

## Evangelism in a rapidly changing world

*A reflection presented by Bishop Moon Hing Ng on 14 February 2011 at the Anglican Communion Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative (ECGI) Core Group meeting in Kuala Lumpur*

We are living in a rapid changing world where some part of the world is still living in the so-called Modernity, others in Post Modernity, and still some in Post Post Modernity. Those living in the Modernity era is the pre-developing world; those in the Post Modernity era is the developing world; and those in the developed world is Post Post Modernity which can also be referred to as Neo-Romanticism era by some. Looking at the rate things are moving, those countries in the Modernity era will probably by-pass the Post Modernity era to the Neo-Romanticism.

*Indeed, postmodernism, particularly as an academic movement, can be understood as a reaction to modernism in the Humanities. Whereas modernism was primarily concerned with principles such as identity, unity, authority, and certainty, postmodernism is often associated with difference, plurality, textuality, and skepticism. (wikipedia)*

In Bishop Patrick Yu's paper citing Brian McClaren's typology, the 3 stages – Early Modernity (Jerusalem model), Late Modernity (Samaria model) and Post Modernity (Roman World model), we need to re-look at Evangelism and Church Growth in the Anglican Communion. The style and tools of evangelism and church growth was largely different and strategic. The Jerusalem model of strict adherence to the Mosaic law (i.e. Pharisaic) has to progress and move to another model when the situation and environment changed. In the early church era i.e. the Roman World model, the style has moved from Jewish legalism to Greek reasoning (1 Cor 1:22), compare Paul's approach in Acts 17. The Samaria model somehow has been largely by-passed and assimilated into the Roman World model. It is possibly due to a restricted and confined to a small area and short period of time.

The message in Mark 8 presents a perfect confrontation of the evangelism model of the Jerusalem model and the Samaria/Roman World models. Paul in 1 Cor 1:22 remarked, "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,..."

In most of our churches today, we have at least 3 generations of believers, ranging from the grannies category, parents category to the teenagers category. They are like the 3 phases of McClaren's typology – the grannies grew up in legalistic-no choice mannerism; the parents grew up in moralistic-limited choice mannerism; while the teenagers are growing up in freedom of choice mannerism. Our churches still have to cater for all these 3 groups, and perhaps a coming fourth group – the children category, a non choice mannerism according to romantic realities.

In order to reach the present world with Christ's salvation message, we need all the strategies for all the groups, and not promoting one over the other.

*"To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Cor 9: 20-22).*