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The Relevance of Paul's Missionary  
Methods to Today's Christian Mission

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A Special Paper

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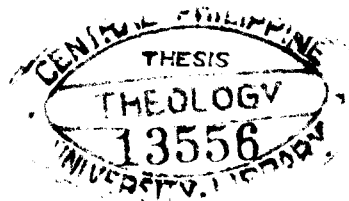
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## INTRODUCTION

It cannot be denied that the missionary methods of the great missionary Paul of Tarsus in the first century are exceptional, because they resulted in the phenomenal growth of the Christian church especially in Asia. It can be made the model for today's missionary endeavors. In it we can find theological and practical insights which are relevant to our present situation.

The relevancy of missionary methods is determined by their effectiveness in responding to the needs of a given time, where Christian mission is being actualized. Relevancy means practical applicability of something which brings in the desired result. This implies that relevant method is designed out of consideration of the requirements of the situation to bring about an intended purpose. It is flexible, not static and fixed in its form. But the principle or essence is maintained. No doubt the situation during the time of Paul was different from any other situation including ours. This paper maintains that while Pauline mission in terms of its method is relevant to today's mission, it is so only in principle or essence. In terms of its form, it must be made flexible to respond effectively to the requirements of our present situation. While this paper is concerned with mission methodology which makes Pauline mission a model, it includes in its coverage the theology of mission and its motivation and historical strategies which are reflected in

the Bible, particularly in the book of ACTS and in the epistles of Paul. This is discussed in Chapter 1. It will be shown that mission as proclamation of the Gospel includes the process of consolidation which results in the establishment of churches and the cultivation of its members for the purpose of mission. This is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. In Chapters 4 and 5, I tried to deduce conclusions from what has been observed. Out of this recommendations are drawn which can be applied to our present situation.

It is obvious that this paper bears the conviction that for mission today to be effective, guidelines can be drawn from Pauline mission which are significant and indispensable in the work of mission of contemporary churches. This is so in inspite of the fact that the human instrumentality namely Paul, the missionary was an exceptional personality and an almost impossible factor to be duplicated. His birth, his education, his personal circumstances and his motivations were unique and exceptional. But which made Paul what he has was not entirely human and historical. It was the movement of the divine within him that mostly influenced the outcome of his missionary endeavor. The human and the historical situations are different from ours today, yet the divine element is that which is the same for all time<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, it can be observed, that while Paul played

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<sup>1</sup>  
Roland Allen, Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?  
WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan:  
(Copy Right 1962), p. 4.

an important part in the whole missionary endeavor during that time, there were other missionaries of lesser stature than that of Paul, who were part of the total network. This reminds us that mission is not just the work of one man. It is the work of the whole people of God. Speaking about the possibility of modern mission, one factor is present today which can be used to great advantage. This is the printing press which was not present during the time of Paul. With the printing press, the Scripture can be widely published and gospel materials can be produced and disseminated. This can effectively enhance the proclamation of the gospel. Indeed, modern mission must continue to capitalize on this. One other concern must be addressed. It is the concern of some people who say that while Pauline mission is exceptional, it cannot be made the basis of today's mission because different times and conditions would render its method irrelevant today. This paper maintains, however, that while this is so that which is universal remains unchanging in its value and significance. It is because of this that Paul and his mission are still valid for consideration in our time. This element of the universal can be maintained. Its manner of expression however must be in form that must address the particular elements in a given culture<sup>2</sup>. Modern mission has been found to be weak in this particular requirement. It

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<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., p., 4.

comes from the West and while it contains the essence of the Christian gospel, it presents that essence in Western form thereby propagating in its entirety not only the essence of the gospel but also its Western particular form. Its failure to address the gospel to the particularities of the situation makes the gospel strange and difficult to understand and cannot be accepted easily by people who do not have the Western perspective. This pattern of adapting the gospel to a particular situation is one characteristic of Pauline mission. He addressed the gospel to different people under different situation and yet he maintained the universality of Christ who is the essence of the Christian faith. (Colosian 3:11).

To the Jews who insisted that Gentile converts to Jesus Christ must fulfill the requirements of Jewish law, Paul admonished them not to do so because such requirements, as circumcision, do not belong to the essence of the Gospel. They are particularities that are relevant to one people but not to all<sup>3</sup>.

Many times in doing mission, we tend to claim that our mission is a faithful imitation of that of St. Paul's. When we fail however, we put the blame on Pauline method and rationalize it to be so because the method is no longer relevant to our present time. The truth of the matter is this, such failure is due to the fact that we have not fully implemented the essential requirements of Pauline method.

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Ibid., p., 7.

My conviction is this that if the Pauline method of mission is faithfully implemented, our missionary endeavor will be successful.

I propose in this paper to set forth the methods which Paul used to produce the amazing result as recorded in the Scripture. I am not attempting to write a book on St. Paul's doctrine. I do not feel it necessary to argue over doctrinal foundation of the faith. I am a Korean missionary, and I write as a missionary minded person. I naturally use terms which imply mission principles. But the point to which I want to call attention to is not the doctrine of St. Paul, which has been expounded and defended by many. My focus is on Paul's method of mission. As a missionary my understanding of the method does not depend upon a correct interpretation of the doctrine being set forth. It is based solely on the appreciation of the facts. About the facts that have been recorded there is a general agreement. But about the doctrine and interpreted teaching there is variety in understanding.

This paper will call to mind concepts or principles which seem to lie at the back of all the Apostle's actions which I believe are the key to his success. This will lead to the showing of some ways by which St. Paul's missionary methods might be used effectively in mission today.