When the Church was the Mission Organization: Rethinking Winter’s Two Structures of Redemption Paradigm
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Critical observers of mission history will remark that following the sixteenth-century Reformation in Europe, one reason for the overall inaction of Reformed Protestants in mission was the lack of mission sending structures. Roman Catholics on the other hand possessed a number of sending structures—most notably the monastic orders (e.g., Franciscans, Augustinians, Dominicans, Cistercians, and Jesuits) that were formed in the medieval period for the purpose of sending witnesses into the world. So how did mission sending happen and what structures were in place in the early and medieval church prior to the rise of monastic missionary orders? In this paper, I will argue that the church itself was the key organism and catalyst for mission sending. In doing so, I will offer an alternative conclusion to Ralph Winter’s (cf. Winter 1999, 220-229) popularly accepted notion of two structures of redemption in mission history—modalities (e.g., churches) and sodalities (e.g., monastic movements)—and argue that the church was the sole means of mission sending. To make the case, I will highlight the representative examples of four missionary-monk-bishops who served between the fourth and eighth centuries: Basil of Caesarea (fourth-century Asia Minor), Patrick (fifth-century Ireland), Augustine of Canterbury (sixth and seventh century England), and Boniface (eighth-century Germany).

Basil of Caesarea (329-379)
Remembered in church history for being one of the Cappadocian fathers famous for their articulation of Trinitarian thought, Basil was also engaged in mission in his home city of Cappadocian Caesarea in Asia Minor. Born into a wealthy and ascetically minded family, Basil was educated in rhetoric and philosophy before embracing a monastic lifestyle. After a few years of living in monastic community, Basil was set apart by the church at Caesarea as a reader, presbyter, and then finally a bishop. Though ordained, Basil remained in his monastic calling and joined a growing number of fourth-century church leaders who served as monk-bishops (cf. Rousseau 1998, 2, 68-69, 84-85, 93; Sterk 2004, 43, 74-76).

What do we know about Basil’s ministry context? Because of its strategic location on Roman roads that connected trading centers such as Constantinople and Syria, Caesarea was an important city and Roman administrative center in the fourth century. As diverse peoples from Asia Minor, Armenia, Syria, Persia, and the northern Gothic regions regularly passed through the city, it also became an intercultural crossroads (cf. Rousseau 1998, 133-134; Holman, 2001, 69-70). On the other hand, due to an earthquake and famine in the region beginning around 368, many Cappadocians faced poverty and near starvation. In addition to these economic and social problems, Basil seemed to have regular political conflicts with
Roman officials and theological ones with other church leaders (cf. Smither 2011, 80-82; Holman 2001, 5, 65-69).

Given this brief overview of his context, how did Basil approach mission in Cappadocia? As bishop of Caesarea, Basil’s first priority was preaching—both to train believers but also to evangelize non-believers (cf. Basil, Morals 70.9-11, 31-34). Though Basil was committed to caring for humanitarian needs, his close friend and biographer Gregory of Nazianzus indicated that Basil’s first concern was the spiritual needs of his hearers:

[Basil] provided the nourishment of the Word and that more perfect good work and distribution being from heaven and on high; if the bread of angels is the Word, whereby souls hungry for God are fed and given to drink, and seek after nourishment that neither diminishes nor fails but remains forever; thus [i.e., by his sermons] this supplier of grain and abundant riches [he who was] the poorest and most needy [person] I have known, provided, not for a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but a longing for the truly life-giving and nourishing Word, which effects growth to spiritual maturity in those nourished well on it (Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 43.36 in Holman 2001, 65).

While Basil preached the Scriptures, his sermons also included a prophetic discourse against the injustices happening in Caesarea. He confronted moneylenders who exploited the poor by charging exorbitant interest rates as well as the poor themselves for failing to be content and live within their means. He chastised the wealthy for refusing to be generous and for those who hoarded grain during the famine. Though most of his prophetic preaching was aimed at poverty related issues, he also confronted the social sin of slavery (cf. Smither 2011, 83-85).

In addition to preaching about poverty, Basil was actively involved in caring for the needs of the poor in Cappadocia. In response to the famine of 368, Basil led an effort to open the storehouses of grain and distributed food to the poor and hungry. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote:

By his word and advice [Basil] opened the stores of those who possessed them, and so, according to the Scripture, dealt food to the hungry and satisfied the poor with bread . . . and in what way? . . . He gathered together the victims of the famine with some who were but slightly recovering from it, men and women, infants, old men . . . and obtaining contributions of all sorts of food which can relieve famine, set before them basins of soup and such meat as was found preserved among us, on which the poor live (Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 43.34-36 in Holman 2001, 65-66)

The most concrete expression of Basil’s ministry to the poor in Caesarea was the establishment of the *basileas* (“new city”)—“a complex of buildings constructed at the edge of Caesarea during the early years of Basil’s episcopate” (Sterk 2004, 69). Built on land owned by Basil’s family or perhaps donated by the emperor, the
complex included a home for the poor, a hospital, an early version of a job training center, and storehouses from which food supplies were distributed. Also, as Caesarea was located on a crossroads between Asia Minor, Syria, Armenia and the Gothic regions, the *basileas* included a hospice for travelers for the purpose of showing hospitality (cf. Smither 2011, 88-90).

As we reflect upon Basil’s approach to mission in Cappadocia, it should be noted that his entire ministry was conducted under the auspices of the church at Caesarea. That is, Basil served as a cross-cultural and urban missionary from his position as bishop of the church at Caesarea. In addition to preaching, leading the sacraments, and generally administrating the church, he made cross-cultural mission work a part of his job description as bishop. In this sense, he followed in the footsteps of earlier missionary bishops Irenaeus of Lyons in second- and third-century Gaul, and Gregory Thaumaturgus in third-century Asia Minor (cf. Smither 2014, 34).

Not only did Basil self-deploy in mission as part of his role as bishop, he also directed a community of monks and clergy in this same work in Cappadocia. As a monk-bishop, Basil lived in community with other monks and clergy right on the outskirts of Caesarea—they were urban dwelling monks and the ministries of the *basileas* were carried out by Basil's monks and clergy (cf. Smither 2011, 88-90).

Finally, Basil served as a metropolitan bishop for Asia Minor, which meant that he oversaw and influenced the ministries of some fifty other bishops in the region. He was in contact with these leaders through pastoral correspondence but also through a regional church council that he convened once a year. From Basil’s letters, it is evident that he expected bishops to care for the poor in their communities and projects similar to the *basileas* were started by other church leaders because of Basil’s influence (cf. Basil, *Morals* 70.19–20; Basil, *Letters* 141–144; Sterk 2004, 69-74; Smither 2011, 88-90).

**Patrick of Ireland (ca. 389-ca. 461)**

It may come as a surprise to some to learn that Patrick of Ireland was not Irish; rather, he was probably British but served as a pioneer missionary-bishop among the Irish in the fifth century. Taken captive by the Irish as a teenager, Patrick spent six years among this Celtic people as a slave, clarifying his own commitment to Christ, and also learning the Irish language and culture. After a successful escape from captivity and a return home to Roman Britain, Patrick reported in his *Confessions* that he received a vision calling him back to the Irish. Interpreting this later in his life, he wrote: “The one and only purpose I had in going back to the people from whom I had earlier escaped was the gospel and the promises of God” (Patrick, *Confessions* 61 in O’Loughlin 1999, 89; cf. McNeill 1974, 56-59; O’Loughlin 2005, 37-42).

According to traditional sources, Patrick did not return to Ireland immediately but rather prepared for ministry by studying under Bishop Germanus of Auxerre in Gaul. However, it is probably more likely that his pre-mission training took place under the supervision of local clergy in Britain. Interestingly, Patrick was set apart as a missionary-bishop by Bishop Celestine of Rome. Unlike the bishops in the fourth and fifth century who were appointed as organizers of established
Christian communities, O'Loughlin asserts that Patrick's "missionary work is explicitly aimed at those Irish who are not Christians" and that he saw himself as "the final missionary to Ireland, the one who went to mop up the last pockets of paganism so that Ireland could be wholly Christian" (O'Loughlin 2005, 58-59; cf. Freeman 2005, 62-63).

Though there were some Christians among the Irish when Patrick arrived, the majority were still adherents to Celtic paganism and worshipped as many as 400 gods while also venerating certain animals, sacred places, and sacred dates. Their rituals, which included sacrifices and teaching, were facilitated by a priestly class known as the Druids who also served as "judges, teachers, healers, politicians, and astronomers" (Olsen 2003, 28). In terms of social structure, fifth-century Ireland was organized along tribal networks and there were no actual towns or cities.

Believing that he was ministering in the last days and literally at the ends of the earth, Patrick's first step in evangelizing Ireland was to approach tribal leaders, seek their protection and favor, and ask permission to proclaim the gospel among their people (cf. Wilken 2012, 271). One of the earliest missionaries in church history to reference Matthew 28:18-20 as a central mission text, Patrick's ministry was characterized by itinerant preaching. Working alongside teams of monks and clergy, Patrick recognized that they would encounter suffering and hardship as they pressed on in the work. That said, he also preached prophetically against injustice and slavery in Irish society. After ministering for nearly thirty years among the Irish (ca. 432-ca. 461), much of Ireland was evangelized and the Irish church became a hub for reaching other parts of Europe (cf. Patrick, Confessions 1, 9, 12, 23, 34, 39, 43, 48; O'Loughlin 2005, 65-68, 72-77).

Patrick's mission work was also based in the church and had churches as its most visible outcome. As shown, he was set apart for the Irish mission by the bishop of Rome and was probably trained by British church leaders and effectively sent by the British church for the work. His evangelism and preaching were organically related to catechesis (a thorough period of instruction prior to baptism) and baptism itself. O'Loughlin points out that the confession of faith in the opening paragraphs of Patrick's Confessions, which surely informed his catechesis, was based on a creed that greatly resembled that of Nicaea (cf. Patrick, Confessions 4; O'Loughlin 1999, 54-55). Reflecting on the fruit of his ministry, Patrick spoke of the "many thousands, my brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, I have baptized in the Lord" (Patrick, Confessions 14). He further rejoiced that new church leaders had been raised up who shared those values—"clergy everywhere to baptize and preach to a people who are in want and need" (Patrick, Confessions 40).

As Patrick, who was also a monk-bishop, planted new churches around Ireland, Irvin and Sunquist note that he deliberately "sought to establish monasteries in the regions of his missionary labors" (2001, 236). Patrick's monastic convictions also influenced the leadership structure of the developing Irish church. As there were no towns to speak of in Ireland prior to Patrick's mission, the monastic communities (and their structures) filled that void and became the first towns. Though there were, of course, bishops in the Irish church, the primary leaders were monastic abbots. This monastic form of church polity certainly made
the Irish church distinct from the broader church in the world (McNeill 1974, 69-70).

**Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604)**

According to an eighth-century biography of Bishop Gregory I (540-604) of Rome, one day before he was a bishop, Gregory observed boys “with fair complexions, handsome faces, and lovely hair” being sold in the slave market in Rome. Inquiring about their identity and background, he was told that they were *Angli* (Anglo or English). Responding with a play on words, he declared “they have the face of angels [*angeli*] and such men should be fellow-heirs with the angels in heaven” (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1). Though the accuracy of this particular story is doubted by scholars, what is undeniable is that around 596, several years after becoming bishop of Rome, Gregory the Great sent Augustine of Canterbury and a group of about forty monks on a mission to evangelize the English (cf. Mayr-Harting 2001, 57-59; Markus 1997, 177-178). It was the first cross-cultural mission effort in church history initiated by a Roman bishop.

Bede begins the narrative by stating simply: “Gregory, prompted by divine inspiration, sent a servant of God named Augustine and several more God-fearing monks with him to preach the word of God to the English race” (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.23). In all, the band of missionary monks may have been as large as forty persons. As Bede’s account presents Gregory as a strong and assertive bishop and Augustine as a rather weak and uncertain monk, one might wonder why Augustine was chosen to lead the effort. The most likely reason was that because Augustine was serving as the abbot of Gregory’s St. Andrews monastery, Gregory already had a great deal of confidence in him. In addition, the monks in his charge on the English mission had made a vow of obedience to Augustine and, of course, Augustine had made the same vow to Bishop Gregory. It seems that obedience to spiritual authority was a strong value in this missionary effort, especially as the group of monks faced difficulties that came with cross-cultural ministry among a pagan people (cf. Mayr-Harting 2001, 61).

After traveling over land through Gaul, the monks were greeted by King Ethelbert of Kent upon their arrival in England. Having been married to a Christian wife for thirty years and apparently remaining unmoved by the gospel, it is not surprising that Ethelbert did not respond immediately to the monks’ message. However, the king did allow them to build a church and establish a mission base at Canterbury and gave the monks freedom to preach among his subjects. According to Gregory, in the first year of their ministry, over 10,000 Anglo-Saxons believed the gospel and were baptized. Though it is difficult to know exactly when Ethelbert converted, the king eventually embraced the gospel for himself (cf. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.25-26; Mayr-Harting 2001, 62-64; Markus 1963, 19-24).

What were Augustine’s mission strategies in the pagan, English context? First, like Patrick and other missionaries in the period, they first approached a political leader, preached the gospel to him, sought his favor, and received permission to minister to his subjects. Second, their preaching was given credibility because of the monks’ holy examples and also through their apparent working of miracles. Third, they were sensitive to contextualize the gospel in English forms. In
particular, they transformed existing pagan temples into houses of Christian worship and they adapted a pagan cattle festival into a thanksgiving feast (cf. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.25-26, 30-31).

How was the mission to England a church driven mission? First, as shown, the visionary behind the effort was the Roman Bishop Gregory. Called out of the monastery to serve as a deacon and later bishop, Gregory wrestled with the tension between the contemplative (prayer, fasting, devotion to Scripture) and active (service, ministry, mission) aspects of monastic living (cf. Demacopoulos 2015, 21, 26, 28-30). For Gregory, service to others always trumped contemplation and this value surely undergirded his passion for mission. This was evident in his work as a deacon distributing material aid to the poor in Rome and also in his vision to see the unbelieving English hear the gospel. Gregory seemed particularly burdened for the English because they represented the last vestiges of paganism within the Roman Empire (cf. Mayr-Harting 2001, 13-16, 22-30; Markus 1997, 80-82).

Second, once Augustine and the monks had departed for England, they remained under Gregory’s authority and pastoral care. Sometime after the journey began, the community of monks either experienced dissension or became overwhelmed by the hardship of the journey and the task before them. Bede writes that “they began to contemplate returning home rather than going to a barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation” (Bede *Ecclesiastical History* 1.23). Augustine apparently left the group for a time and returned to Rome to convince Gregory that the mission should be abandoned. The strong-willed bishop demonstrated pastoral care for his struggling abbot; however, he refused to allow the monks to return. Instead he sent Augustine back with a brief letter to encourage the group:

You must, most beloved sons, fulfill the good work . . . with the help of the Lord, you have begun. Let, then, neither the toil of the journey nor the tongues of evil-speaking men deter you; but with all [urgency] and all fervor go on with what under God’s guidance you have commenced, knowing that great toil is followed by the glory of an eternal reward. Obey in all things humbly Augustine your provost (*praeposito*), who is returning to you, whom we also appoint your abbot, knowing that whatever may be fulfilled in you through his admonition will in all ways profit your souls. May Almighty God protect you with His grace, and grant to me to see the fruit of your labor in the eternal country; that so, even though I cannot labor with you, I may be found together with you in the joy of the reward; for in truth I desire to labor. God keep you safe, most beloved sons (Gregory, *Letter* 6.51).

Third, as King Ethelbert granted the monks space to live and work, one of the first things they did was establish a church as a base of ministry. As the work among the English developed, more churches were started and Augustine and at least two other monks were set apart as bishops (cf. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.27; 2.3; Markus 1997, 180-181). Though they were not indigenous leaders and the church structures that were adopted were clearly Roman, one clear outcome of the English
mission was the establishment of churches. In short, the mission to England was the vision of the bishop of the church at Rome and its outcomes included new churches and church leaders in England.

**Boniface (ca. 680-754)**

Boniface was the most well-known eighth-century missionary and, arguably, the most influential English Christian on European Christianity in the medieval period. Originally named Wynfrith, he spent the first forty years of his life in monasteries at Exeter and Nursling. While living in the monastery at Nursling and probably inspired by the accounts of the Celtic monks, Boniface felt the initial urge to leave and move out among pagans for the purpose of pilgrimage and mission. Though initially his monastic abbot was opposed to Boniface’s ideas, he eventually released him to go. This initiative to mission seemed to rest squarely on Boniface’s vision as no monastic or ecclesiastical sending initiative was in place (cf. Willibald, *Life of Boniface* 1-2; Talbot 1970, 45-46).

Boniface’s missionary career began around 719 when he joined the missionary Willibrord’s work among the Frisians, a Germanic people who lived in what is now Holland and Germany. After a year of ministry, Boniface journeyed to Rome where he was set apart by Bishop Gregory II as a missionary envoy to the Frisians and was given the name Boniface (Talbot 1970, 48). After another season of ministering with Willibrord, Boniface returned to Rome in 722 and Gregory II set him apart as a missionary-bishop for all of Germany. Boniface took a vow of allegiance to the pope and committed to propagating a Roman form of Christianity among the Germanic peoples. Commenting on the uniqueness of Boniface’s episcopal appointment, Talbot writes: “This was not a case of becoming a bishop like anyone else. Boniface had no diocese, no episcopal see, no attachment or subordination to a metropolitan. His sphere of work was the whole of Germany beyond the Rhine” (Talbot 1970, 49).

The most celebrated account of Boniface’s ministry among the Germans came in 724 when he confronted pagan ritual and belief head on by cutting down the sacred oak tree of Jupiter in the town of Geismar. Boniface’s biographer Willibald writes:

> With the counsel and advice of the latter persons, Boniface in their presence attempted to cut down, at a place called Geismar, a certain oak of extraordinary size called in the old tongue of the pagans the Oak of Jupiter. Taking his courage in his hands (for a great crowd of pagans stood by watching and bitterly cursing in their hearts the enemy of the gods), he cut the first notch. But when he had made a superficial cut, suddenly, the oak’s vast bulk, shaken by a mighty blast of wind from above crashed to the ground shivering its topmost branches into fragments in its fall. As if by the express will of God (for the brethren present had done nothing to cause it) the oak burst asunder into four parts, each part having a trunk of equal length. At the sight of this extraordinary spectacle the heathens who had been cursing ceased to revile and began, on the contrary, to believe and
bless the Lord. Thereupon the holy bishop took counsel with the brethren, built an oratory from the timber of the oak and dedicated it to Saint Peter the Apostle (Willibald, *Life of Boniface* 6).

As his mission work continued and particularly as he saw churches established, Boniface gifts as an administrator became recognized. In 737 and 738, following another trip to Rome, he was given authority over all of the churches of Bavaria and he organized several new churches and appointed bishops in the region. Though Boniface wanted to move away from administration and presumably back toward more pioneering mission efforts, Gregory III of Rome ordered Boniface to stay in this role. Between 741 and 747, his administrative tasks only grew as he was tasked with reforming the already established Frankish churches and dealing with immoral clergy and financial abuses among other issues (cf. Boniface *Letters* 23-24, 27-29, 35; Talbot 1970, 53-55).

Neill writes, “As Boniface grew older, he withdrew more and more from the field of administration; at the end the spirit of the missionary prevailed, and drove him out again into the lands where Christ had not been named” (Neill 1991, 66). In 753, now well into his seventies, Boniface headed back out to a part of Frisia where there were still unbaptized pagans. In the midst of this new work of preaching, baptizing, and teaching, Boniface and a team of his companions were attacked by an angry mob and were martyred in 754.

What were Boniface’s approaches to mission in Germany? First, like others that went before him, he made contact with German leaders and preached Christ to them while also seeking their favor to preach among their people. Boniface was also in contact with Frankish Christian political leaders—including Charles Martel, Carloman, Griffo, and Pepin—who gave him military protection as he preached among the Frisians (cf. Willibald, *Life of Boniface* 5; Talbot 1970, 45). Second, despite this protection, Boniface’s mission work was centered on building relationships and preaching. As shown in the account at Geismar, a key part of his preaching included confronting paganism. As many Frisians were converted through his itinerant preaching, Boniface followed up the work through teaching, catechesis, as well as the establishment of new churches cf. Willibald, *Life of Boniface* 5; Boniface *Letters* 3, 11-12; Mayr-Harting 2001, 263). Third, Boniface was an innovator in team ministry by involving monks and nuns in mission among the Frisians. He is one of the earliest recorded missionaries to recruit women for the work of mission (cf. Willibald, *Life of Boniface* 8; Boniface *Letter* 6; Talbot 1970, 51).

Boniface’s ministry was also characterized by a strong connection to the church. Though not sent out by his monastery or the English church, he aligned himself with the bishop of Rome and became ordained as a bishop for missionary work in the Germanic regions. Effectively, he was sent out for mission by the bishop of Rome.

As Frisians embraced the gospel, Boniface catechized and baptized new believers and established new churches. As shown, part of Boniface’s work as a bishop was serving as an administrator of existing German churches and bringing reform to the Frankish churches.
Like Augustine of Canterbury, Boniface’s mission work was also characterized by its distinct Romanness. Boniface demonstrated a strong loyalty to the bishop of Rome and in his work, particularly the organization of new German churches, he sought to align them with the authority, teaching, and practices of Rome. In Gregory II’s initial letter to Boniface, the bishop encouraged him to assimilate German believers into the church according to Roman customs (cf. Boniface Letters 5, 23, 25, 37, 46-47). As Boniface received direction on questions related to ordinations, marriage, and the liturgy among other things, Roman theology and approaches to church certainly prevailed, which inhibited the German churches from being fully indigenous (cf. Boniface Letters 14, 16; Talbot 1970, 51-52; Mayr-Harting 2001, 269). Though this Roman influence hindered local Germanic Christianity from developing, one thing that is clear is that Boniface was sent by the Roman church and the most evident outcome of his work were churches and networks of churches.

**Conclusion**

This paper has endeavored to narrate representative accounts in four contexts (Asia Minor, Ireland, England, and Germany) from the fourth to eighth centuries in which the local church functioned as the sending structure for missionaries. Though the circumstances, strategies, and contexts differ, what is constant is that mission flowed from the church and resulted in churches.

In the case of Basil of Caesarea, he self identified as a bishop and not as a missionary; however, a clear part of his job description was serving as an intercultural, urban missionary in the multicultural context of Cappadocia. As a monk-bishop and leader of the church and the monastery in his region of Asia Minor, Basil recognized only one structure for ministry and mission—the church.

Patrick of Ireland also viewed himself first and foremost as a bishop (cf. O’Loughlin 1999, 48). As we have shown, he was not set apart to serve an existing congregation as Basil and other early Christian bishops were; rather, he was appointed as a missionary bishop for the sake of non-believers. Patrick was, of course, set apart under the authority of the bishop of Rome and he most likely apprenticed for the Irish ministry under British church leaders. As the Irish embraced the gospel, Patrick planted churches and started monasteries and church leadership structures followed monastic structures, which resulted in an organic relationship between the two. Though later Celtic missionary monasticism flourished because of Patrick’s legacy, in his day we cannot really separate the monastic and ecclesiastical structures for mission.

While Augustine of Canterbury’s mission to England was initiated by the bishop of Rome and Boniface sought out the bishop of Rome in order to be sent to Germany, both men were clearly sent by and ministered under the authority of the Roman church. Though they established monasteries on their fields of service, these communities were accountable to the church. If there were two structures in these contexts, then the monastic structure was so subservient to the ecclesiastical one that the former was engulfed in the latter. Finally, as Augustine and Boniface received pretty specific directions from the Roman leadership, the most visible outcome of their work were theologically and culturally Roman churches.
In summary, in the period our study—from the fourth to eighth centuries prior to the rise of monastic missionary orders—it was the church that sent missionaries, trained them, kept them accountable, provided them authority, and often gave specific direction for ministry. This narrative and analysis of early and medieval mission history calls into question the two structures of redemption paradigm that Winter has proposed and suggests that the church alone functioned as the sole structure for sending missionaries.
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Meaning is direct when it nominates the referent without the help of a context, in isolation; meaning is figurative when the referent is named and at the same time characterized through its similarity with other objects; Cf. direct meaning, figurative meaning, tough meat
head foot face. tough politician head of a cabbage foot of a mountain put a new face on smth. Holborn is a tough examiner. When analysing the semantic structure of a polysemantic word, it is necessary to distinguish between two levels of analysis. On the first level, the semantic structure of a word is treated as a system of meanings. For example, the semantic structure of the noun fire could be roughly presented by this scheme (only the most frequent meanings are given) Question: "When did the church begin/start?”. Answer: The church began on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover when Jesus died and rose again. The word translated "church" comes from two Greek words that together mean "called out from the world for God". The word is used throughout the Bible to refer to all those who have been born again (John 3:3) through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 10:9-10). The word church, when used to reference all believers everywhere, is synonymous with the term Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18). The w