

**The Missionary Context at the Turn of the XVIII Century: A Review of Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and the Church of England Mission Models**

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**Presented at the Oxford Institute for Methodist Studies**

**Pembroke College**

**Oxford, UK**

**August 2018**

**Introduction**

When John Wesley is born in 1703 there was already a long and complicated history of Christian missions. Seventeen centuries after Christ, Christianity had spread to six continents with some successes and some setbacks. Considering that Jesus was born in the small village of Bethlehem and raised in the isolated region of Galilee, it is a miracle that Christianity had survived at all. After all, Nathanael said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth” John 1:46). The Bible scholar, John Meier, describes the improbability of the emergence of Christianity in his book, *A Marginal Jew*. Meier describes the peripheral status of Palestine as an occupied territory at the margin of the Roman Empire, and even for the Jews Galilea was considered a backward rural region far from the center of religious and political power in Jerusalem. This makes today’s discussion about the spread and growth of Christianity even more unlikely.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the mission models and missiology that were in existence leading up to the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is the world in which John Wesley was raised and the context that shaped his missiological views. My thesis is that John Wesley was a product of the time period in which he lived and his attitudes toward mission developed with his historical context. His views on mission were shaped by the models he observed and adopted, or in some cases, reacted against. Due to space constraints the paper does not discuss the German Pietists whose missionary efforts began in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century nor the Moravians whose missionary efforts began during Wesley’s lifetime. The paper begins much further back with the origins of the Eurocentric view of the world shaped by the Age of Exploration and ends at the year of Wesley’s birth: 1703. The paper examines four mission models and missiology within four main traditions: 1) Roman Catholic, 2) Lutheran, 3) Calvinist, and 4) the Church of England.

**The Age of Exploration**

The Middle Ages or Medieval period in Europe spans from the fall of the Roman Empire until the European encounter with the native peoples of the Americas in 1492. Some historians also refer to this period as the Dark Ages due to the sharp decline in civilization with high illiteracy rates, a feudalistic system that trapped peasants in a cycle

of poverty, and a lack of hygiene and health care that led to mass death such as the Black Plague episodes that eradicated half of Europe's population in 1347 and 1353.

Ironically it was the Crusades that exposed a closed European society to Middle Eastern and Asian cultural advances. Although the Crusades are considered to be a military and public relations disaster for Europe and Christianity, the Crusaders observed a different way of life that included advances in science, math, literature, and medicine. They were also exposed to Asian merchandise that came through the Silk Route. After the Crusades Europe wanted access to these goods and attempted to travel overland on the Space Route.

As far back as Aristotle philosophers had contemplated that the world was round due to the circle shadowed caste on the earth during a lunar eclipse. Aristotelian thought and scientific method were adopted by Arab civilization in the study of astronomy and medicine. For example, Caliph Al-Ma'mun, who ruled Bagdad between 813-833, appropriated Pythagoras's geometric findings and assigned two survey teams to draw a line from the North to the South pole to measure the earth's radius. It was also the Arab civilization that created the system of reducing mathematical equations that we now know as algebra, which is derived from the Arabic "al-jabra."<sup>1</sup> Also the word algorithm comes from the 9<sup>th</sup> century Muslim scholar Al-Khawarismi.<sup>2</sup> These mathematical equations and scientific advances became necessary building blocks for the Age of Exploration that were appropriated from the Arab civilization as a result of nearly eight centuries of Muslim occupation of the Iberian peninsula.

The Muslims crossed the Straights of Gibraltar from North Africa in 711 and completed the conquest of Spain, Portugal and across the Pyrenees into parts of southern France in 726. The Caliphates ruled the Iberian peninsula for nearly eight centuries and for some of that time Spain enjoyed peaceful periods of religious tolerance between Jews, Christians and Muslims—in some regions more than others. Yet the Christian fight to regain religious dominance began in 1094 with the victory of Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, aka "El Cid" that ignited the internal Holy War, which Spanish is called "La Reconquista." A year later Pope Urban II called for the reconquering of the Holy Land and launched the Crusades—a series of military and spiritual pilgrimages to the Middle East between 1095 and 1272. Within Spain the Christians gained the upper hand in 1469 when Isabel de Castillo and Fernando de Aragon married and unified their providential armies and pushed Muslims south to their final foothold in Granada. Finally Sultan Mohamed VII surrendered and abandoned the Alhambra Castle on January 2, 1492. The Muslim defeat combined with the Spain's drive for religious purity also called for Jews to convert or leave the country resulting in Sephardi (or hidden) Jews.

Nearly eight centuries of Muslim occupation of Iberian was more than enough time for the Spanish and Portuguese to glean the scientific and mathematical advances, which were appropriated by the Portuguese for navigation. Already avid sailors, the Portuguese ventured off-shore and discovered the islands of Azores in 1430, continuing down the coast of Africa by Cape Bojador in 1434. The occupation of the Canary Islands prompted Pope Nicholas V to offer Portuguese King Alonso V a papal bull entitled

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<sup>1</sup> María Rosa Menocal, *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2002, 180.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

“Romanus Pontifex” in 1455. This bull became the basis for what we know today as the Doctrine of Discover and states the following:

We [therefore] weighing all and singular the premises with due meditation, and noting that since we had formerly by other letters of ours granted among other things free and ample faculty to the aforesaid King Alfonso -- to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit...<sup>3</sup>

The Portuguese continued exploring down the African continent to Sierra Leone in 1462 and anchored off Ghana in 1471 and built the Elmina Castle on the Gold Coast in 1482. In 1487 Bartolomeo Díaz came around Cape Hope in South Africa and this opened passage to India. Finally, Vasco de Gama arrived in Calcutta in 1498.<sup>4</sup>

It is in this same context that Christopher Columbus lived and worked. Born in the Republic of Genoa, Columbus arrived in Portugal in 1476 and began working as a cartographer. Then he joined a fleet that sailed to Iceland and Ireland in 1477. In 1479 he married his first wife, Felipa a noble from the Perestrello e Moniz family. Between 1482 and 85 Colon traveled to the Gold Coast and visited Elmina Castle in Ghana. He then had the skills and knowledge to search for a shorter route than the overland Spice Road and the sea route around Africa. Columbus asked Portuguese King João II and then petitioned Queen Isabela. His expedition had the blessing of the Roman Catholic Church to conquer and evangelize non-Christian peoples. Columbus wrote:

...The present year of 1492, after Your Highness had brought to an end the war with the Moors who ruled in Europe and had concluded the war in the very great city of Granada, where this present year on the second day of the month of January I saw the Royal Standards of Your Highness placed by force of arms on the towers of the Alhambra, which is the fortress of the said city; and I saw the Moorish King come out of the gates of the city and kiss the Royal Hands of your Highnesses and of the Prince my Lord; and later in that same month, because of the report that I had given to Your Highness about the lands of India and about a prince who is called “Grand Khan,” which means in our Spanish language “King of Kings”; how, many times, he and his predecessors had sent to Rome to ask for men learned in our Holy Faith in order that they might instruct him in it and how the Holy Father had never provided them; and thus so many peoples were lost, falling into idolatry and accepting false and harmful religions; and Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians and Princes, lovers and promoters of the Holy Christian Faith, and enemies of the false doctrine of Mahomet and of all idolatries and heresies, you thought of sending me, Cristobal Colon, to the said regions of

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<sup>3</sup> “Romanex Pontifex,” <http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/indig-romanus-pontifex.html>

<sup>4</sup> Neill, 37.

India to see the said princes and the peoples of the lands, and the characteristics of the lands and of everything and to see how their conversion to our Holy Faith might be undertaken. And you commanded that I should not go to the East by land, by which way it is customary to go, but by the route to the West, by which route we do not know for certain that anyone previously had passed. So, after having expelled all the Jews from all of your Kingdoms and Dominions, in the same month of January Your Highnesses commanded me to go, with a suitable fleet, to the said regions of India. And for that you granted me great favors and ennobled me so that from then on I might call myself “Don” and would be Grand Admiral of the Ocean Sea and Viceroy perpetual Governor of all the islands and lands that I might discover and gain and [that] from now on might be discovered and gained in the Ocean Sea.<sup>5</sup>

After having found land on October 12, 1492, Columbus returned to Spain and Queen Isabel immediately commissioned a second expedition that included a Dominican friar to instruct the “Indians” about the Christian faith. These expeditions were very expensive and finding a faster trade route to India and seeking riches were always the goal, nevertheless the Spanish were sincere in their duty to spread the Holy Faith.

The New World presented new exploration and conquering opportunities and Spanish and provoked another papal bull, this time from Pope Alexander VI, with the intent to divide the territories evenly between the Portuguese and Spanish with a line from the North to the South pole between the islands of Las Islas Verdes and los Azores. This bull was later revised and expanded in the Treaty of Tordesillas with a new line that divided South America in half allowing the Portuguese the rights to what today is Brazil. This treaty is depicted in the 1984 Oscar award-winning movie “The Mission,” and is set in Iguazu Falls. In May my wife and I visited the falls and one day saw the falls from the Brazilian side and the following day crossed the border downriver and saw the falls from the Argentinian and Paraguayan side.

A third papal bull entitled “*Eximiae Devotionis Sinceritas*” was emitted on May 4, 1493 and gave the King of Spain the same rights that were already granted to the Portuguese. Namely to create dioceses, name and appoint bishops, create monasteries, name and assign missionaries to the discovered territories.<sup>6</sup>

While the Portuguese and Spanish were the first explorers of the Age of Discovery, it did not take long for word of their “discoveries” to spread to other European countries with worldwide ambitions. The Dutch, French, and English were not far behind.

Before leaving for Georgia as a missionary John Wesley knew about Spanish colonialism and the geopolitical tension between the Spanish and English. For example, Wesley wrote his mother that “the Spaniards daily plunder our merchantmen as fast as they can catch them in the West Indies.”<sup>7</sup> Also, the British pirates intercepted the gold extracted from South America and Mexico on its trade routes to Spain. Spanish forts along the coasts of South American and the Caribbean in places such as Cartagena, Havana, and St. Augustine, Florida as lasting evidence of the dangers of maritime travel. The Spanish fleet was feared and earned the nicknamed “*la Armada Invencible*”. In 1588

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<sup>5</sup> Christobol Colon, *Los Cuantró Viajes del Admirante y su Testimonio*, Biblioteca Virtual Universal.

<sup>6</sup> Neill, 42.

<sup>7</sup> 29 de Julio de 1725.

King Philip II attacked Holland and England through the English Channel during the rule of Queen Elizabeth, but Captain Francis Drake defeated the Armada in a fortuitous victory.<sup>8</sup>

When Wesley went to evangelize the Native Americans in Georgia in 1725 the Spanish had already been in the New World for two centuries. Wesley began studying Spanish in order to communicate. It was a precisely a Sephardi Jew, Dr. Samuel Nuñez, who had escaped the Inquisition in Portugal, who taught Wesley Spanish in exchange for English classes for his daughter.<sup>9</sup> Wesley was in disagreement with the Spanish treatment of the Native Americans, which was confirmed in his conversation with Chief Tomochichi:

I am happy that you have come. When I was in England, I desired that someone would speak to me about the Great Word. Well then my nation desires to hear as well. But now we are all confused. Nevertheless I am glad you have come. I will go up and speak to the wise men of our nation. And hope that they will listen. Now we will not become Christian as the Spanish make Christians. We will be taught before we are baptized.<sup>10</sup>

As a matter of fact, Tomochichi's father had been assassinated by the Spanish for not accepting forced conversation.<sup>11</sup>

## Roman Catholic Mission Models

In 1735 when Wesley arrived in Georgia the Catholics had been evangelizing in the New World for two centuries under the Doctrine of Discovery. Many of the early shipmates had previous experience fighting the Reconquista to expel Muslims and Jews from Spain. However not all Catholics were violent, and many friars were earnest in their attempts to teach catechism in a civil way.

One of the Catholic missionaries who introduced the indigenization of the gospel was the Italian Jesuit, Matteo Ricci who traveled to China in 1582. His missionary method was intellectual as he learned Mandarin and read Confucius' works. Earning the respect of the Chinese he introduced much Western knowledge translating six classic texts and drawing world maps. Ricci also adopted many local customs including dress and mannerisms and became known as "Li Madou." Earning trust as an insider, Ricci is largely believed to be the first European to be accepted by the prestigious "Circle of Mandarins" and enter the forbidden city. In 1582 he became the first Westerner to publish a book in Mandarin, which was the Catholic catechesis. Thanks to Ricci's indigenization method, Catholics opened more than 60 churches in China and had more

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<sup>8</sup> "Spanish Armada", Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Armada-Spanish-naval-fleet>

<sup>9</sup> Philip Wingeier-Ray, "A Wesleyan Theology of Religions: A Re-Reading of John Wesley through his Encounters with Peoples of Non-Christian Faiths," *Methodist Review*, vol.10, winter 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Wesley recorded in his journal on February 14, 1736, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 20: Journals and Diaries III (1743–1754), ed. W. Reginald Ward & Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 149.

<sup>11</sup> Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1995, 62.

than 200 missionaries and enjoyed a good relationship with the Chinese until the Qing Dynasty.<sup>12</sup>

However Ricci's indigenization method was not universal and in many other regions around the world Catholic missionaries participated in the colonial efforts to impose European culture upon native peoples, including mass baptisms and even genocide. On some occasions the tie between the Crown and Roman Catholic Church was so close that the friars taught the European language, culture and trade skills as a type of cultural imperialism. In New Spain there were several interconnected mission systems, the Alamo in San Antonio, for example, that formed part of Spanish defense against Anglo Protestants in the north. Church cooperation with European colonization was not unique to Catholics, however as Protestants have committed similar infractions.

## **Martin Luther**

Shortly after Columbus' maiden voyage to the New World, Martin Luther (1483-1543) provoked another chapter in religious history with the publication of his 95 theses. His challenge of the Roman Catholic practice of indulgences was both the result of and a step toward a new worldview marked by Humanism, individualism, anti-authority, and the return to original sources. Luther's doctrinal teachings were *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Fe*, *Sola Gratia* (vs. law), and the priesthood of all believers.

On October 31, 1517 the Dominican friar posted his thesis on the door of the Wittenberg Church and four years later on April 2, 1521 was ex-communicated from the Roman Catholic Church, marking the Protestant Reformation. Although this incident and Columbus' travels may seem completely independent they were linked through the Holy Inquisition. The thirst for religious uniformity and purity pushed Europeans to have little tolerance for Muslims and Jews, and likewise, theological diversity. The Inquisition produced religious refugees—many of whom—were to find an escape valve in the New World.

## **Lutheran Mission Models**

Generally speaking Lutheran Church was not very mission oriented for several reasons. In the first place, the Protestant Reformation began in Germany that did not have a prominent navy, and as a consequence, was not an early protagonist in European colonial expansion. So Germans did not have the same colonial ambitions as the Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch—at least not at the time of the Protestant Reformation. In second place, its vision was much more focused on reforming Europe—especially those regions that had a strong Roman Catholic presence. So Lutheran ecclesiology was not all that different from Roman Catholics, in the sense that the Church and the State should closely collaborate to create Christendom. So whatever the religion of the king, so be the people.

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<sup>12</sup> Carlota Falco Vich, "Matteo Ricci: El Jesuita que evangelizó a China", Forum Libertas, 20 de enero de 2010 <http://www.forumlibertas.com/matteo-ricci-el-misionero-jesuita-que-evangelizo-china/>

The first generation of reformers spent so much of their time and energy dealing with the conflicts with Catholics, that there was no thought for foreign missions. It was not until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 that the religious wars subsided enough to clarify which regions would be Catholic and which Protestant and each religious could have enough energy to think about something besides mere survival. Nevertheless, the Reformation marked not only a theological shift, but also cultural and scientific advances in European civilization such as the challenge to authority, Guttenberg's invention of moveable type, individual expression, personal expression, and orientation toward personal salvation that all contributed to a new missiological model. For example, Luther's translation of the Bible and the ability to print the Bible made its distribution much more prolific and widespread.

The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* placed much more emphasis on God's ability, through his Word, to convert people. This was part of the humanist emphasis of returning to original sources to test authority and seek truth, and thus sought read Scripture in its original languages. Based on his high view of Scripture, Lutheran missiology taught that human effort was not so necessary since God's Word was sufficient to evangelize. For example, Luther used a metaphor of world evangelism as throwing a stone in a pond. A stone creates a ripple effect spreading God's word to the shore.

Regarding the authority of the Pope, Luther believed that if indeed the Pope were the Vicar of Christ, he would preach to the Turks instead of calling upon the secular rulers to attack militarily.<sup>13</sup> Therefore Luther was not in agreement with the use of force to coerce non-Christians to convert, but he did allow for secular rulers to use force for the sake of governing.<sup>14</sup>

The doctrine of justification by faith placed emphasis on individual conversion. While the Roman Catholic Church relied on the tradition of councils and the Pope, Lutherans put more weight on the efficiency of the Word and the grace of God. Humans are totally deprived and have a limited role in our order of salvation and God shall do the rest. The central role of Scripture in Lutheran's missiology can be seen in his interpretation of Mark 16:15 "Go ye into all the world." While acknowledging that the disciples did not preach throughout the whole world, Luther likens the Word to a stone thrown into a pond producing ripples that will continue until reaching the shore. So it is with the preaching begun by the disciples and continued on through the present age.<sup>15</sup>

Another central tenet of Lutheran theology is the belief in the "Priesthood of all Believers" that opens the door for lay participation in missionary work. A baptized Christian did not have to be ordained or a friar, nor leave one's secular duties (i.e. marriage) to have a missionary calling. So lay people can serve as missionaries, but they must do so without the support of a religious order, such as the Society of Jesus, Franciscans, Dominicans or Carmelites. This meant that an early Lutheran missionary did not have the same institutional or economic support from a religious order or from a government. Luther was happy with this shift because he was against the threat of

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<sup>13</sup> Gustav Warnack, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1906, 11.

<sup>14</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991, 245.

<sup>15</sup> Ingemar Oberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007, 146.

violence or psychological manipulation, for example that of the sale of indulgences for the forgiveness of sins.

One well-known doctrinal change accredited to Luther was the reduction of sacraments from seven to two under the rationale that a sacrament must have been instituted by Christ. And since Jesus was never confirmed, forgiven, ordained, married, nor was it necessary to perform extreme unction, so must those sacraments be eliminated by the church. As a result, only baptism and the Eucharist remained as rituals that Jesus actually did institute and command his disciples to do likewise. The problem with Luther's sacramental reduction was creating a real and visible difference between Catholic and Protestant liturgy.

In the aftermath of the Reformation there was a theological debate on the validity of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) between two Lutheran theologians Adrian Saravia (1531-1613) and Philip Nicolai (1556-1608). The former believed that the Great Commission was still valid and pushed the church to reach out beyond Christendom, meanwhile the latter argued that the Great Commission had ceased to be relevant for the contemporary church and world. Nicolai's rationale was that the church should do missionary work, but it could never compare to the foundational work of the apostles. As a result, Nicolai distinguished between the early mission work of the apostles as "mission," and the later church extension as "*propagatio*."<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion Luther himself did not write much about mission and evangelism of non-Christian persons because he was more focused on the internal divisions within Christendom and frankly, Germany was not as involved or exposed to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century global expansion. Luther also placed great hope in the Word of God to convert on its own as a stone thrown into a pond. The central beliefs of *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Fe*, *Sola Gratia* and the Priesthood of All Believers was an opportunity for lay missionaries, which would open the door for the pietistic renewal movement that we will explore later in this paper.

## Calvinist Mission Models

Another mission model in the century immediately leading up to Wesley's ministry was the Calvinist or better known as Puritan. In England and around Europe Calvinists suffered persecution at the hands of the Roman Catholic effort for religious uniformity. The New World became an escape valve for persecuted groups to seek refuge, have religious freedom and build an ideal society.

Generally speaking, Puritans subscribed to the doctrines of limited atonement and predestination, which were counterproductive for mission work among non-Christians. The Puritan interpretation of being God's chosen people led to deeply held American belief of Manifest Destiny that embolden Americans of European decent to push Native Americans off their land under the theological guise of entitlement.

There was a group of thirteen persecuted French Huguenots who established a colony on the Bay of Guanamara in 1555, which today is Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Jean De Lery wrote an eye witness of the experience fleeing to a place where the Huguenots

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<sup>16</sup> Bosch, 249.

desired to “serve God according to the reformation of the Gospel and prepare a place for those desiring to escape persecution.”<sup>17</sup>

Back in England Puritan missiology gained more formality from the teaching and writing of Richard Sibbs (1577-1635) who was trained at St. John’s College in Cambridge and lecturer at Holy Trinity. Sibbs developed a missiology based on Scriptures as indisputable and above the authority of all other doctrines. He believed that God is the sovereign Lord of missions and Christ will return to complete his work.<sup>18</sup> The goal of missions is the response of man and God has divinely appointed the means to accomplish the mission, namely the verbal preaching of the gospel by ministers and then laity in their ordinary callings, for example “merchants, and those that give themselves to navigation, they may with good success carry the gospel to all people.”<sup>19</sup> Sibbs believed that the gospel had the power to convert savages [sic] and made the comparison to England before the arrival of Christianity:

Let no man therefore despair; nor, as I said before, let us not despair of the conversion of those that are savages in other parts. How bad soever they be, they are of the world, and if the gospel be preached to them, Christ will be ‘believed on in the world’. Christian’s almighty power goeth with his own ordinance to make it effectual.<sup>20</sup>

Sibbs’ primary motivation for missions was the glory of God, compassion for the heathen [sic], and obedience to divine authority.<sup>21</sup> However the need of witnessing as a by-product of faith, is a more compelling motivation for doing missions than obedience go God. Although John Wesley read and respected Sibbs, ultimately they had differing views on the motivation for mission.<sup>22</sup> Another person who read Sibbs and was motivated by his writings was Richard Baxter.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) was ordained in the Anglican Church in 1638 and became a leading non-conformist, advocate of Puritan missions and contemporary of Samuel Annesley. Together they were both silenced and faced persecution following the Act of Uniformity in 1662. It was not until the Act of Tolerance in 1689 that non-conformists could remain in England without persecution, but during the better part of the seventeenth century many Europeans emigrated and sought to practice their religious beliefs in peace, and thus become exposed to non-Christians in foreign lands. Baxter was a supporter of Christian work among non-Christians and his works referred to the great 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century great missionary movements—especially *A Treatise of Conversion* and *A call to the Unconverted to Turn and Live*. Baxter espoused a missionary theology. Of the fifteen duties of the minister, the first four are missional:

- 1) “To preach the Gospel for the conversion of the unbelieving and ungodly world;”

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<sup>17</sup> Jean de Lery, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*, Geneva, 1578.

<sup>18</sup> Sidney H. Rooy, *The Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition*, Audobon Press, 2006, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Sibbs, *Works of Richard Sibbs*, Edinburgh: Joel Creig & Sons, 1929, vol. V, 512,

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 517.

<sup>21</sup> Rooy, 65.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Dreyer, *The Genesis of Methodism*, Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1999, 90.

- 2) "To repent, and believe, and be reconciled to God;"
- 3) "To receive into his house as fellow citizens of the saints, and the of the household of God;"
- 4) "To gather these converts into solemn assemblies ordered churches."<sup>23</sup>

In spite of Baxter's ministerial duties, he recognized that English preachers were not really reaching out to native peoples. In his scan of foreign missions, he can only applaud the Jesuits and criticize the Protestants for not preaching to the unconverted:

The condemne the best worke that even the Jesuites did in the world: Though by the corrupt End of subjecting Kingdomes to the Pope, and by much corruption in managing their worke they disgrace and hinder it, yet I take it to be my duty greatly to honour them, for what they have done in Congo, Japan, China and other countries, if Maffaeus and many others are to be believed: Yea I think them much more laudable that did those great things though in a culpable manner, than those Protestants that ever had opportunity, and having done nothing themselves, but find fault with them that did it.<sup>24</sup>

Germinating from his missiology and criticism of the lack of Protestant mission activity, Baxter was supporter of Puritan missions among the Native Americans. He helped John Elliot to found the Corporation for the Promotion of the Gospel in New England in 1649. He also facilitated the translation of Christian literature into other languages—including Arab and Native American languages. Samuel Wesley was influenced by Baxter and heard him preach once noting that he glowed with "a strange fire and pathos."<sup>25</sup> John Wesley, himself, read and was influenced by the Baxter's theology and implications for missiology found in *Aphorisms of Justification*, and motivated to publish an abstract.<sup>26</sup>

Baxter's missional emphasis among Puritans led directly to John Eliott's (1604-1690) outreach to the Narragansett Indians near Martha's Vineyard. As a result of his contact with the indigenous he was motivated to translate the Bible and some twenty other books into Algonquian. John Eliott's missiology follows what we know today as the Homogeneous Unit Principal.<sup>27</sup> Namely that he believed it would be difficult for the English to reach Indians because of the linguistic and cultural barriers.<sup>28</sup> While he himself dedicated four decades to this work he realized that it was "hopeless" to get English pastors to minister to Native Americans for three reasons: 1) work is full of hardship, 2) Native Americans cannot afford the minister's support, and 3) the English cannot

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Baxter, "Christian Ecclesiastics" in *The Complete Works of Richard Baxter*, Vol. III, 1673, 556.

<sup>24</sup> Rooy, 127.

<sup>25</sup> Marcus L. Loane, *Makers of Religious Freedom in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, London, 1960, p.183.

<sup>26</sup> Frederick J. Powickle, *A Life of Rev. Richard Baxter, 1615-1691*, II, London, 1924.

<sup>27</sup> The Homogenous Unit Principle (HUP) is a sociological concept adopted by Donald Macgavran of the Church Growth school of world evangelization. Donald Macgavran defined a unit as "a section of society in which all members have some characteristic in common." Basically, the HUP argues that a people of certain sector of society (ethnicity) are best suited to evangelize other members of that sector than an outsider.

<sup>28</sup> Rooy, 183.

communicate as well as native speakers.<sup>29</sup> And therefore toward the end of mission work encouraged some Native Americans to be trained in the liberal arts, sciences, and theology to serve as pastors.<sup>30</sup> First of all, he led by example and set out to teach prayer and Christian doctrine to a few Native Americans so that they could become Christian, and in turn, teach their fellow tribesmen.

In spite of Eliott's view of mission he worked hard to learn the Algonquin language and ministered among Native Americans in New England between 1630 and 1670. Over time, some Native Americans learned English especially when there was a close relationship and children frequented the English homes. During his four decades of ministry among Native Americans, there were many letters and eleven tracks written which eleven described Eliott's experiences. In one track entitled, *The Day-Breaking, If not the Sun-Rising of the Gospel with the Indians in New England*, an observer summarized Eliott's sermon:

...all the principall matter of religion, beginning first with a repetition of the Ten Commandements, and a briefe explication of them then shewing the course and dreadfull wrath of God against all those who brake them, ...and so applied it unto the condition of the Indians present, with much sweet affection; and then preached Jesus Christo to them the onely meanes of recovery from sinne and wrath and eternall death, and what Christ was, and whither he was now gone, and how hee will one day come againe to judge the world in flaming fire; and of the blessed state of all those that by faith believe in Christ, and know him feelingly...<sup>31</sup>

After this sermon there were three hours of questions and dialogue between Eliott and the Native Americans and according to witnesses the Indians were not weary. Two weeks later there was a second gathering that drew a larger audience.<sup>32</sup>

The emphasis of the last decade from 1660-1670 was the establishment of the Indian church resulting in the organization of an Indian church on August 22, 1670 on Cap Cod where several Native Americans adults and children baptized, and Richard Bourne was named as pastor. In total, Eliott created 14 praying communities that included about 4000 people. During King Philip's War many of the villages were damaged and he spent his later years helping to restore them.<sup>33</sup>

### **Mission Models of the Church of England**

The first British colony in America began in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607 and expanded to thirteen during Wesley's formative years. The first Caribbean colony was Bermuda in 1612 and from there British territories expanded throughout the Caribbean

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<sup>29</sup> Rooy, 219.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> John Eliott, John Wilson, and Thomas Shepard, *The Day-Breaking, If not the Sun-Rising of the Gospel with the Indians in New England*, 1647.

<sup>32</sup> Rooy, 181.

<sup>33</sup> Ernest Hawkins, *Historical Notices of the Missions of the Church of England in the North American Colonies*, London: B. Fellowes, 1845, 11.

where they had to fight the Spanish, French and Dutch to expand and protect their territories. In this same year the East India Tradition Company was founded to expand trade between Europe and Asia, extending further East beyond India to Singapore and Hong Kong earning the expression “The sun never sets on the British empire.” Colonial expansion provided an opportunity for explorers, soldiers, adventurers, business men, opportunists and religious dissidents to seek a better future. It was not until the Act of Tolerance in 1689 that non-conformists such as Quakers and Puritans could remain in England without persecution.

Anglican treatment of Native Americans was different from that of Roman Catholics and Puritans who had come before, namely they did not feel a duty to evangelize nor the obligation to interact. For example, the Spanish were predominantly male conquistadores that often intermarried with Indigenous princesses creating a mestizo race. The Anglicans, on the other hand, often came as settlers with the whole family and did not intermarry.

Thomas Bray was commissioned to establish the Church of England and observe life in the Colony of Maryland in 1696. Upon arrival he found that there were several English priests serving parishes, but they were often poor with scarce resources to meet their own needs or buy books. So he announced a willingness to accept funds on their behalf and established the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in March of 1698. He also witnessed how the enslaved Africans and Native Americans were mistreated and expelled from their land. Upon returning to England he advocated on behalf of foreign mission work on Native Americans and enslaved Africans and founded the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in June of 1701. This society provided financial support for the clerics of the Church of England serving in British colonies with a special emphasis on reaching Native Americans and enslaved Africans. The majority of the parishes were in New York, Virginia, Maryland, Philadelphia and Boston, so the SPG provided financial support to send missionaries, known as “Dr. Bray’s Associates,” to rural areas and plantations to convert Native Americans and African Americans.<sup>34</sup> John Wesley originally went to the Colony of Georgia with the intention of evangelizing Native Americans and received financial support from the SPG during his missionary service in Georgia. However upon arrival, Governor Oglethorpe made it clear that he could not leave the colony “destitute of a minister.”<sup>35</sup> It was clear that Wesley’s first responsibility was as parish priest for the spiritual needs of the colonists.

Wesley also had personal experience with the SPCK. Rev. Samuel Wesley, John’s father, founded a chapter of the SPCK while John was just a child. During the period when Samuel was in debtors’ prison, Susannah Wesley led the group with capable leadership. These two societies continue to exist today in addition to several others.

In spite of the missionary efforts of Thomas Bray and other SPG missionaries, the main focus of the Church of England was to provide parish priests for their English settlers and other European parishioners. With the exception of Thomas Bray and a few other missionaries supported by the SPG, the Episcopal Church focus was inward toward the colonists in the years leading up to the time of John Wesley.

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<sup>34</sup> C.E. Pierre, *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol.1, No.4, October 1916, 350.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Heitzenrater, *John Wesley and The People Called Methodists*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1995, 67.

## Conclusion

In conclusion this paper has reviewed the mission methods and missiology leading up to 18<sup>th</sup> century when John Wesley was born. Beginning with European conquest and expansion during the Age of Discovery that immediately followed the Crusades and the Reconquista, Europeans entered into a period of colonization of non-Western lands that facilitated Christian missionary work in North and South America, Africa, Australia and Asia to a lesser extent. The paper began with Roman Catholic mission models, and following the Reformation, the Lutheran, Calvinist, and finally, the mission societies of the Church of England. Initially the Lutherans were more internally focused on the religious conflicts within Europe, and Luther placed a central view of Scripture in missionary work. The paper also reviewed the work of several Puritan mission efforts among Native Americans in North America. While many Calvinists traveled seeking refuge and upheld the doctrine of predestination as God's chosen, a few began missionary work among Native Americans and enslaved Africans. Likewise, the Church of England created missionary societies to support their clergy working abroad, but mainly focused on the spiritual needs of the colonists. Although this was the majority, John Wesley read the work of English missionaries and missiologists, such as Richard Sibbs, Richard Baxter, John Elliott, and Thomas Bray, and their writings motivated him to want to be a missionary himself. This dream was short-lived, and he encountered the same Eurocentric attitudes of the colonial system that focused first on Europeans and did little to reach non-Europeans.