

Book Introduction and Summary

제4 선교신학 - The 4th Mission Theology

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1. Three Major Mission Paradigms and Necessity of the 4th Mission Theology

The concept of mission was very simple and clear by the 19th century. In a simple expression, mission was understood as “the activities that deliver the gospel and plant self supporting churches to expand the Kingdom of God.” However, in relation to the emergence of WCC the following 3 major mission paradigms appeared.

- 1) evangelical mission theology(the 1st mission theology paradigm)
- 2) ecumenical mission theology(the 2nd mission theology paradigm)
- 3) holistic mission theology(the 3rd mission theology paradigm)

The 1st paradigm (evangelical mission theology) tends to insist on the traditional evangelism which has been carried out from the early church days. It seems to believe that the gospel should be proclaimed the same way as the commandment of Jesus Christ regardless of changes of the world or culture. The 2nd mission theology paradigm tends to think that the duty of mission needs to be changed as the circumstance changes. These two paradigms had different views on the core of mission which caused various conflicts.

Due to these conflicts, as a way of solution, a new mission paradigm, holistic mission theology (the 3rd Mission Theology Paradigm), appeared. This 3rd paradigm balances and strengthens the two conflicting paradigms. Holistic mission theology is considered as the most desirable paradigm and is widely accepted among the mission theologians.

However, the 3rd paradigm also has some limits. One major weakness is a possibility of weakened dynamics of evangelism as it loses the priority of evangelism. Another is a possibility of causing confusion upon the concept of mission since it is combination of two opposite ideas.

Could this 3rd mission theology be a solution for the weakening Christianity? Even the Korean church, one key missionary church among the 2/3 world, is diminishing following foot-step of the west where the Christianity was once flourished. Would the church in the world overcome the problems and gain the dynamics of evangelism once again with the current mission paradigms? It is about time we should eagerly search for an alternative mission theology which can contribute to healthy dynamics for church growth. This is a background for the 4th mission theology.

2. Major Emphasis of the 4th Mission Theology

As an alternative mission theology, the 4th mission theology emphasizes the followings.

First, the 4th mission theology values the status of the church. The 1st mission theology tends to emphasize the church, while the 2nd focuses the world. The 3rd one tends to view the church and the world in a same balance. However, the church is more important since God's saving grace works mainly through the church, though He sometimes uses various people and institutions of the world. Of course this does not mean that the church is blameless. It surely has many problems and weaknesses. Yet, God has used the church as a major tool for his work. So the status of the church is crucial in the 4th mission theology.

Secondly, the 4th mission theology differentiate mission from ethics, though it recognizes the importance of ethics in mission. Mission and ethics are two major duties of the Christians. When Christians show high moral life, it would be helpful for an effective evangelism. That is why ethical dimension is so crucial in mission. However, mission is mission while ethics is ethics. Mission has its core works and ethics has its core values.

The 1st mission theology tends to emphasize mission, while the 2nd tends to be concerned about the ethical duties in the world. The 3rd tends to view the mission and ethics at the same level, but they sometimes can collide with each other because of their different values. When the gospel is delivered in a non Christian world, it can cause ethical problems as it breaks peace among the local people for a while. If the church puts ethical concern upon the missiological concerns, it may face various barriers in preaching the gospel where the gospel is persecuted. And that is why the evangelism and the church can become weaker when the church puts priority on ethical issues over mission. Hence, the 4th mission theology makes the mission concept centering the dimension of mission, though it pursues mission in an ethical way to the most.

Thirdly, the 4th mission theology values priority in mission. Though there is a danger of excessive simplification, the 1st mission theology tends to put a priority upon evangelism, while the 2nd in humanization. With the appearance of the 3rd mission theology, the issue of priority is not a matter anymore since the theology valued the balance in mission.

However, in fact, priority is still crucial in mission. In the enterprises of mission, there are so many goals, but not all of them have the same eminence. Not all goals can be done at a same time either. So there must be a priority list in mission for effectiveness. Nowadays, one important issue is 'selection and concentration' to save time and energy even in government management. It is the same with mission. The time and energy is limited in mission as well. So if there is no priority, most energy can be consumed vainly. Therefore, the 4th mission theology values the priority in mission.

Lastly, the 4th mission theology sets the goal of mission as 'glorification.' Briefly speaking, the goal of the 1st mission theology is evangelization and the 2nd humanization. And the 3rd pursues both. But the ultimate goal of mission goes beyond them. The final goal of mission is the glorification of God. John Piper said that the goal of mission is to make the nations see the greatness of God and have joy. If so, evangelization and humanization would be the goals on the way that lead to glorification, the ultimate objective of mission.

When the aim of mission is set as glorification, we can overcome the limitedness of the former mission paradigms. For example, the weaknesses of the 1st mission paradigm are

imperialistic mission, denominationalism, filthy greed of human, and so on. When we pursue the glorification of God, it might be helpful for us to overcome the above problems of the 1st mission theology. Also the goal of glorification can be helpful for overcoming the weaknesses of the 2nd mission theology as well. The ministry of humanization such as developing social circumstances and making peaceful society can be helpful for making people happy a little. However, it is hard to say that mission is accomplished with just full humanization. No matter how happy people are with social circumstances developed by the mission, the kingdom of God is afar if there is no relationship with God. There must be a right relationship with God to make authentic kingdom of God and people happy. These will be done when people glorify God, their creator and father.

3. Frame of the 4th Mission Theology

In the 4th mission theology there are following 6 basic elements in the frame.

First, the fourth mission theology makes the clear mission concept. In the case of holistic mission theology, the mission concept is rather too broad and even vague as it includes all constituents in the concept. With that vague concept, an effective mission cannot be carried out. So the 4th mission theology has a clear mission concept which is not mixed with ethical matters.

Second, the 4th mission theology sets the mission goal as the ministry which can be done only by the church. There are ministries which can be done only by the church, and the ministries which can be done by the church as well. For example, evangelism and church planting are the works categorized into the former, and the works of humanization are fell into the latter. If the church is idle in carrying out the tasks of the former, there is no institution that will do the work of the former. Then the church will gradually become weaker. However, since the church needs to carry out the works of the latter as well, the 4th mission theology makes a priority list to do mission effectively.

Thirdly, the 4th mission theology has openness and flexibility in the dimension of mission methods, while it pursues clear focus in setting goals of mission. As long as the way of mission is useful for achieving the mission goal, it is widely opened to any kind of methods. In other words, the fourth mission theology is very flexible in the dimension of methodology of mission, while it is firm in the goal of mission.

Fourthly, the mission content in the 4th mission theology is more limited than that of the 3rd mission theology. Traditionally the mission content was no other than 'salvation' and the way of salvation was 'only through Jesus Christ.' But in the 3rd mission theology, the scope and way of salvation expands. The scope of salvation covers not only souls but also flesh, and not only human but also all kinds of creatures. Also, the way of salvation is not limited only in Jesus Christ as it insists the salvation of whole creatures. So the contents of mission in the 4th mission theology stresses saving souls through only Jesus Christ, and understands that other areas of salvation such as humanization, shalom, building a new creation are the fruits of saving souls.

Fifthly, the 4th mission theology strengthens the status of the church as a major subject of mission. In the case of 2nd mission theology it tends to view the subjects not only as the church but also many other worldly institutions. So the dividing line between the church and

world is very dim, and in this situation the church can be easily secularized by the impact of the world. And this is not much different in the 3rd mission theology either though there are some differences in their intensity. Because of this, there is a high possibility that the church would become weak as we can see in Europe. Surely, the world is important, but to serve this world, the church should be healthy enough to serve. If not, the church cannot serve or change the world; rather the church would be absorbed by the powerful world.

Lastly, the 4th mission theology considers the major target people as the people who do not know Jesus Christ regardless of their social positions or financial abilities. In the case of the 2nd mission theology, it tends to see the target people of mission as the poor, the oppressed, and all the creatures in the universe. When a mission views the target people as the oppressed or the poor as in the 2nd mission theology, the character of mission tends to pursue liberation of a society through social actions or revolutions and for this even violence can be justified. In this case, the character of mission can become similar to that of ideology instead of religion. Due to this reason, the 4th mission theology tries to focus on the people who are not saved yet, though it considers all the poor people and all other creatures with a strong zeal to help them ethically.

4. Comparison of the 4 major mission paradigms

To help readers to understand the 4th mission theology, I will compare the 4th mission theology with the other 3 mission paradigms.

First, the mission concept is different from other 3 mission paradigms. The concept of the 4th mission theology is similar to that of the 1st in general in that the 4th theology puts a priority upon evangelization, while different in that the 4th values the aspect of ethics unlike the 1st. The difference between the 3rd theology and the 4th is that the 4th puts the priority upon the dimension of mission and does not mix ethics with mission even though the 4th values the dimension of ethics.

Secondly, let us think of the goal and method of the 4th mission theology. In terms of the mission goal, it is similar to that of the 1st theology in that it stresses priority. But in terms of the mission method, it is similar to that of the 3rd theology in that it has openness and flexibility. However, the 4th mission theology does not accept all methods unconditionally. It accepts the methods as long as they contribute to the mission goal. So the 4th theology is different from the 3rd which tends to open to all mission methods.

Thirdly, let us think of the view of ecclesiology. The 4th theology is similar to that of the 1st in that it values the church. The 4th theology does not consider the world, which is indifferent to God, as a partner of mission. The 4th theology views that only the church is a major tool for mission. However, the 4th theology seriously recognizes the weakness of the church and feels the necessity of obeying God, the subject of mission. This is a similarity with that of the 2nd and 3rd theologies.

Fourthly, let us think of the nickname of each paradigm. The 1st mission theology can be named as “the mission theology of evangelization.” The 2nd one can be labeled as “the mission theology of humanization.” The 3rd one “the mission theology of evangelization and humanization.” The 4th one can be called “the mission theology of glorification” in that it goes beyond the goal of evangelization which can be misunderstood as the work of church

expansion, and the goal of humanization which can fall into just a work of constructing welfare of the world. So the ultimate goal of mission in the 4th theology is no other than 'glorifying God.'