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Prokhanov's missiology: A forerunner to Bosch's Emerging Paradigm

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This article examines the hypothesis proposed by missiologist Johannes Reimer that Ivan Prokhanov, the founder of the missionary movement in Russia in the early 20th century, anticipated and, to some extent, embodied the emerging missional paradigm articulated by David Bosch in 1991, approximately 60–70 years later. The article argues that Reimer's intuition was largely correct, as Prokhanov significantly aligned with at least 9 of the 13 elements identified by Bosch. Furthermore, it suggests that the correlation between the views of Prokhanov and Bosch can be explained by their shared epistemological orientation towards the New Testament missional paradigm, particularly the paradigm of Matthew, Luke and Paul, as described by Bosch.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: According to this hypothesis, Bosch's analysis of the historical development of missional theology traces the deviation from the apostolic paradigm established by these New Testament authors, with the emerging missional paradigm representing a partial return to that original framework. For Prokhanov, New Testament missiology was the foundational basis of his mission theology.

Keywords: Prokhanov; David Bosch; Holistic Mission; New Testament; Mission Paradigm; Emerging Mission Paradigm; Russian Evangelical Movement.

Introduction

Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov (1869–1935) was a prominent figure in the Russian missional movement of the early 20th century, playing a crucial role in its initiation and development (Ellis & Jones 1996:173; Popov 1996:54; Savinskiy 1995:74, 77–78; Vsesoyuzny Sovet Yevangel'skikh Khristian Baptistov [VSEKhB] 1989:147–157). Despite his significant influence, the reasons behind his success remain largely unexplored. Russian historian V. Stepanov posits that Prokhanov's reformist theological approach was a key factor contributing to his accomplishments (Stepanov 2023:486–490). Indeed, Prokhanov's progressive and innovative missional paradigm for his time likely played a critical role in his success.

This article seeks to evaluate Johannes Reimer's hypothesis (2013:145) that Ivan S. Prokhanov anticipated many elements of David Bosch's missional paradigm by several decades. Prokhanov began his active ministry in 1906, and by 1910, he had developed a comprehensive doctrinal framework reflecting his missiological perspectives (Prokhanov 1910a:1–19). His missional thinking was likely fully developed and clearly articulated by 1925–1926, as evidenced by key documents such as 'New or Evangelical Life' (Prokhanov 1925a:4–23) and his address 'To All Ordinary Members and Leaders of Communities and Departments'(Prokhanov 2009a:125–130). Moreover, his 1926 work, 'The Gospel Standard of Life in Russia', further exemplified his missional vision (Prokhanoff 1933:237–238).

In contrast, Bosch presented his seminal study, *Transforming Mission*, in 1991, where he introduced his Emerging Missional Paradigm, consisting of 13 elements. According to Reimer's hypothesis, Prokhanov anticipated the majority of these elements by 60–70 years.

Bosch categorised three New Testament missional paradigms – Matthew's, Luke's and Paul's – and conducted a historical analysis of six paradigms using classifications established by Hans Küng (1995), rooted in Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts (1996). Reimer contends that Prokhanov foresaw, to varying extents, at least 11 of Bosch's 13 elements (Reimer 2013:145). These include Mission as the Church with Others, *missio Dei*, Mediating Salvation, Quest for Justice, Evangelism, Contextualisation, Inculturation, Common Witness, Ministry by the Whole People of God and Action in Hope. Reimer's examination of the writings of Prokhanov and other Slavic evangelical leaders underscores their commitment to an ecumenical and inclusive mission.

Reimer also observes that these leaders seldom addressed theology and inter-religious dialogue within their specific historical and cultural contexts (2013:145).

This article will integrate discussions of Mission as Liberation and Mission as Inculturation into related topics: Mission as Quest for Justice and Mission as Contextualisation, respectively. While there are similarities between Justice and Liberation, as well as between Contextualisation and Inculturation, they are distinct concepts. However, because of space limitations, this article will not delve deeply into the specific nuances between these interconnected concepts.

Mission as the church-with-others

The concept of 'Mission as the Church-with-Others' encompasses several fundamental principles. Firstly, it underscores the inseparable connection between mission and the church, a notion that evolved over time (Bosch 2011:loc. 8660–8682; Brunner 1965:108; Newbigin 1958: 26–27). Secondly, it emphasises the holistic nature of the church's mission. Acts of mercy are not merely tools for evangelisation but are ends in themselves, encompassing the pursuit of justice and peace (Bosch 2011:loc. 8749; Newbigin 1958:22).

Central to this concept is the idea that the church engages collaboratively with others. Bonhoeffer (1997:4) argues that the church truly embodies its essence when it lives for others, echoing humanistic liberal thought (Bosch 2011:loc. 8800). However, it is preferable for the church to live and serve alongside others, inviting them to follow Christ (Bosch 2011:loc. 8823).

Initially, Ivan Prokhanov did not fully recognise the pivotal role of the church in mission. When he founded the Russian Evangelical Union between 1906 and 1909, it was envisioned more as an association of individual believers than a union of churches (ed. Prokhanov 1908e:8). However, this approach faced challenges, lacking support from both Baptists and Orthodox Christians (Puzynin 2010:249–250).

By 1908, Prokhanov began to shift his focus towards the church, aiming to foster a renewed community that integrated evangelistic efforts with charitable activities (ed. Prokhanov 1908b:9–12). His 1910 'Confession of Faith' explicitly stated that the mission of the local church was to establish and spread the kingdom of Christ (Prokhanov 1910a:11–12). He dedicated a chapter to the importance of acts of mercy, citing Micah 6:8.

In a 1925 report, Karev highlighted the active engagement of the St. Petersburg community in both evangelism and social welfare, inspired by Christ's example (Karev 1925:51). Concurrently, Prokhanov organised a union of churches to unite them into a cohesive movement, envisioning the spiritual renewal of Russia through churches restored to an apostolic model (Prokhanoff 1933:149–151, 265, 267).

Prokhanov firmly advocated that societal reform could only be achieved through the church's collaboration with other institutions. He urged church leaders and members to participate in societal transformation, advocating for the pursuit of higher education in science alongside spiritual development (Prokhanov 1925a, 1933:237–239). He also endorsed the adoption of modern technologies and agricultural practices (Prokhanov 1925a:20).

In his influential work, 'The Gospel Standard of Life in Russia', Prokhanov called for comprehensive societal transformation, emphasising the necessity of collaboration with others to achieve this goal (Prokhanoff 1933:237–239).

Both David Bosch and Ivan Prokhanov emphasise the integral relationship between the church and mission, advocating for a holistic approach that encompasses acts of mercy, promotion of justice and collaboration with broader society.

Mission as missio Dei

In the latter half of the 20th century, the missional community began to understand that mission is not merely a function of the church confined to ecclesiology or soteriology, but rather participation in God's mission (*missio Dei*). This concept is rooted in Trinitarian theology, where the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – motivated by love, engages in the historical process of redeeming the world (Aagaard 1973:11; Bosch 2011:loc. 9131). The church is called to participate in this divine mission (Moltmann 1977:64), avoiding both quietism and apocalyptic extremism (Davies 1967:106–107) by sharing in the suffering and pain of the world (Von Thadden 1953:53–59).

As a universal and holistic endeavour, this mission transcends traditional boundaries, compelling the church to address global injustices, environmental concerns and societal healing – reflecting the expansive scope of God's redemptive plan (Bosch 2011:loc. 9183–9184).

Although Ivan Prokhanov did not explicitly use the term *missio Dei*, his ministry embodied its principles. His vision for the renewal of all of Russia through spiritual transformation aligns with the broader scope of *missio Dei* (Kuznezova 2009:241; Mitrokhin 1997:262; Prokhanoff 1933:119–120). Prokhanov interpreted Ezekiel 37:1–14, where God breathes life into dry bones, as a metaphor for the spiritual revitalisation of Russia through the church's prophetic mission (Prokhanoff 1933:119).

A significant aspect of Prokhanov's theology is his pneumatological orientation. As Reimer (2013) argues, Prokhanov's concept of a spiritual revolution was groundbreaking, especially within the context of Western classical mission thought. Prokhanov emphasised the Holy Spirit's role in this mission, advocating for prayer and the Spirit's empowerment (ed. Prokhanov 1906a:3). He saw the

Holy Spirit as essential not only for individual transformation, as exemplified in the conversion of Saul (Prokhanov 1906c:24), but also for societal renewal and liberation (Prokhanov 1906a:22–23). This focus on the Spirit's role in creation and societal transformation extended the mission beyond individual salvation.

Christ also held a central place in Prokhanov's theology, particularly in the context of atonement through Christ's sacrifice. His sermon 'Christ Crucified' and the motto 'We preach Christ Crucified' on the title pages of Christian magazines emphasised this focus (Prokhanov 2009b:63–71). For Prokhanov, evangelism was an expression of God's love, driven by solidarity with those who suffer, shaping his vision for a transformative mission (Prokhanoff 1933:40–41, 2009c:39; Trosnov 1912:4).

Thus, Prokhanov's theological reflections significantly align with the contemporary concept of *missio Dei*, emphasising both individual and societal transformation through the church's participation in God's mission.

Mission as the mediation of salvation

Significant shifts in the church's approach to mission are closely linked to evolving understandings of salvation (Bosch 2011:loc. 9229). The emerging paradigm offers a more holistic view, extending beyond traditional concerns of the afterlife to address the full spectrum of human needs on earth (Bosch 2011:ch. 12).

The ministry of Jesus Christ, as depicted by Luke, sought to alleviate suffering in all dimensions of human existence – political, social, physical, psychological and spiritual (Scheffler 1993:60–69). This comprehensive approach characterised the early Christian church.

The divergence in soteriological approaches between the Eastern and Western churches can be traced to their differing Christological emphases. The Eastern church focussed on *theosis* – the deification of humanity through Christ's incarnation – while the Western church emphasised Christ's death and its transformative impact, particularly through Anselm's theory of vicarious satisfaction (Bosch 2011:loc. 9243, 5191).

Modern cultural influences and liberal discourse have further shaped soteriological perspectives, redefining salvation as liberation from superstition, improvement of general well-being and moral progress. In this view, the instruments of salvation are seen as scientific, technological, social and political advancements (Bosch 2011:loc. 9274–9288).

In response, Bosch proposed a new approach to soteriology, grounded in *totus Christus* – encompassing Christ's incarnation, earthly life, death, resurrection and second coming (Bosch 2011:loc. 9371). This paradigm sees salvation as both reconciliation with God through Christ's crucifixion and transformation into the image of God (*theosis*). It also includes discipleship and active participation in alleviating human suffering, with eschatological expectations integral to this view.

An analysis of Ivan Prokhanov's understanding of salvation reveals a similarly holistic approach in his ministry. The epigraph on the cover of his journal *Christian* – 'We preach Christ crucified' – underscores the centrality of Christ's crucifixion in Prokhanov's theology. For Prokhanov, this event is the sole means of redemption and forgiveness of sins, without which salvation is unattainable (Prokhanov 1910a:6). A reconciled person becomes a 'new creation', a child of God (Prokhanov 1925a:7), with this transformation initiated through personal rebirth (Prokhanov 2007a:196–197). However, this initial transformation is only the beginning; the ultimate goal of a Christian's life is to restore the image of God within themselves through rebirth and sanctification, aiming for likeness to Christ (Prokhanov 2007b:232).

Prokhanov critically assessed tendencies towards quietism and the detachment from human needs that can arise from mere religiosity. He emphasised that believers must remain sensitive to the needs of others (Prokhanov 2009d:257, 2009e:139). He proposed a Christian model of social transformation, advocating for the renewal of various aspects of society ('New or Gospel Life' 1925a:4–23). Christians, driven by love for others, should strive to improve life in all its manifestations (Prokhanov 2009a:125–130).

Eschatological expectations also played a significant role in Prokhanov's theological outlook. While familiar with the debates between fundamentalists and liberals, Prokhanov maintained optimism about transforming the world through both the gospel and social progress (Prokhanov 2009a: 125–127). However, he cautioned against excessive optimism in believing that humans could independently establish an ideal life on earth. For Prokhanov, this ideal life would only be realised through God's eschatological intervention in the 'millennial Kingdom of Christ', when Satan will be bound (Prokhanov 2009a:127).

Thus, several decades before Bosch's paradigm emerged, Prokhanov articulated and implemented many elements of a holistic soteriology.

Mission as the quest for justice

The integration of evangelism and social justice is a complex endeavour that requires careful balance (Bosch 2011:loc. 9404). While the Old Testament prophets addressed social justice issues, the New Testament church historically shifted its focus to spirituality, a change often attributed to the lack of a common foundation between church and state (Bosch 2011:loc. 9404–9414). During the Constantinian era, the church's compromise with the state sometimes led to overlooking social injustices (Bosch 2011:loc. 9414).

Niebuhr critiqued the division between earthly and divine realities, a legacy of Augustine, which frequently resulted in indifference towards social issues (Augustine 2023:674; Niebuhr 2015:pt. 3). In modern times, the marginalisation of religion has confined it to the private sphere (Bosch 2011:loc. 9423). Niebuhr distinguished between rational ethics of justice, focussing on fairness, and religious ethics of love, centred on selfless assistance and rooted in Christ's example (Niebuhr 2015:pt. 3).

The mystical ideal advocates withdrawal from worldly concerns, while the prophetic ideal urges active engagement in social justice through Christian love (Bosch 2011:loc. 9443; Haight 1976:623). Early 20th-century conservatives critiqued the Social Gospel movement for potentially overshadowing concerns about eternal salvation (Marsden 2006:92). The Lausanne Movement (2010) calls for a balanced approach to evangelism and socio-political engagement, although this perspective is not universally accepted (Frierson 2018:65–66).

Prokhanov's commitment to social justice stemmed from personal experiences with religious persecution and exposure to literature on suffering and injustice (Prokhanoff 1933:35–36). His time at the politically active Technological Institute in Saint Petersburg further shaped his dedication to social reform through the gospel (Prokhanoff 1933:37, 73–75).

He viewed freedom as crucial for addressing social injustices, envisioning a future Russia free from oppression, aligning this vision with his religious convictions (Prokhanov 1906d:2). Criticising mystical and dualistic tendencies among evangelicals that led to withdrawal from social issues, Prokhanov instead viewed mystical experiences as sources of renewed strength for service and societal transformation (Prokhanov 1925a:10, 1906d:2).

Prokhanov envisioned a societal structure where all 'legitimate needs of each member' would be met (Prokhanov 1925a:15), emphasising the principle of justice. The ethics of love played a pivotal role in constructing such a society, with Prokhanov asserting that in the new society of the righteous, terms such as 'beggar', 'poor person', and 'needy' would vanish completely (Prokhanov 1925a:15). Furthermore, he argued that such a society could only thrive if individuals were willing to sacrifice their own interests for the common good, an attitude rooted in faith in God (Prokhanov 1925a:15).

Prokhanov actively defended believers' rights, influenced legislative processes and educated them about their rights (Kushnerov 1910; ed. Prokhanov 1910b, 1910c, 1912). He founded political parties and agricultural communes aimed at promoting justice and freedom, drawing inspiration from the early apostolic church (Mitrokhin 1997:252; Prokhanov 1917:7, 1928a:12).

His mission emphasised both individual transformation through evangelism and the broader goal of societal reform, as will be explored further in the next section.

Mission as evangelism

David Bosch outlines the paradigm of evangelism through 18 propositions that represent the emerging concept of evangelism. While a detailed examination of each proposition is beyond the scope of this article, a brief overview of key elements reveals a striking similarity between the evangelistic approaches of David Bosch and Ivan Prokhanov.

For Bosch, evangelism is an 'indispensable ministry' and a 'sacred duty' (Bosch 2011:loc. 9705). He emphasises that the gospel must be proclaimed with renewed enthusiasm and relevance (Watson 1983:69). This proclamation should occur within a healthy church context, one that exhibits an attractive lifestyle reminiscent of the early apostolic church (Bosch 2011:loc. 9713).

Bosch defines the goal of evangelism as eliciting a response from individuals (Bosch 2011:loc. 9682). Jesus called for repentance and faith, or *metanoia*, which Bosch describes as a 'total transformation of our attitudes and styles of life' (Bosch 2011, WCC 1982:Affirmation 12). This response is to be a positive invitation, as evangelism is fundamentally a message of joy (Gutiérrez 1988:Intr.). Manipulation through guilt or fear is deemed unacceptable; instead, people should be drawn to God by his love (Bosch 2011:loc. 9697).

While the message of God promises personal salvation, Bosch stresses that personal enjoyment was never the Bible's primary motive (Bosch 2011:loc. 9716–9727). Christ cannot be reduced to a mere distributor of blessings; the Christian calling is not only to receive life, but also to give it.

Moreover, Bosch argues that evangelism cannot be separated from social justice (Bosch 2011:loc. 9804). The blessedness of Christian life, including eternal bliss, should align with believers' calling to serve and advance God's kingdom principles on earth, thereby transforming the existing reality (Bosch 2011:loc. 9828). Evangelism as proclamation is thus inseparable from deeds (Bosch 2011:loc. 9849). As Newbigin (1982:146) asserts, the gospel is that 'the Word became flesh'.

Similar to David Bosch, evangelism was central to Ivan Prokhanov's ministry. His vision for transforming Russia was closely tied to the spiritual renewal of its people through the preaching of the gospel (Prokhanov 1928a). Prokhanov believed that authentic preaching required the preacher to be transformed by the gospel, thus validating their message through a changed life (Trosnov 1912:4).

In his sermon 'The Bible in the Life of a Believer', Prokhanov (2009f:212–222) introduced the concept of the 'living Bible', emphasising that the Bible must be written on believers' hearts. He argued that a transformed life serves as a crucial evangelistic tool because 'the world doesn't read the printed Bible, but it carefully reads our lives' (Prokhanov 2009f:222).

Prokhanov's sermons, much like Bosch's analysis, were designed to provoke a response. In 'For What and For Whom

Do You Live?' he invited individuals to turn to Jesus, who offers to lighten their burdens (Mt 11:28; Prokhanov 2009g:19). In 'Are You a Christian?' he called for repentance, the acceptance of forgiveness, and actions consistent with that repentance (Prokhanov 2009c:41).

For Prokhanov, the core of the evangelical message was God's love. He discouraged polemical disputes, advocating instead for a focus on God's love (Trosnov 1912:4). In a poem dedicated to the Leningrad (Saint Petersburg) congregation, Prokhanov defined the gospel as a divine revelation, emphasising that God is, above all, love rather than judgement (Prokhanov 1925c:49).

Prokhanov promised numerous benefits to those who followed Jesus Christ, including inner peace, freedom from the fear of death, assurance of salvation and a life filled with optimism and joy (Prokhanoff 1933:42–47; Prokhanov 2009h:267–268). However, he was acutely aware of the risk of reducing Christianity to a pursuit of spiritual benefits. In his sermon 'What and For Whom Do You Live?' (2009g:16–26), Prokhanov stressed that the Christian life is not one of self-service but of self-sacrifice (2009g:23–24).

Like Bosch, Prokhanov did not separate evangelism from good deeds. He believed that believers are created to perform good deeds, which bear witness to God's love (Prokhanov 1910a:9). Under his leadership, the Leningrad congregation actively engaged in preaching the gospel and addressing physical needs, emulating Christ's example (Karev 1925:51). For instance, during the 1920 famine in Petrograd, Prokhanov and other believers established soup kitchens to aid the starving (Prokhanoff 1933:216).

While Prokhanov regarded evangelism as the church's primary mission, he also emphasised the importance of social justice, as previously outlined.

Mission as contextualisation

David Bosch emphasised the importance of developing a local theology that is transformative within its context (Bosch 2011:loc. 9876). He proposed a framework for contextualisation that begins with what he termed 'theological suspicion'. Bosch was cautious of Western theology's potential to uphold the status quo, particularly in situations of economic injustice, where it might inadvertently serve Western interests and legitimise existing global power structures (Bosch 2011:loc. 9956).

In Bosch's view, contextual theology also demands an epistemological transformation. Theological truth, he argued, should align with both reason and Scripture, aiming not just to explain the world but to change it. This perspective echoes Marx's idea that philosophy should be transformative (Marx 1945; Torres 1979:5). Bosch particularly stressed that this transformation should prioritise the needs of the poor, making them central to theological reflection (Bosch 2011:loc. 9962; Torres 1979:5).

A critical aspect of Bosch's approach was the preferential option for the poor, a concept that underscores a theology committed to justice and solidarity with marginalised communities (Bosch 2011:loc. 9972–9973). For Bosch, this focus on the poor was not merely a theoretical stance but a practical and ethical imperative, ensuring that the struggles of the marginalised are at the heart of theological discourse (Torres 1979:5).

Furthermore, Bosch believed that those engaging in contextual theology must share in the suffering of the oppressed. This involvement is essential for the credibility and authenticity of their theological work (Bosch 2011:loc. 9972–9973). Theologians should not be detached observers, but participants in the struggles of those they seek to serve.

Bosch also asserted that true theological knowledge arises from action. Theologians must actively participate in God's redemptive work, refining their understanding through practice (Gutiérrez 1988:xxxiv). This integration of orthopraxis (right action) with orthodoxy (right belief) is crucial for a theology that is both relevant and dynamic (Bosch 2011:loc. 9976).

However, Bosch acknowledged the complexities and ambiguities inherent in contextualisation. He emphasised that this process must balance spiritual and social responsibilities, ensuring that the glorification of God is integrated with a commitment to social justice (Bosch 2011:loc. 10011). Bosch also argued that theology should be enriched by both local and universal perspectives, cautioning against the absolutisation of any single local theological viewpoint (Bosch 2011:loc. 10048–10053). Local theological values, while important, should not be considered universally binding (Bosch 2011:loc. 10053).

In addition, Bosch warned against manipulative interpretations of political and social events when discerning 'signs of the times' (Bosch 2011:loc. 10072). Contextual theology should be careful to avoid such distortions. It should also incorporate broader theoretical concepts such as justice, truth and morality, which are essential for a well-rounded theological discourse (Stackhouse 1988:11, 26–27).

Lastly, Bosch highlighted the role of poesis, or the language of symbols, in enhancing both theological theory and practice. Elements such as beauty and worship should not be overlooked in the process of contextualisation, as they contribute to a richer and more holistic expression of faith. These symbols have cognitive, evocative and relational significance (Bosch 2011:loc. 10132; Stackhouse 1988:104).

Prokhanov critiqued the Orthodox Church for serving state interests and neglecting the people (Prokhanoff 1933:18–19). His work aimed to alleviate the plight of the marginalised, embodying a theology of suspicion similar to Bosch's critique of Western theology. Despite severe persecution, which forced him to leave Russia in 1890 and prevented his return

in 1928 (ed. Karetnikova 2001:124; Prokhanoff 1933:92, 252), Prokhanov's experiences, including brief arrests and hardship during the Petrograd famine (Karev 1922:14; Prokhanoff 1933:189–198; Redaktsiya 1922:6), enriched his theology with solidarity for the oppressed (Prokhanoff 1933).

Prokhanov's vision for Russia's transformation was driven by his awareness of ordinary people's dire conditions. He believed true change could only occur by transforming hearts through the gospel, which would, in turn, transform social realities (Prokhanoff 1933:36–38). His theology, grounded in the Apostolic Creed and Protestant Evangelical tradition (Prokhanov 1910a:1–19), focussed on practical and transformative aspects (Prokhanov 1898; 1910a; 1911:1, 1925a:4–23). His reflections aimed to reshape the religious and social life of the people (Prokhanov 1910a; 1925a).

Prokhanov's missiology incorporated Bosch's ambiguities paradigm, balancing spiritual and social work while fostering responsibility (Prokhanov 1925a:4–23; Prokhanoff 1933: 236–237). His theology, while deeply rooted in the Apostolic Creed and Protestant Evangelical tradition, also embraced Christian concepts of truth and justice (Prokhanov 1910a: 1–19; Puzyinin 2010:252). Recognising the impact of symbolic language, such as poetry and music, in Russian theological culture (Kal'nev 1913:529–556; Prokhanoff 1933:147), Prokhanov integrated these elements into his practice.

However, Prokhanov may have overestimated his evangelical tradition's global significance, aligning with a messianic view of Russia's role in world history (Prokhanoff 1933: 13–14; Puzyinin 2010:259). His vision of spreading evangelical awakening worldwide reflects a characteristic Russian intellectual inclination (Prokhanoff 1933:265–266; ed. Prokhanov 1906b:69).

Mission as common witness

David Bosch noted a growing recognition among Christians of the need for unity in mission (Bosch 2011:loc. 10805). In his New Emerging Mission as a Common Witness Paradigm, Bosch emphasises several key elements to achieve this unity. He underscores the necessity of coordination and unity in missionary activities, advocating for a focus on the unity of the Church as a whole rather than on individual congregations (Bosch 2011:loc. 10909, 10919).

Bosch further advocates for unity that preserves diversity, asserting that the Church's unifying factors are Jesus Christ and the Bible. He calls for respectful dialogue to address tensions between churches while maintaining truth (Bosch 2011:loc. 10926, 10936). This approach discourages forming new churches over minor differences, advocating instead for a balance between Christology and Ecclesiology. Bosch emphasises that the Holy Spirit gifts the Church collectively, not just individuals (Bosch 2011:loc. 10958, 10970).

Moreover, Bosch views unity as a command of Christ, asserting that its absence should be confessed as sin (Bosch 2011:loc. 10976). This perspective places a moral imperative on the Church to strive for unity, recognising it as an essential aspect of their collective mission and witness.

Prokhanov shared a similar view on the importance of unity for the Christian mission. During his student years, he published 'Conversion', an underground magazine aimed at uniting believers and advancing God's Kingdom (Val'kevich 1900:162). His broad-minded approach, influenced by his interactions with the St. Petersburg intelligentsia and his studies abroad, helped him overcome confessional exclusivity (Prokhanov 1898, 1908a:9).

Prokhanov founded the Evangelical Alliance in Russia, emphasising unity as a priority. He outlined its goals to foster spiritual rapprochement among believers and support the spread of God's work in Russia (ed. Prokhanov 1908a:9). He believed that the Church's unity was crucial for the world to recognise Christ (ed. Prokhanov 1908a:8).

Prokhanov was well aware of the complexities of achieving unity because of differing opinions and tastes, which lead to various theological views (Prokhanov 1908a:8). Nonetheless, he proposed a theological discourse on unity and practical methods to achieve it. He emphasised recognising the unity created by Christ and valuing every member (Prokhanov, 1908a:8, 1909:17–21). Freedom in secondary matters should foster tolerance and unity (ed. Prokhanov 1908a:8, 1910a:10). Unity should be based on essential doctrines such as faith in Christ, justification and regeneration (Prokhanoff 1933:24; Prokhanov 1908d:1–2). The love of Christ should transcend doctrinal differences, with spiritual unity being the source of the Church's power (Grabb 1906:13; Prokhanov 1898).

Prokhanov also advocated for practical steps to build unity, such as joint prayer, collaborative projects and a culture of partnership between communities (Potapova 2014; ed. Prokhanov 1908a:9, 1910a:15, 1920a, 1920b). His views on unity share significant similarities with those of Bosch.

Mission as ministry by the whole people of God

In recent times, the church has experienced significant changes, characterised by the increasing prominence of non-ordained ministers (Bosch 2011:loc. 10982–10990). Jesus deliberately chose ordinary individuals as his disciples, and the early church adopted the term 'ekklesia' from secular contexts rather than Jewish synagogue practices, emphasising its democratic and inclusive character (Bosch 2011:loc. 10999; Meeks 1983:27,32, 81). By avoiding priesthood language – whether Greco-Roman or traditional Israelite – the church underscored its inclusive ethos.

The rise of heresies (Bosch 2011:loc. 11008) and the emphasis on sacrificial offerings symbolising Christ's universal

sacrifice led to the establishment of ordained ministers. These ministers, as representatives of Christ, facilitated access to God's grace through consecration, forgiveness of sins and blessings (Bosch 2011:loc. 11018; Burrows 1980:60). This development introduced a division between active and passive roles – the bestowers of grace and its recipients. During the Reformation, the church prioritised preaching, and as education advanced, clericalism became more pronounced (Bosch 2011:loc. 11046).

Today, the church faces the imperative of formulating a theology tailored for the laity, aimed at overcoming the Enlightenment-era dichotomy that separated life into private and public spheres (Bosch 2011:loc. 11109; Newbigin 1986:ch. 6). Such a theology should not seek to transform laypeople into miniature pastors but should instead empower non-ordained ministers to extend Christian values beyond the church's confines into the broader world (Moltmann 1975:11). Meanwhile, ordained ministers uphold doctrinal fidelity and equip individuals for their respective ministries (Burrows 1980:112; Newbigin 1987:30).

Prokhanov advocated for the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, arguing that all believers possess 'the power of spiritual influence' (Prokhanov 1908c:4; 2009i:124–125). He asserted that the grace of the Holy Spirit is accessible to all believers and advocated for abolishing the clergy-laity division (Jn 3:5; Rm 8:9, 14; Eph 5:18).

Prokhanov believed ordination was beneficial but not essential. He argued that unordained individuals should not be barred from performing baptisms and Communion, stressing that if unordained individuals are allowed to preach, they should also administer sacraments, as preaching holds even greater importance (Prokhanov 2009j:174–175).

Evangelical and Baptist approaches to Communion differ significantly. In evangelical practice, the presbyter breaks the bread into large pieces, and each member breaks off a small piece individually (Mitskevich 2007:223). In contrast, Baptists have the presbyter and assistants break the bread into small pieces before distribution. This reflects more democratic preferences among evangelicals and more hierarchical ones among Baptists. Prokhanov sought to distance himself from Orthodox traditions where the priest distributes grace.

Prokhanov advocated for expanding women's roles in the church, recognising societal conservatism. His brochure 'On the Service of Women in the Church' (2009k:231) was approved at the evangelical Christians' annual congress (ed. Prokhanov 1922c:10). While affirming women's primary roles as wives and mothers, Prokhanov argued against limiting them to these roles, recognising their diverse gifts (2009k:231). He allowed women to pray, prophesy and evangelise under male guidance, and serve as missionaries and deaconesses (Prokhanov 1910a:15, 2009k:235). Prokhanov emphasised women's equality with men before God (ed.

Prokhanov 1922b:11; 2009l:92), highlighting their potential to foster spiritual and moral renewal in Russia (Prokhanov 1922b, 1922c:11). He encouraged women's active participation in evangelical organisations and provided them with leadership roles.[1] Women made significant contributions to congresses and spiritual publications.[2]

The house church concept promoted the priesthood of all believers, encouraging families to maintain regular prayers and Bible readings (ed. Prokhanov 1922a:7). Prokhanov developed a theology for ordinary people, focussing on the ethics of labour, where work becomes a joyful necessity and participation in God's renewing work (Prokhanov 1925a:4–23).

Thus, Prokhanov's views on the universal priesthood were likely linked to his vision of a transformed Russia. He believed that changing human hearts through the gospel's preaching was essential to reaching every person with the evangelical message. To achieve this, he argued that every believer should be empowered to communicate the gospel.

Mission as action in hope

Bosch offers a holistic integration of mission and eschatology, addressing the de-historicisation of Christian faith influenced by Hellenistic culture and modern developments. He also tackles issues of ecclesiocentrism and mystical eschatological views. This approach aims to restore a more historical and comprehensive understanding of Christian mission.

Historically, both Old and New Testament believers anticipated God's intervention for the complete redemption of creation (Lampe 1953:19; Wright 1952:24). However, the delay in the expected Parousia led to a shift towards spiritual interpretations, which emphasised the soul's union with the divine rather than focussing on bodily resurrection and the renewal of creation (Lampe 1953:20). This shift contributed to a broader divergence in eschatological thought.

Jewish moralism began to replace the hope for a heavenly kingdom, redirecting focus towards rewards for righteous living (Lampe 1953:20). Consequently, eschatological thought bifurcated: one strand saw the church as fulfilling past eschatological hopes, while the other anticipated eternal soul salvation. This divergence was reinforced by the Enlightenment's retreat into mystical concepts of salvation or a focus on ecclesiocentrism, where the church's role was seen as increasingly detached from public life (Bosch 2011:loc. 11784).

Bosch's model provides a balanced perspective by combining post-millenarian optimism – the belief that the world can be improved through the gospel, social progress and scientific advancements (Marsden 2006:49; Quandt 1973:391) – with

pre-millenarian realism, which acknowledges that true perfection requires God's apocalyptic intervention (Bosch 2011:loc. 6767–6770; Stackhouse 1988:206). This model not only addresses personal sin through conversion, fostering reconciliation with God and hope for the future eschatological kingdom, but also emphasises the importance of tackling social sin through activism.

Bosch argues that evangelisation and social action are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. He notes that pre-Civil War evangelists often combined their commitment to abolition with their post-millennialist views and belief in a supernatural kingdom of God, addressing both public (structural) and private (individual) dimensions of sin (Bosch 2011:loc. 6770).

Ultimately, Bosch's belief in God's apocalyptic intervention serves as a motivation for active efforts to improve the world, promoting action driven by hope (Bosch 2011:loc. 11994; 12005).

Prokhanov's eschatological-missiological paradigm was also balanced and ahead of its time. He effectively addressed the de-historicisation of Christian faith influenced by Hellenistic culture and the Enlightenment, avoiding both ecclesiocentrism and mystical eschatological tendencies.

Prokhanov embraced the optimism of postmillennial American evangelicals from the mid-19th century, believing in the successful spread of the gospel and progress in science, technology, culture and society (Marsden 2006:49; Prokhanoff 1933:258; Prokhanov 1925a:21–23). He encouraged believers to pursue high-quality education and actively engage in societal development. His optimism was rooted in Christ's victory over darkness through the crucifixion and resurrection, as well as the historical transformation of Greco-Roman society through the gospel, which he saw as evidence of the gospel's power (Prokhanoff 1933:270).

In his social programme 'New or Evangelical Life' (1925a:4–23), Prokhanov envisioned a utopian future marked by ideal believers, families and societies, expecting a glorious transformation in Russia even before Christ's return (Kravtsev 2017:85). He believed that the global spread of the gospel would lead to Christ's millennial Kingdom (Prokhanov 1910a:18).

Despite this optimism, Prokhanov's preaching also included apocalyptic expectations. He anticipated a new heaven and earth, with believers resurrected in bodies similar to Christ's (Prokhanov 1910a:18–19; 2009m:97; 2009n:187). For Prokhanov, the future involved the transformation of the current world rather than an otherworldly paradise.

Prokhanov (1933:265) saw personal and societal sin as interconnected, with the mission of the All Russian Union of Evangelical Christian focussing on the spiritual and moral rebirth of individuals and society.

While he upheld conservative evangelical soteriology and opposed the liberal social gospel, he saw evangelism as both a means of securing eternal salvation and a tool for social change (Prokhanov 1928a:15).

Prokhanov (1910a, 2009g:25), ahead of his time, advocated for the church's active social role while emphasising the spiritual anticipation of eternal life and Christ's Second Coming. The prospect of Christ's apocalyptic return motivated him to pursue moral purity, active service and evangelism, closely aligning with premillennialist views (Prokhanov 1925b:45–46). However, for Prokhanov, evangelism served not only to secure eternal bliss but also as a catalyst for social transformation, with spiritual awakening pivotal in establishing a new social order (Prokhanov 1928a:15).

During the planning of the government-approved yet unrealised project 'City of the Gospel' or 'City of the Sun', disrupted by Stalin, Prokhanov penned the poem 'City of the Sun' (Prokhanov 1928b:15–16), envisioning an ideal future city as a present-day model. His eschatological beliefs thus inspired both evangelism and efforts towards social transformation.

Thus, in terms of eschatology, the thinking of Prokhanov and Bosch is remarkably similar.

Conclusion

Thus, as demonstrated in this article, at least 9 out of 13 elements of Bosch's Emerging Paradigm and Prokhanov's missiological thinking are similar. This raises the question: How can we explain such similarity in the positions of missiologists who lived in different historical eras? It can be suggested that the common thread in the missiological theology of Prokhanov and Bosch was their epistemological orientation towards the apostolic New Testament missiological tradition. Bosch's Emerging Paradigm is, to some extent, a restoration of the apostolic missiological paradigm as formulated by Matthew, Luke and Paul – a paradigm that was lost in the course of the historical development of missiological thought. However, verifying this hypothesis could be the subject of another study.

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Author's contributions

J.J.K. conceptualised and supervised the study and contributed to the methodology and project administration.

D.L. conceptualised the study, contributed to the methodology, investigation, the writing of the original draft, resources and writing – review and editing.

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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