



2013 Winter

GREAT COMMISSION NEWS

Published by Great Commission Center International

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Function and Mission of God's People

By Chi-Yu King

During the last several decades, Chinese Christian churches have been paying increasing attention to mission and establishing more mission ministries even at distant locations and among different ethnic/cultural groups. An important issue recently in discussion is whether the missionary efforts should be made holistically, i.e., covering not only gospel preaching, disciple training, and church planting, but also efforts with many cultural aspects, such as, moral ethics, social care, justice, politics, education, science, arts, media, medical service, and family matters. Most recently, a British Bible scholar, Christopher Wright, through his books and conference presentations even proposed to enlarge the sphere of mission to cover ecological and environment-protection matters. His proposal has stimulated enthusiastic responses from Christians world wide. For example, the Cape Town Committee of Lausanne III, 2011, in South Africa called fellow Christians to take urgent and prophetic action on "creation care;" the Lausanne Movement has appointed a Senior Associate for Creation Care; and Lausanne, together with WEA and other organizations, sponsored a consultation in St. Ann Jamaica, which came up with two major conclusions in November 2012: (1) Creation care is indeed a "gospel issue within the lordship of Christ;" and (2) we are faced

with a crisis that is pressing, urgent, and that must be resolved in our generation.

According to Wright's view of the whole Bible, the blood of Christ was shed not only for the fallen human race, but also for the rest of the whole creation in order to make peace with God (Col. 1:20). Thus, he proposed that the Christians' "holistic mission" should include not only "gospel mission" and "cultural mission," but also the so-called "creation mission."

Wright's proposal, however, puzzled many Christians and triggered discussions among some Chinese Bible scholars (see a specials issue on "Exploration of Holistic Mission" of the Great Commission Bimonthly, vol 97, April 2012). Some of them wondered whether this proposal might have over-enlarged the range of Christian missionary efforts, thus rendering gospel preaching itself less effective. Some were alarmed by the possibility of the real Gospel being changed in nature into something else, like the "social gospel" of the last couple of centuries.

In this article, I would like to suggest that the above-mentioned perplexity may have been caused by a possible misunderstanding of Colossians 1:20 and by the

lumping together of almost all the churches' efforts into one task, the so-called "holistic mission."

The mission of God's people

The "mission" that Jesus Christ gave to his disciples was clearly and specifically recorded in the four gospels and the book of Acts (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). In it the Lord was sending his disciples out to preach the gospel as personal witnesses to all the peoples in the world both far and near, to get them to believe and be saved, to baptize them, and to make them disciples. Thus, the mission's dual goal is to get people saved and to help people to grow spiritually so that they may become more and more like Jesus in character and in daily behavior.

Beside this missionary task, Christian churches have other things to do, of course. These, I think, are mostly the natural consequence of Christians' transformed lives and may be regarded as their normal "functions," rather than their "missions." Before going further into the details, let us first try to clarify the question:

For whom was Christ's blood shed?

Wright's argument for Christ's blood being shed for all the creation is based solely on Colossians 1:20, which states (all quotations are in New King James Version), "... and by him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross." This verse indeed made the general statement of "to reconcile all things to Himself... through the blood of His cross," but it does not specify "How?" Thus, to properly understand this statement, we need to examine other relevant Scriptures. The traditional and my own understanding of numerous relevant Scriptures is that Jesus' blood was shed for all the human beings, and for them only, in order to reconcile them to God; once the human beings are reconciled, the rest of the creation will also become reconciled with God subsequently. My reasons for this understanding are as follows:

1. The problem between God and His creation was originally caused by the first human beings' sin against God, as recorded in Genesis 3. As a result, not only the human race became alienated from God, but the rest of the creation became deteriorated also, as evidenced by the cases of meteorological change (3:8) and the ground's being cursed (3:17-18). The rest of the creation's deterioration was originally not their fault, but human's.
2. Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:19-21: "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption

into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Thus, the creation's reconciliation with God will probably be a consequence of human beings' reconciliation with God, rather than being made directly and independently.

3. The point that Christ shed his blood for **man** only is more clearly shown in Hebrews 2:16, "For indeed he (Christ) does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham (**people** who are justified by faith)," in Jesus' calling of Apostle Simon Peter, "From now on you will catch **men**" (Luke 5:10), in Jesus' sayings that he came to seek and save that which was lost (**sinners**)" (Luke 19:10), and in Apostle Paul's writing "Who (God) desires all **men** to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and **men**, the **man** Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all (mankind), to be testified in due time" (1 Timothy 2:4-6).
4. The shedding of Christ's blood (as a **man**) is necessary for the forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22); whereas for the rest of creation, there is no sin to speak of. Because even the most intelligent animals were not made in God's image, do not have spirit to communicate with God, do not know God's law given through Moses, and do not know what is sinful; thus any of their wrong doings cannot be counted as sin (Rom. 3:20; 5:13). Nor can they understand the gospel message, and thus repent and ask God for forgiveness and be saved. Therefore, all the above-mentioned and other aspects of God's salvation are not meant for them, but for human beings only (Rom. 5:6-11). However, the rest of the creation do and will benefit from man's salvation, just as they have suffered from man's fall.

In short, the reconciliation of the rest of the creation which God mentioned in Col. 1:20 hinges on the human beings' reconciliation, and for this Christ shed His blood. Once human beings are reconciled with God, the rest of the creation will be also. As evangelical Christians, we should be true to the nature of the gospel and should not let it be perverted, as warned by Apostles Paul (Gal. 1:6-9) and John (2 John 9; Rev. 22:18). Also, as to taking care of the other things, such as ecology and environmental protection, there are other people and governments in the world beside the Christians, whereas preaching the gospel of salvation is the unique mission of God's people that no other people are qualified to do, or can do. Thus, on this God's people should focus.

The functions of God's people

Besides gospel preaching, Christians have other work in the world to do, which should not be neglected either. As Jesus said to his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth" and "You are the light of the world." These together with his many other teachings show that Chris-

tians should be functioning in many other ways for the betterment of the world they live in. Actually, to rule over the world for God was the original responsibility God assigned to Adam and Eve when they were created by God in His image (Gen. 1:26-28). However, due to their disobedience to God, they and the whole human race fell into sin and death. And human beings became not only short of God's glory (and image), but also short of being God-intended good rulers or care-takers of the world. Since sin and all the troubles "entered this world through one man (Adam)," it is God's plan to redeem this world through one man (Jesus Christ) (Rom. 5:12-19). This redemption and restoration process begins with mankind and then spreads to the rest of the creation.

So, as God's redeemed people, we are not only born again spiritually, but are also being renewed and transformed in our minds, thus to bear the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; see Gal 5:22-25) in our character and in our daily behavior. As a result, we may love God and our neighbors, and be the salt and the light of the world. When God's holiness, truth, and love are manifested in our lives, we may naturally function as agents of anti-corruption and illumination in this corrupt and spiritually dark world, and thus become better caretakers of the rest of the creation. In other words, in proportion to God's image being restored in us, we should be restored as the God-intended good caretakers of the rest of the creation also, whether in "cultural mission" or "creation mission."

The function and mission of God's people in practice

Of course, the manifestation of these Christian functions, in such social-care matters as disaster relief and education, does not have to always follow gospel preaching in time; they may sometimes precede it either out of the God-given love or for the purpose of facilitating gospel preaching. In any case, these tasks should never be allowed to substitute or weaken the critical missionary effort of gospel preaching to save lost human beings.

To carry out the various tasks properly, the individual Christians, churches, and organizations need to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit as well as the principles given in the Bible. Realizing the immensity of the task in contrast to our very limited ability and resources, we should not over-extend our effort, attempting to cover all aspects of the so-called the "holistic mission of God" with equal priority or emphasis, but should do our best with whatever we have in doing the specific things that God has led us to. Also, we need to keep in mind that God's ultimate goal is not to just make this world better, but to replace it with the new heaven and the new earth, in which we will live in our new incorruptible bodies with Christ forever. This is the good purpose of God, and something that only God Himself can do and will do when Christ comes again.

(Dr. King earned his Ph. D. in Physics from Cornell University and did his postdoctoral research in Seismology at the California Institutes of Technology. For decades he had engaged in Geophysics research at UCLA, USGS, NOAA, University of Tokyo, etc. He has been serving very actively in his church and parachurch organizations.)



大使命中心
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塑造推動宣教的牧者
**Transform pastors
into mission-mobilizing pastors**

塑造投身宣教的信徒
**Transform Christians
into mission-participating Christians**

US Supreme Court Will Decide the Marriage Act

By Bill Tam

Editor's Note:

In 2008, California voters passed the Proposition 8 to define marriage as only between one man and one woman. However, the opponents of traditional marriage initiated several law suit asking the court to rule Proposition 8 unconstitutional. Supporters of the Bill made appeals, first filing in California Supreme Court, then the 9th Circuit Court, and finally the Federal Supreme Court. It is our prayer that the Federal Supreme Court will honor the decision of the people. In November of 2012, the Federal Supreme Court announced that they will take up the case and make a decision before the summer of 2013. In order to help our readers understand the long-term influence of the ruling, we have invited the Executive Director of the Traditional Family Coalition, Dr. Bill Tam, to offer the following analysis.

The Supreme Court is taking up both the federal DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act) and California's Proposition 8 cases. A ruling is expected in 2013. Here are some conjectures to their rulings and possible repercussion for churches in California and in the USA.

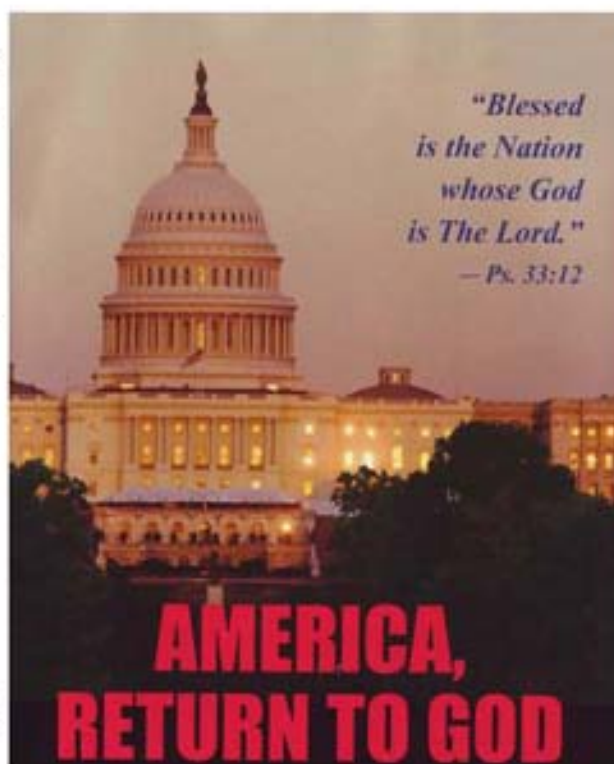
Scenario 1: Both laws are constitutionally sound.

Same-sex marriage would continue to be illegal in California and not recognized at the federal level. The Democrat-dominant California state legislators will work with homosexual communities to introduce a proposition to repeal the Proposition 8, and put on the 2014 ballot. We project that they may win and California would then recognize same-sex marriage in 2014.

With a Republican majority in the Congress, we project that DOMA would be kept intact at the federal level for the time being.

Scenario 2: Proposition 8 is ruled unconstitutional for California only.

Same-sex marriage would be lawful in California. California churches would face the challenge of same-sex couples requesting marriage ceremonies to be conducted at their sites. They would face lawsuits if they turn down these requests.



Scenario 3: Proposition 8 is ruled unconstitutional and the same argument applies to all other states.

Same-sex marriage would be legal throughout the country. US churches would face the challenge of same-sex couples requesting marriage ceremonies to be conducted at their sites. They would face lawsuits if they turn down these requests.

Scenario 4: DOMA is ruled unconstitutional.

The federal government would recognize same-sex marriage along with all the marriage rights granted to heterosexual marriages. The court may allow each state to define its marriage law, as most states already did, by passing either constitution amendment or statutory laws.

If the court, however, broaden the ruling to apply to all states, same-sex marriage would be legalized throughout the country. US churches would face the challenge of same-sex couples requesting marriage ceremonies to be conducted at their sites. They would face lawsuits if they turn down these requests.

Let us join hands to protect the traditional marriage which God initiated since the Garden of Eden. Pray earnestly to God that He will intervene in the outcome of the court case and call America to return to God!

WE HAVE FORGOTTEN GOD !

January, 2013



On October 30, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued A Proclamation For a Day of National Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. He said, in quote, "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven ... We have grown in number, wealth and power ... But we have forgotten God... we have become too self-sufficient...too proud to pray to the God that made us" !

This cautionary rebuke of a setting President of the United States to a prodigal nation over a century ago, could truly serve as a description as well as a warning to America today !

We have grown enormously in wealth, power and number. We have received unprecedented blessings from God. But we have rebelled against Him and violated His principles : our President has defiantly endorsed gay marriage which God detests (Lev. 18:22; Rom 1:26, 27); our law makers have made laws which encourage alienation or even enmity between Church and State; and our highest court has kicked God out of our public schools by outlawing prayer and Bible-reading in the classrooms.

If there is ever a time for us to plea for God's mercy upon America, it is NOW!

Our gracious Heavenly Father, we come humbly before you, with a contrite heart, do earnestly confess to you our personal, social and national sins.

O Lord, we have gravely offended you. We have been unfaithful, ungrateful and unrepentant. Our Government, Congress, Court and even some churches have sinned against you! We deserve your righteous judgment!

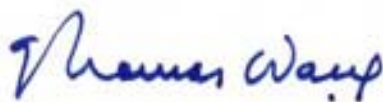
But because of the redeeming love of your Son Jesus Christ, and under His blood, we come assuredly before you to ask for your forgiveness; that through your loving-kindness, grant us another Awakening so that this nation which you have established will experience again a spiritual, cultural and national transformation as you intended it to be, "A City On the Hill".

Yet we know "judgment to begin with the family of God" (I Peter 4:17). To expect a national restoration, the church must first repent, and in turn, the clergy and leaders must first surrender to the Lordship of Christ in life and service.

O God have mercy upon us! Please intervene! Do not be silent! We earnestly seek your out-stretched hand for guidance, control and protection. America belongs to you. You are the Founder and Owner of this nation. Hear us O Lord, hear us!

We pray in the all-loving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!

Yours Very Sincerely,



Thomas Wang (Rev.)
President Emeritus
GCCl





World Mission News

Compiled by Samuel C. Y. Ling



USA: A recent survey showed that, for the first time, people affiliated with the Protestant Church has dropped below 50%. Those have no affiliation has grown almost four times since the 90s and correlates strongly with the decline of mainline churches. The evangelicals has been holding more or less steady since the 80s. Among the adults 18- to 29-year-olds, the evangelicals are still growing.

<Christianity Today, christianitytoday.com, December 12>

Indonesia: Fifty years ago, a missionary couple with an infant son came to the cannibalistic Sawi tribe in the remote area of West Papua with some fear and trembling. It turned out that the tribe viewed the infant as a sign of peace. With his 3 siblings, the child grew up among the Sawi. Earlier this year, the father and his 3 sons returned to Sawi not knowing what to expect besides being told that 2-3,000 will greet them and 50 wait to be baptized. Upon their arrival, thousands in traditional garbs shouted and cheered. After the Sunday service, 250 more stepped into the river to be baptized. The full story is chronicled in a book, "Peace Child," as well as movie.

<Pioneers, www.pioneers.org, 11/13/12>

China: An agency recently distributed a seemingly large number of 30,000 Bibles. But with the church growing by 35,000 per day, 50% of them in rural areas like where they were, it barely met 2 days' needs. After getting the Bible, a believer often reads it through in 6 weeks. 5 others will read it in the 1st year on average and 3 come to Christ. Healing sparked revival in one remote area. The agency people met a lady who lost her hair saw her hair grew back after accepted Christ. This inspired a man born mute. He accepted Christ and was given a voice with complete vocabulary. Their church now has 600 people.

<Bibles For China, www.biblesforchina.org, 11/20/12>

Deaf Bible: There are 300 million deaf people in the world, 70 million of them use sign, but only 2% of these have ever heard the gospel. Contrary to common perception, there are 200 to 400 different sign languages. An agency, having been recording Bibles for 40 years, has produced an app that will provide video American Sign Language Bible streaming anywhere around the world free on Deaf Bible.is. They received permission for 14 more languages to be added in a couple months.

<Faith Comes by Hearing, faithcomesbyhearing.com, 11/12/12>

Pakistan: The 14-year old mentally disabled girl wrongfully charged of blasphemy by burning pages of Koran last August is free. The court granted her bail in September after a cleric was detained on suspicion of planting evidence to stir up

anti-Christian resentment. The cleric is now on trial. The blasphemy law is popular. Past 2 years, 2 senior officials who suggested reform were shot dead. Since 1987, there have been some 250 cases. Most convictions were thrown out on appeal, but mobs often take the law into their own hands. 50 have been killed since 1990.

<Mission Network News/ www.mnnonline.org, 11/21/12>

Egypt: Amidst the political turmoil, a Christian satellite television station continues to cover current events and broadcast on a show every Sunday. The broadcast is strictly non-political, but with a Christian perspective in the form of citizens speaking to each other, praying for peace and non-violence, others outside praying for them, the hope in Christ, and God still in charge. A 2008 survey showed that 1.4% of 80 million population watched programs on the station.

<SAT-7, www.sat7.org, 11/29/12>

Congo-DRC: Since early 90s this nation rich in natural resources like gold, diamonds and timber has been at the center of conflict among nearby nations that killed 2.5 million from 1998 to 2001. Severe clashes renewed in 2008 forcing thousands to flee. The nation remains the world's poorest with 80% living on less than \$1 a day. An agency began to assist refugee children in 1995, and to help refugees rebuild their lives in the east in 2006. They have made sustainable progress: helping 129,000+ people; supplying 9,000 families with seeds, tools and training for improved agricultural practice; forming 179 income generating groups and 10 savings and loan associations; and providing 4 health centers with medical supplies.

<Food For the Hungry, www.fh.org, 11/27/12>

Spanish Study Bible: A group of 57 Latin American theologians contributed to the study Bible. Though printed in the US, it was with a Latin American mindset and authors from Latin America. It now can be used as a core source for pastors throughout Latin America who are highly literate but never had the opportunity for theological education.

<HCJB Global, www.hcjb.org, 11/16/12>

Australia: Thirty years after his first campaign in Newcastle, an evangelist returned to help more than 100 churches to reach new generations with the love and gospel of Jesus. 30,000 crowded the two-day CityFest venue for live music, kid-friendly shows and activities, and nightly gospel presentation. Several hundred people made decisions for Christ. This was the culmination of a season of ministry: 16 evangelistic events for students, military people, civic and business leaders, plus training and mentoring of 50 evangelists.

<Luis Palau Association, www.palau.org, 11/28/12>

Rev. Wang's Trip Update #1 : West Malaysia



At the age of 87, Rev. Wang arrived at Klang, West Malaysia to preach sermons in a Revival Meetings on November 2-4, 2012 in the Klang Chinese Methodist Church. Standing on the podium, with clarity and conviction, he delivered a message that excited the congregation. The first two sessions

were held on November 2nd & 3rd, with three to four hundred people in attendance. The third one on November 4th was the Holy Communion Sunday and the attendance was about eight to nine hundred people.

Rev. Wang on the first night used Acts 1:8 to remind us the command that Jesus gave to the disciples, that they should be His witness "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The word "and" was used three times to emphasize that church's mission work is not only local in nature but also globally. The second sermon's topic was "Arise and Shine." He encouraged the church to carry out both cultural and evangelical missions. In Sunday's sermon, Rev. Wang used the "10/40 Window" as the topic to challenge the church to focus on the unreached peoples. Moved by the earnest calling and challenge, seven brothers/sisters came forward and dedicated themselves to serve the Lord full-time. Rev. Wang prayed, blessed, and presented them to the Lord while they knelt before the podium.

During his visit in Malaysia, Malaysia Bible Seminary had an End-of-School ceremony in the morning of No-

vember 2nd, where Rev. Wang was invited to give a message. He was welcomed whole-heartedly by students and faculty, who gathered around him after the sermon to continue the dialogues eagerly throughout lunch time.

(Reported by: Rev. Teong Loke Yeo - the Senior Pastor in Klang Chinese Methodist Church, Klang, West Malaysia)



Photo:

Top Left: Rev. Teong Loke Yeo & Rev. Wang in Klang Chinese Methodist Church

Above: Left to Right, Mr. Tan Kim Sai(former Principal), Rev. Wang, Mrs. Wang, Dr. Jason Lim(Principal) in Malaysia Bible Seminary (MBS)

Bottom: Rev. Wang, Mrs. Wang and the students & faculty in MBS at the End-of-School ceremony



Rev. Wang's Trip Update #2 : Singapore



Rev. Thomas Wang is well-known among the older generation Christians in Singapore. He was the main speaker for the Singapore Chinese-speaking Church Ministerial Retreat in 1975. Through the love offering of a brother in Christ, over 100 pastors enjoyed both spiritual and physical nurturing at RELC hotel for a few days. As one of the participants, I still remember that meeting vividly.

Because of Rev. Wang's involvement in unreached people group ministries in the past 30 years, he seldom passed through Singapore. However, we still remember his powerful preaching and admire his passion for global mission.

When we learned from the President of GCCI, Dr. Sharon Chan that Rev. Wang has been invited to preach in Malaysia in early November, we took the opportunity and invited him to come to Singapore after his speaking engagement in Malaysia.

By the grace of God, we were able to arrange 3 evening Revival Meetings for Rev. Wang on November 7-9 at the Gelang Presbyterian Church. The meetings were sponsored by the Every Home Crusade of Singapore and the Singapore Chinese Christian Mission, and co-sponsored by over 20 churches and organizations.



In view of what happened in different parts of the world recently, Rev. Wang chose the theme of "The Second Coming of Christ and Global Mission" for this 3-day event. The sub-titles for the 3 evenings were: Rapture -- Tribulation, Millennium -- New Heaven and New Earth, and Global Mission. These were very timely messages for all of us.

We all admired Rev. Wang's enthusiasm and passion for God's work even in his old age. No one could imagine an 87-year old man had the energy to travel from the United States to Malaysia and Singapore for a two-week preaching ministry. Moreover, when he was behind the pulpit, he looked like a person in his 60s, preaching powerful and encouraging messages.

During his stay in Singapore, a sister from Singapore Technology College interviewed him at the Chin Lien



Bible College about his personal encounter with Dr. John Sung in the 1930s. Rev. Wang was one of the fruits of Dr. Sung's evangelistic meetings in the 1930s and was invited by the Singapore John Sung Evangelistic Crusade to speak at one of their Bible Conferences in Malaysia in 1971.

We thanked God for all His blessings upon the speaker and the cooperation among churches in Singapore. May all Glory and praises be unto our living God!

(Reported by Mr. Kei Keng Tai, Director of Every Home Crusade, Singapore)

Photo:

Top Left: Rev. Wang preaching in Revival Meeting at Gelang Presbyterian Church, Singapore

Bottom Left: Rev. Wang blessed the brothers and sisters dedicating themselves to God

Above: The congregations at Gelang Presbyterian Church