its redemption which it waits.

The Gospel of the kingdom has been "bearing fruit in the whole world and growing" (Col. 1: 6). Even more, it has been "preached to every creature under heaven" (1: 23), and Paul has been commissioned to accomplish this task. Paul is satisfied that he has been faithful to this task assigned to him by the risen Lord, but is conscious of an even greater task that God is accomplishing through his dominion over all the universe. "The Christ who is the head of the church is also the fullness of God and Lord of the universe. Church and universe have been joined in the body of Christ."⁵

Paul points out that God has "made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph. 1:9ff). The horizon of the past that we have seen is that God has created with the primary intention of demonstrating his lordship. But men and women conflict with this desire, arrogating lordship to themselves. Creation at present

awaits the fulfilment of this originally intended purpose. Here again, God's total concern has to be taken into account so that we understand God's desire to restore his creation in his kingdom purposes.

When we consider the lordship of Christ over all things, we recognize our own small idea of God's mission. God's mission is much bigger than the Church's mission. Hence the Church's vision must not be restricted to short-sighted expressions of a redemption that looks no further than the redemption of its members nor even the salvation of only our world. "The union of the Jew and Gentile in the church becomes a sign and even instrument of the cosmic triumph and reconciliation being effected by God through Jesus Christ."⁶ We need to grasp this movement in order to see the ultimate dimension of God's mission.

The question is: "Can the church get involved in this cosmic mission?" In answer we must remember that all of God's mission cannot be accomplished only by the church. God's lordship over the entire universe, and in fact in the world, does not imply the Church's lordship. It is perhaps a misunderstanding of this lordship that leads us into triumphalistic representations of our mission. The Church needs to be faithful to its role of being all that God wants it to be without limiting itself to narrow perspectives. Committing itself to the lordship of Jesus Christ it needs to express itself in servanthood to the world. God will do the rest.

Broadening out the Church's vision in no way undermines individual salvation. But we are concerned about restricted views of such salvation. If we can capture even a glimpse of the cosmic curtain against which individual salvation must be seen, we would better appreciate God's concern for humanity. But in broadening, we must constantly stress the centrality of the community made up of individuals. When this community recognises God's cosmic concern it will appreciate its own local situation even more.

Jesus Christ's Lordship over Creation

Acknowledging Christ's lordship is key to our mission today. Paul's Christology in his epistle to the Colossians, elucidates some thoughts basic to our concern.⁷

First, Christ is given the central role in all creation, one in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. ". . . Jesus as the ultimate personification of God's creative presence, becomes not only the pattern but the very goal toward which creation tends."⁸ One can see Paul's concern to show the subordination of everything to Christ "so that in everything he might have the supremacy" (1:18). This assertion is the negation of false beliefs in the power of the created order itself. In Asia and Africa one is well aware of the worship of nature and the fear one lives under as natural calamities have devastated humanity. The recent environmental crisis is also moving people towards worship of Mother Earth. Even Hellenists thought of nature as a living and divine body but with God as its ruler.

Man in this Hellenistic area was not so much worried with his personal problems, his sin and his righteousness, as with problems of this world, the meaninglessness of life, the threat of an unavoidable fate, the tyranny of heavenly rulers, that is the star that determines every move of earthly life ...⁹

Our situation is no different. The message of God's salvation needs to stress God's absolute supremacy and the utter subjection of the universe to its Lord.

Paul's emphasis on Jesus Christ's lordship also attacks the Gnostic assumption of the duality of matter and spirit. Matter is evil and spirit is good. We have already referred to the Hindu belief of the devaluation of creation according to the concept of *maya*. Despite recent attempts to redefine this concept there is the strong teaching of an impersonal absolute and a worthless and illusionary creation.¹⁰ Monistic Hinduism complicates God's role even more by totally identifying God with creation. There is much false worship directed towards nature.

The biblical God is involved in His creation, but stands apart as its Lord. His lordship assumes that there is

nothing inherently evil about creation. However, Paul's longing for creation to be reconciled, in fact creation is "groaning" for redemption, confirms that sin has tainted creation. Creation now requires the work of God in Christ to reconcile the world to himself.

The stress on the total humanity of Jesus Christ is another factor we need to consider in dealing with the relationship of God to his creation. God did not see creation as completely evil, or else his Son would not have been allowed to enter creation. He allows his son to be manifest as the "first born of all creation"—a title of honour. When God himself esteems creation so highly, why have we not been more positive in our attitude? We have devastated nature and glibly dismissed ecological concerns as liberal or unrelated to the Church. When we truly get right with God we will get right with our world too.

Environmental destruction has assumed proportions large enough to threaten the very survival of humanity. No longer is it an academic exercise, but a concern that even the world's superpowers are not ignoring. The pressing problems of pollution, global warming, the "greenhouse effect", the depletion of the ozone layer and the rapid loss of plant and animal life all over the world must be tackled at the highest level. The earth's security is now threatened and the threat to continuing existence becomes a major concern. The Church has unfortunately sidelined any action outside its confines. God's mission expresses God's total concern. We must urge members of the church to be involved at various levels to help in their local situations.

Whatever our attitude to ecological action, we will accept that the root of all our problems today is human greed and selfishness. Even if we hesitate to directly address the environmental crises, our preaching against human sin itself should awaken consciences to recognize the wider effects of our sin. People will then get involved in rectifying the ill effects. Reconciliation must begin with the vertical dimension, with people made right with God, and

that will subsequently bring about people right with their environment.

Jesus Christ and the Church

A second aspect of Christ's cosmic lordship is his lordship over the Church. In emphasizing cosmic lordship one could easily get carried away with the idea of some mythical, all pervading force as in Greek or Hindu mythologies. The reality of Christ's lordship over all underlines the reality of his lordship over the Church. "The tenor of Christ's lordship is manifested historically and concretely in the community bound to him in love, the church."¹¹ In his being the head of the body, Paul is asserting that "the Church is the organism through which Christ acts, and which shares all the experiences of Christ."¹²

The impact of this assertion needs to be spelled out in the Church's mission in the world today. If Christ is really acting through the Church today, what should the church be demonstrating? Is there the heart of Christ for a lost world today? Is there a concern for the devastation of God's creation today? Would Christ allow the injustices that have penetrated the very fabric of our society and that consequently influence even the church today? What is required is a total commitment in absolute obedience, allowing Christ to truly work out his purposes through the Church today. Mission will be at its best when the Church's obedience to its Lord is at its highest.

Positively, we need to note that God places high premium on the Church as the agent to fulfil His mission in the world today. The Church having blunted the sharp edge of true mission has itself to blame for the rise of mission agencies or para-church movements. It is time for a healthy reversal of this trend. Granting that there is no stopping the mushrooming of mission bodies, the Church needs to find a valid corrective. Rather than being critical of such agencies, it needs to look at the Bible for a fresh understanding of the meaning of the Church itself. It has been

pre-occupied with its survival, its distinctives and perhaps in some cases even in working out its effectiveness as a worship centre. But a church that stops there, falls far short of what its Lord desires it to be. Mission agencies are part of God's plan to fulfil his deepest longings for mission to the world. In accepting this, the Church will not merely duplicate what is being done but will co-operate to offer the soundest corrective for effective proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel.

Jesus Christ and Universal Reconciliation

Evangelicals have stressed human reconciliation with God, often ignoring the wider implications of reconciliation depicted in the Bible. In its cosmic dimensions, the reconciliation depicted in Paul's letters embraces all the universe. "The vision of Paul is for a redeemed universe, a universe in which not only the people, but the very things were redeemed."¹³ If God is Lord of all, his mission must be a mission for all.

We must be careful to avoid any confusion between the universalism of certain theologies and the universality that is implied here. Origen's universalism claimed that in the end even the devil and all his angels would be reconciled. While God's mission is for all, not everyone may be willing to be subjected to His control. The New Testament makes it amply clear that there is an intelligent commitment involved between the one reconciled and the reconciler. Hence, God's kingdom concern does not automatically assume that all humanity will be reconciled.

Even though we assert God's concern for all of his creation, it is difficult to answer the question—Does this mean that God will eventually save all his creation? All that can be said is that his primary purposes are for people and we are sure those who commit themselves to him will be redeemed. But the influence of this reconciliation also extends to all of his creation.

However these things may be, this much is certain, God's only aim was to reconcile men to himself in Jesus Christ, the

medium by which he did so was the death of Christ which proved that there were no limits to his love, and that reconciliation extends to all the universe, in earth and heaven alike.¹⁴

The Church and God's Cosmic Mission

The cosmic scope of God's mission is set in its proper perspective in Paul's splendid introduction in the letter to the Ephesians (1:1-23). The kingdom mission is spelled out in its universal dimension with the responsibility and privilege of the church underlined. It not only possesses but also proclaims the ultimate plan of God. The Church has been blessed with supernatural insight into God's plan for his whole universe.

Here again, Paul does not allow the cosmic scope of Jesus Christ to remain in some abstract philosophical level, but actualizes it by first pointing to the gracious inclusion of the Gentiles, who "no longer are foreigners and aliens" but have become "fellow-citizens with God's people" (Eph. 2:19). This bringing together of Jew and Gentile is a demonstration of the bringing together of "all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (1:10). This reconciliation concretized in the Church, powerfully implies that in God's plan and purpose, missiology and ecclesiology go hand in hand. The church is not the object of God's mission. It is only the means of his fulfilling universal reconciliation.

The fact that is repeatedly underlined is that the Church must be involved in the fullest possible expression of God's kingdom mission in order for it to be truly the Church. There is no exemption to be claimed on any grounds. Paul's ecclesiology is one that reminds the Church of its prime purpose of being committed to God's ultimate plans through his redemptive mission. By doing so it finds its place in Christ, in whom "the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21).

Even the reference to "building up" does not sanction the appropriation of gifts for its own benefit but so that

God's ultimate intention may be fulfilled, viz., "through the church, the manifold wisdom of God may be made known . . ." (Eph. 3:10). The church in worship is not an end in itself, but for the building up of a more powerful witness. We should, however, avoid an overemphasis on either side, for that could only result in an incomplete and ineffective church. For instance, some churches get so caught up in mission that worship is neglected. This will only result in a weak witness. The Church in order to be a powerful witness, must strengthen itself in its worship.

The key to the heart of Paul's concern in Ephesians is the close link between the cosmic scope of God's kingdom mission and the centrality of the Church in making known this total plan. God's reconciliatory purposes for all, demonstrated in establishing his redeemed community, is declared through a people in worship committed to witness to God's ultimate purposes. There is a clear call to proclamation which has been neglected today. A mission without proclamation is incomplete.

One other movement could be mentioned in passing. There is a historical continuity of the Church in mission. The coming together of the Jews and Gentiles in God's eternal plan boasts of an historical foundation of the "apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus himself" (2:20). We stand today in continuity on this foundation. There is no need for us to re-establish "New Testament" churches today! One is amazed at the continuing call to go back to the New Testament church.

We could explode the myth of the New Testament church by reminding ourselves that they too had problems even as we have now. It was far from a perfect church. Rather than retreating into the harbour of a New Testament Church, we need to discover its continuity in history. The Church is ever growing seeking to become more and more the body that will glorify the Lord. Lessons are learned, some through utter failures, others through our success, but all are part of our continuous growth. Even warnings

that come through perversions and heresies are helpful in this process of growth of the body.

Paul's Prayer for the Church

Significant aspects in the powerful prayer of Paul in Eph. 1, could have direct bearing on our present discussion. First, Paul prays for a spirit of wisdom. 'Wisdom' has had a wide variety of uses—unusual ability and knowledge, a specialized knowledge, a judicial shrewdness etc. In the gospels it is generally "tied to the traditional Old Testament and Jewish conception, where wisdom is man's approach to life, arising out of his life in the covenant bestowed by God."¹⁵ It is the gift of God.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians contrasts the wisdom of this world with the wisdom of the cross. The cross seemed to be foolishness in the light of human wisdom, but God in his infinite wisdom cuts across human wisdom to reveal to us "the mystery of his will" (Eph. 1:9). This wisdom is not a particular insight nor secret knowledge but access to God's will enabling us to know him and his purposes better. Those who have the "mind of Christ" (1 Co. 2:10ff) are able to appreciate the deepest significance of this privilege.

The prayer for wisdom for the Ephesian believers implies that this wisdom is not something acquired through one's own abilities, but the gracious gift from God himself that will enable us to "know him better" (1:17). This reminder is required afresh in a day when human speculations replace the Spirit-led manifestations of God's mission. The wisdom and knowledge that lead to a better acquaintance with God himself are the greatest need for all involved in understanding and interpreting God's mission for the world today. The heavy stress on contextualizing the message may fail to impact the life of the messenger. We need to actualize our theology through an ongoing personal relationship with the God of mission.

Theologies based on human rationalization could place God on the periphery. Even our well-meaning evangelical

attempts concoct mission in tune with modern day obsession with success. Strategies are evolved to maximize results rather than seeking faithfulness to God's desires. The financial and technological resources available for today's missiologists can easily degrade mission into an earthly exercise where immediate results are manipulated rather than awaiting the ultimate fulfilment of God's purposes in his time.

Mission in its structured formulations and repeatable models, worked out without sensitivity to God's desires for each particular context, can stifle the newness of God's outworkings for each situation. The early Church realized the importance of waiting for God to empower them before they embarked on their mission. There were no neatly worked out plans, nor enormous resources, and yet the results were phenomenal. This should not mean that the most successful missions are the unstructured ones! We could err even more on that side. The reminder is for the Church to appropriate the wisdom of God fully in order to experience the freshness of God's plans awaiting to be actualized in its life for mission today.

Notes

1. Donald Senior and Carrol Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Missions*, SCM Press, London, 1983, p. 261.
2. *Ibid.*
3. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Tyndale Press, London, 1965, p. 31.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Senior and Stuhlmueller, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
6. *Ibid.* p. 191.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.* p. 196ff. Senior and Stuhlmueller develop these aspects, from where I have taken some of the points for our discussion.
9. Senior and Stuhlmueller draw their inspiration and quote from E. Schweizer, *Neotestamentica*, p. 325.

10. I have developed some of these aspects in an article published by Asia Theological Association in their book, *God in Asian Context*, pp. 108ff.
11. Senior and Stuhlmueller, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
12. William Barclay, *Letters to Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1972, p. 144.
13. *Ibid.* p. 148.
14. *Ibid.*
15. H. Weigelt, "Wisdom", *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, The Paternoster Press, p. 1030.