

## The Vocation of the Missionary

---

*E. Theodore Bachmann  
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Berkeley, California*

For one who has not himself had the distinction of serving overseas as a foreign missionary, and who has only had the privilege of living for a time amid the fruits of other men's labors in the land from which the first missionaries were sent forth, it may be presumptive to say something about the vocation of the missionary. When, however, I had accepted the invitation of our extremely able and persuasive president, Dr. R. Pierce Beaver, in which he laid stress on placing the missionary's calling in its appropriate theological context, I knew I was in for a rough assignment.

At times this presentation may appear theoretical. If it does, I hope it will not appear artificial. For you, too, may recall the character in Thackeray's *Yellow Plush Papers* who accepted an assignment on "Chinese Philosophy." Indeed, he did so unflinchingly, simply blending into an essay two articles from the encyclopedia: the one on "China," and the other on "Philosophy."

In approaching the vocation of the missionary, I was assured by discerning friends that not much had been written on the subject in recent years. There was, of course, plenty of material on recruitment; also excellent statements on the characteristics of the missionary. The importance of vital Christian experience was everywhere recognized. There were glowing accounts of the missionary vocation of the whole Church, and of the duty of each believer to be a missionary. And there were wise words about the foreign missionary vocation as a special task of some Christians who take it up as their personal responsibility. Yet I have also accumulated a small but choice file of letters in which friends at home and overseas--and this has

made me suspicious--wished me well in tackling this seemingly neglected subject.

What follows is something that I can offer only as the fruit of prolonged struggle. Postwar years in Europe, especially in occasional contacts with the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute near Geneva, and in frequent ones with the Evangelical Academies in Germany, have made me aware of the eagerness with which people in many kinds of occupation are seeking to recover a sense of vocation, a glad awareness of being called by another, and of thus possessing once again a meaningful rather than a meaningless life. This is a life in which the individual is retrieved from the loneliness--even the sickness --of his individualism and is placed in community. If such community remains at the level of mere sociological interdependence or solidarity, it leaves life truncated and its quest for completion falls forever short. Such completion, in terms of radical reorientation and fulfillment, is available to all people in the vocation-- the calling--of the Christian Evangel.

This treatment of the vocation of the missionary is therefore an attempt to set forth the subject more by implication than by explication. It is, I think, more important at this point of search to provoke questions than to offer specifications. Indeed, what is thus said about the special vocation of the missionary may illuminate other aspects of the one vocation of all Christians.

What follows falls into four unequal parts. Firstly, the career of the missionary in our time--a brief reference to the contemporary breadth of the subject. Secondly, the missionary vocation as a special calling--a pair of biographical sketches expressing historical depth. Thirdly, the theological content in missionary vocation. Finally, the missionary vocation and the unity of the Church.

## I. THE CAREER OF THE MISSIONARY IN OUR TIME

Seldom has man been so accessible, his achievements so spectacular, his common plight so evident, his quest for community so unsparing, his need for radically good news so all-pervasive. Between the twin evils of self-destruction and self-deification there is set the task of the Christian missionary who points man's hope not to the corrupt and mortal self but to the gracious and eternal God. Yet there are many other kinds of missionaries. Amid the many rival forces now claiming attention and demanding loyalty, the career of missionary--political, commercial, scientific, cultural as well as religious--is recognized as essential. The missionary of all these causes is

a symbol. He operates off-stage teaching lines by which others are to live. Whether one observes a Buddhist, humanist, or communist missionary at work, there is in each a sense of commitment, a calling or vocation that appears like an alarming imitation of what the Christian missionary ought himself to possess, only to a still greater degree, by way of commitment and vocation. The alarm over this grows, at least in part, out of discordant factors among Christians themselves.

**A. Sour Notes in Zion**, from trumpets with uncertain sound, betray confusion in the ranks of the missionary force. The metaphor can be exaggerated, but the urgency of the Christian mission cannot. In amazing disarray this urgency breaks out in drama and procession. Now from the mass rally of sectarian enthusiasts, now from the quiet professionalism of the candidate secretary, persons are recruited and sent forth. Their destination "The ends of the earth," Their work? New or already well established. Their backing? Anything from tiny "faith mission" to proud denomination. Their unity? The Christian name--a collective term for a multiform but aggressive faith.

One of the sourest notes, unhappily, blares from the religious illiteracy of so many of today's missionary candidates. No one questions their sincerity or their Christian character. Some have had a deep experience of the grace of God. Most of them have a firm faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Compared, however, to earlier generations it is agreed that:

Most missionary candidates of the present day shock their elders by their ignorance about the Bible and about missionary and church history. ...This is true, not only of medical, agricultural and educational missionaries, but also of many seminary graduates .... Few of them have read much about the missionary work of their denominations. Not many are familiar with missionary biography. Fewer still are aware of the steps which have led to the growth and development of the Younger Churches .... There is (for example) nothing today to compare with the kind of continuous missionary education received a generation ago by those who were members of Student Volunteer bands on college campuses.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "New Trends in Missionary Training in the United States," A Paper Prepared by the Secretary of the Committee on Missionary Personnel of the Division of Foreign Missions, National Council of Churches, New York: NCC, 1957, pp. 2-3.

Such disturbing observations make it all the more important to hear again what J. H. Oldham, that ecumenical and missionary veteran, had to say in 1935:

The missionary movement... is what its representatives are. The end for which all missionary organization exists, for which funds are collected at great cost in time and labor, for which programmes of missionary education are planned, is that a certain witness shall be borne and a certain work done by persons sent out by the home churches. All depends on the character and capacity of those persons.<sup>2</sup>

The question of motivation thus becomes highly significant for the missionary vocation. Out of 915 denominational missionaries, in Kenyon E. Moyer's valuable survey, the personal factor accounted for five out of six decisions to enter missionary service. The influence of missionaries and their talks stands foremost. Next, comes that of parents and friends, on the one hand, and of interpersonal contacts in Student Volunteer activities, summer camps and the like, on the other. Comparatively little influence was ascribed to pastors, church school teachers, college or seminary professors.<sup>3</sup>

Also revealing is the fact that among those questioned nearly four out of six decisions for missionary service were made after high school, "that is, after the home church had ceased to be a major factor in the influences on their lives." Although it may be assumed that earlier Christian nurture was not without effect. Finally, in looking back, nearly five out of six felt that their preparation before being sent out was lacking in such essentials as the principles, history and methods of mission, as well as cultural orientation to the land and people they would be serving.<sup>4</sup>

As to the personal qualifications of the missionary, Douglas Webster's booklet, *What Is A Missionary?*, sharpens much previous discussion of the subject. He lists four priorities: (1) a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ; (2) a capacity to interpret the gospel; (3) an awareness of the kind of world in which we live; and (4) readiness to make the universal church a reality.<sup>5</sup> Obviously it is not easy to meet such standards. The claim that it

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Oldham, ed., *The Modern Missionary*, London: SCM, 1935, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> "A Study of Missionary Motivation, Training, and Withdrawal (1932-1952)," by Kenyon E. Moyer. New York: Missionary Research Library, 1957, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Recruiting, Selection and Training of Missionaries in North America," A paper for study and references prepared by the Secretary of the Committee on

takes “eight volunteers or recruits to make one missionary” hardly seems an exaggeration.<sup>6</sup> For the person sent forth today must fit the specifications of the slot at the other end of the line. The oldtime sending of all sorts of “pioneers”—at least in the case of the older established denominations—has given way in Asia and elsewhere to requested partners in on-going tasks.

Experienced missionaries have pointed out the very practical need of gaining and holding a point of contact with the non-Christians among whom the missionary is to work. To be effective at his appointed place, the missionary must fulfill a double requirement. He must have both a keen competence in something that already has captured the interest of the non-Christians as well as a communicable commitment to Jesus Christ. For example, the late A. C. Hogg, president of Madras Christian College, put it this way: “The educational missionary must have a scholar’s zest for his subject and a teacher’s joy in educating as well as a longing to declare Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

For the missionary vocation the best are none too good. If the day of the old-style missionary is over, (although some do not seem to realize this fact), the new day calls for an all-round excellence of professional talent and confessing faith such as the home churches would like to obtain for themselves—and keep. Yet the candidate secretary is in a pivotal position. He knows the church at home and also the church abroad. He has heard the sour notes in Zion echo around the world. But he also hears and shares that stronger and persistent call to mission which comes to man from another direction.

**B. Who Goes Where?** Those who are sent forth give an ever-fresh relevance to the map of the Christian world mission. Against the background of Latourette’s monumental *History of the Expansion of Christianity* there is the ever-changing configuration of locations. Each spot is alive with missionaries and personal meaning. In the divided state of Christ’s Church, some are Roman Catholic, others are Protestant, and in many places their efforts overlap and compete.

---

Missionary Personnel of the Division of Foreign Missions, National Council of Churches. New York: NCC, 1957, pp. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Kenyon E. Moyer, “Selection and Training of the Overseas Personnel of the Christian Church,” New York: Missionary Research Library, *Occasional Bulletin* Vol. VIII (August 15, 1957) No. 8, pp. 1, 9. [Hereafter: MRL:OB]

<sup>7</sup> Oldham, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 44.

In terms of totals, the Roman Catholic Church has in its mission lands some 40 million adherents. To serve these the Propagation of the Faith, with its long-standing headquarters in Rome, has 684 "Ordinaries," responsible for some 33,000 priests, 12,000 brothers, and 75,000 sisters. Since about half of these are nationals, and half from other countries, the Roman foreign missionaries number about 60,000. Of these possibly five out of eight are women.<sup>8</sup>

Protestant foreign missionaries from all lands total approximately 35,000. Of these, about two-thirds (23,432) come from the United States, (Fifty years ago the United States provided only one-third of the total.) Six out of ten of those from America are women. And each year between 1,000 and 2,000 new missionaries are appointed.<sup>9</sup> Their support comes from 213 different missionary agencies, and they serve in about 100 countries around the globe. Asia draws over one-third of these Americans; Africa south of the Sahara nearly 30%; Latin America 26%, plus smaller contingents in the South Pacific and elsewhere. As to countries of service, India has the largest number of American missionaries; Japan is next, and the Belgian Congo third. China, with nearly 4,500 in 1925, today has one lone and unofficial American missionary, Paul Mackensen.<sup>10</sup>

This American agglomeration is a house divided. While the denominations cooperating in the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of Churches have the longest established and most extensive work, they accounted in 1956 for 43.5% of all the American foreign missionaries. In that year they also sent out 631 more missionaries than in 1952. Meanwhile, the independent societies and agencies, including so-called faith missions, in 1956 accounted for 56.5% of the American foreign missionaries, and sent out 4,170 more than in 1952.<sup>11</sup> Behind this visible cleavage lie theological and other differences that perpetuate the old conflict of "modernist" versus "fundamentalist" and carry it from the United States to the rest of the world.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Frank W. Price, "World Christian and Missionary Statistics." MRL:OB, IX (May 6, 1958) No. 4, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> "Recruiting, Selection and Training..." p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Frank W. Price and Kenyon E. Moyer, "A Study of American Protestant Foreign Missions in 1956," MRL:OB, VII (Nov. 16, 1956), No. 9, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> "Recruiting, Selection and Training..." pp. 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> *The International Review of Missions* [IRM], XLVII (April 1958), No. 186. The following articles are invaluable: Harold Lindsell, "An Appraisal of Agencies not Cooperating with the International Missionary Council Grouping," pp. 202-209. David J. du Plessis, "Golden Jubilee of Twentieth-Century



**C. Facing the World Divided** has long been one of the major liabilities of the Christian outreach, and now it faces a day of reckoning. While the world population is booming, the number of Christians is growing only one-third as fast.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the missionary today faces competition that is moving forward on many fronts with grim intensity. It is no less than the struggle for the whole man, body and soul. Its epic quality steps forth from Hendrik Kraemer's now classic work, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, as well as from such newer accounts as Rajah Manikam's *Christianity and the Asian Revolution* (1954); Keith Bridston's *Shock and Renewal* (1955); M.M. Thomas and J. D. McCaughey, *The Christian in the World Struggle* (1956), and works of comparable challenge.

His task set amid "so many and great dangers," the missionary's vocation is on the front line of Christian witness. If he is alert, he notices in such developments as the advance of Islam in Africa, the renewal of Buddhism in Southeast Asia, or the resurgence of Hinduism, certain new characteristics that did not appear to missionaries in an earlier era. The fact that some of the major changes in these ancient religions is the result of their encounter with Christianity, tells a story whose meaning demands ever higher performance in the missionary calling.<sup>14</sup> Along with this deep-seated religious renaissance comes also the driving force of a new nationalism. The propagandists of these changes are themselves ardent missionaries. They confront the Christian missionary with such exacting tests that he must be doubly sure of his vocation.

Nor is this all. Cutting across all ancient religions, yet with points of contact suggesting at least the possibility of a future synthesis, comes the challenge of revolutionary Communism. Born of Western secularism, this dialectical materialism professes atheism while it breathes the fanaticism of a Judeo-Christian heresy. Its apostles are missionaries for whom the one end justifies any means. In their minds is a "blueprint of world conquest" whose messianism appeals to the awaking masses, and in their lives is the iron discipline of party membership.<sup>15</sup> If the Party was Lenin's most

---

Pentecostal Movements," pp. 193-201, Norman Goodall, "Evangelicals' and WCC-IMC," pp. 210-215.

<sup>13</sup> MRL, OB, IX (May 1958), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Hendrik Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith*. Phila: Westminster, 1956, pp. 27-30. Rajah B. Manikam, ed., *Christianity and the Asian Revolution*. Madras: Diocesan Press, 1954, pp. 185-209.

<sup>15</sup> William Henry Chamberlain, *Blueprint for World Conquest*. Washington: Human Events, 1946, pp. 73-85, 234-45.

conspicuous achievement in strategy, then the Communist cadres have become the missionary task force of this atheistic faith.<sup>16</sup>

Between religious renaissance and political revolution the missionary of Jesus Christ is to plant the gospel of reconciliation. This is a dangerous and costly witness to bear. It calls for a modern *martyrion*. As one missionary expressed it, in preparing for the Willingen Conference in 1952: "A missionary is called to the martyrdom of staking his life. A martyr is one who bears witness, not so much by his death as by the use of his life."<sup>17</sup>

## II. THE MISSIONARY VOCATION IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Besides contemporary breadth, the Protestant missionary's vocation has historical depth. This discussion can be highlighted by two lives which bracket between them the quarter millennium of continuous Protestant mission overseas. The one is Bartholomew Ziegenbalg (1683-1719), who began his missionary career in Tranquebar, South India, in 1706. The other is Rajah Bhushanam Manikam (1897-19--), who was consecrated Bishop of Tranquebar in the 250th anniversary year, 1956. In both of these men the call to mission is strong. That call is lived as a vocation involving the whole person, and it is understood as a vocation of the whole Church. Matters of theology as well as of function become personified in these men in such a way as to make each of them a symbol of the Christian world mission. On closer scrutiny we can see why.

A. Ziegenbalg was well known in the 18th century as the pioneer Protestant foreign missionary. In him Protestantism emerged belatedly on the stage of the Christian world mission, and reference to him could help to refute the Roman Catholic charge of Protestant provincialism. His letters, reports, and even personal visits from India back to Europe packed his thirteen-year missionary career with meaning for Protestants everywhere. The fact that he happened to be a pious Lutheran aided rather than hindered, and his work soon acquired an ecumenical aura.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred Meyer, *Leninism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957. See also book review of this work in *American Historical Review*, Spring, 1958. High Seton-Watson, *From Lenin to Malenkov, The History of World Communism*. New York: Praeger, 1954, pp. 343-344.

<sup>17</sup> "The Missionary Vocation," Report of Commission II, The Missionary Obligation [a pre-Willingen study]. Division of Foreign Missions, NCC, New York, March 7, 1952, p. 20.



The geographic quadrilateral of Halle, Copenhagen, London, and Tranquebar become the design for a remarkable partnership. Men could refer to August Herman Francke in Halle as the “heart” of this venture, to King Frederick IV of Denmark as its “head,” to Archbishop Tenison and the SPCK in London as its helping “hand.”<sup>18</sup> These leaders and many others followed the reports from Tranquebar with growing interest. In young lives as well as old such news of the Kingdom summoned forth a far-reaching range of response. There was, for example, Grandmother Zinzendorf, in whose home little Nicholas first learned about the new mission in India. And while Suzanna Wesley was capturing the imagination of young John with the published translations of Ziegenbalg’s letters, Cotton Mather wrote him in Latin from Boston (1717). Addressing Ziegenbalg as “the most honorable, renowned, and world famous Servant of the Gospel, dean of the Congregation in India, indefatigable missionary...and humble Servant of Christ.” Mather confessed that many of the Protestant churches regard it as an offense that so little has hitherto been done for the spreading of the Christian faith. Without intending flattery, he assured Ziegenbalg:

You have surpassed all .... The fame of your mission, and of its diligent cultivation, has echoed from East India to [our] West India. And what you have been able to accomplish by divine grace in the way of founding a Christian people among the people of India is being received in America as good news from a distant land, and is being proclaimed among American Christians to the great praise of God.<sup>19</sup>

The vast outflow of Protestant missionary activity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century eclipsed these cherished beginnings. But with the current re-examination of the Christian world mission, and in connection with the anniversary year 1956, Ziegenbalg’s work and vocation disclose still other important features. These bear further, even if brief, notice now.

Ziegenbalg grew up in the baroque era of widening horizons and ready experimentation. Among many there moved a desire for life in full dimensional harmony: harmony with God, with the world, with the self. A basic openness in Lutheranism to the world as God’s creation helped to set the tone. Even the newfound pietism--as Spener and Francke insisted -- could be harmonized with authoritative confessional orthodoxy. Indeed, piety of heart and dedication of mind were complementary elements of

<sup>18</sup> Erioh Beyreuther, *Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, Bahnbrecher der Weitmission*. Stuttgart: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1955, pp. 65 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Arno Lehmann, “Prioritäten und Fernwirkungen der Tranquebar-Mission,” *Evangelische Missions Zeitschrift*, February 1956, pp. 49-50.

that faith which, like Augustine of old, confesses: *Credo ut intelligam* [I believe in order that I might know].

Son of a successful businessman in Saxony, Ziegenbalg was orphaned early, educated by friends, befriended by Spener in Berlin, and summoned by Francke to study theology at Halle, Germany's newest and fastest-growing university. His previous months of spiritual struggle had proved a season of growth, yet a recurring stomach ailment, which he called his *malum hypochondriacum*, at times severely tested his spiritual harmony with God.

At the University of Halle, August Hermann Francke introduced his students to theology by striking a missionary note. He declared:

A hunger and thirst for righteousness and closer communion with God has come over many souls. In thousands there is a sense of need, and they are looking about for persons who will show them the way. As once from Macedonia, so today they cry: Come over and help us.<sup>20</sup>

Then, with an infectious enthusiasm and a conviction born of personal experience and far-flung contacts, he continued:

One may indeed say that our Lord God is making His presence known in this world and is permitting a general shaking of the foundations far and wide, not only in Germany and Europe, but also in other parts of the world. Today such things are happening that our descendants--when they will sometime be reading about the compassion in bodily and spiritual matters which God is showing us--will be amazed at the blessedness of these days.

Confronting his students with a personal challenge of Scriptural power, Francke told them: "You are to become ambassadors of God! Why? For the past few years, and ahead of all others, God has been singling out the students."<sup>21</sup> Francke's fervor was born of evangelical piety, and his consuming activity was governed by a "kingdom-consciousness." The secret of never-failing and ever-renewing power and inspiration lay in the Kingdom that both is and is coming. Francke and his like-minded

<sup>20</sup> Beyreuther, op. cit., pp. 10-17.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

contemporaries “found in the theology of the Kingdom both the will and the joy to mission.”<sup>22</sup>

Young Ziegenbalg had caught this spirit during his single full semester at Halle. Meanwhile, a visit to Berlin coincided with the arrival there of an urgent request from King Frederick IV of Denmark for qualified men to help him conduct an experiment. The location was not yet sure, except that it would be in one of his Danish colonies, either in the West Indies, or on the African Guinea Coast, or in India. In any case, Frederick was moved to try spreading the Christian gospel among the native people.<sup>23</sup> Who would go?

Ziegenbalg and his older friend, Heinrich Pluetschau (1677-1746), who had been serving as a teacher in Francke’s schools at Halle, hesitated. But they did not say “No.” They seemed to let the decision be made for them, although there was intensive spiritual wrestling in each of them before consenting to go. Outwardly the logic of this enterprise was plain: there were chaplains for Danish seamen and pastors for Danes in the royal colonies. Then why not missionaries as a next step? After a thorough theological examination, the two were ordained in Copenhagen by the Bishop of Zealand and pledged to the ritual of the Church of Denmark.

While en route to India, Ziegenbalg gave much thought to his vocation as a missionary. To friends in Germany he wrote:

In the task before me I seek nothing but to serve the Triune God in gratitude for the fatherly love and constancy He has shown me since my youth, and to use whatever resources He will provide me for proclaiming His truth and spreading His kingdom. So may His name be made known and glorified among the heathen. To achieve this purpose I will gladly deny myself, relegating all earthly pleasures to the last place and accepting with great joyfulness whatever cross, sorrow, persecution and misfortune will most surely come my way. And why should I be ashamed to suffer even the most ignominious death, if thereby God be praised and my neighbor’s salvation be hastened?<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> J. C. Hoekendijk, “Mission in der Krise,” *EMZ*, May 1949, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Arno Lehmann, *It Began At Tranquebar, A History of the First Protestant Mission in India*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1956, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Arno Lehmann, ed., *Alte Briefe aus Indien*. Unveroeffentliche Briefe von Bartholamaeus Ziegenbalg, 1706-1719. Berlin: Evang. Verlagsanstalt, 1957,

Despite the hostile reception accorded the two missionaries in Tranquebar by the Danish Governor Hassius, and with the prospect of a prolonged imposition of calculated frustrations by local Europeans to whom Christian missioning was an embarrassment, Ziegenbalg's convictions remained unshaken. He was able, as he put it, "to perceive the certainty of God's call."<sup>25</sup>

This certitude expressed itself remarkable in Ziegenbalg's intensive application of his calling. Actually, this is the story of thirteen years of pioneering toil, full of frustration, opportunity and encouraging response. His biographer, Erich Beyreuther, has told this story well<sup>26</sup> and has amplified it with further studies. His letters have been gathered by Arno Lehmann and are now also available.<sup>27</sup> The significance of his work in India has been helpfully appraised by Hans-Werner Gonsichen.<sup>28</sup> Here it is enough to summarize some of their observations:

Ziegenbalg's approach was marked by patience with his Hindu critics. His refusal to return insults eventually drew their respect and, in some cases, won their interest in the Christian faith.

His desire to know all he could about Hinduism--a desire so incomprehensible, even reprehensible, to Francke and others in Europe--grew out of his contention that non-Christians must be convinced of their sin and need of salvation in Jesus Christ not only by the Law of God but also on the grounds of their own religion.<sup>29</sup>

His lack of acceptance by his fellow Europeans in Tranquebar favored the acceptance of the Gospel by the Tamils and aided the beginnings of an indigenous Christian constituency.<sup>30</sup>

---

pp. 25-26. Z's letter from the Cape of Good Hope, 30 April 1706.

<sup>25</sup> Z's letter from Tranquebar, 5 September 1706, pp. 21, 33.

<sup>26</sup> See above, footnote 18.

<sup>27</sup> See above, footnotes 23 and 24.

<sup>28</sup> Hans-Werner Gonsichen, "Die konfessionelle Stellung der daenischhalleschen Mission." *EMZ*, February 1956, pp. 1-18. Also, "Tranquebar Then and Now," *The Indian Journal of Theology*, V (October 1956), no. 2, pp. 21-26.

<sup>29</sup> Beyreuther, "Die Missionspredigt Ziegenbalgs," *EMZ*, February 1956, pp. 24-33.

<sup>30</sup> Gonsichen, "Tranquebar Then and Now," *The Indian Journal of Theology*, October 1956, pp. 25-26.

In him the pietist concept of the Kingdom of God as expressed through individual conversion was balanced by a strong Reformation understanding of the Church, where specifically, in Word and Sacrament, Jesus Christ exercises his Lordship and the believer receives the forgiveness of sin.<sup>31</sup>

His method, tinged with a mystical intellectualism, laid much, perhaps too much, weight on disputation and education. Yet such an emphasis set sound patterns of future endeavor. Among others, it enabled his balanced and most distinguished successor, Christian Frederick Schwartz, to draw hundreds into the fellowship of the Church.<sup>32</sup>

His confessional Lutheranism instilled in him a concept of missionary vocation that was also actively ecumenical.<sup>33</sup>

His marriage and home life made a difference. Not commissioned as a missionary, but no less devoted to the work, his Maria Dorothea shared with him in demonstrating Christian family living. Roman Catholic missionaries were never able, because of their celibate ideal, to convey to the natives the reality of the Christian home, (Yet it was just at this point that Ziegenbalg's Danish mission superior, Wendt, criticized him most severely for having departed from the ideal of "apostolic simplicity.")<sup>34</sup>

On the whole, Ziegenbalg was far ahead of his times with his emphasis on mission as the task of the Church that leads again to the Church. Yet on this subject, as in his married estate, he got little encouragement from his pietist supporters in Denmark.<sup>35</sup>

In his enterprising and hopeful way, Ziegenbalg thus laid the basis for a spread of the Gospel among the Tamils and others. His deep missionary commitment found a response. Indian Christians emulated his efforts. Herein lay the test of his calling as well as that of his colleagues and successors. As Professor Gensichen concludes:

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>32</sup> Beyreuther, *EMZ*, February 1956, pp. 33-36.

<sup>33</sup> Gensichen, "Tranquebar Then and Now," loc. cit., pp. 22-23.

<sup>34</sup> Beyreuther, *Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg*, pp. 81-87.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-92.

The great history of Protestant work in the districts of Tanjore and Tinnevely still stands out as a lasting memorial of the fact that the road on which the Gospel went out from Tranquebar into large parts of South India was in those early days not marked by mission stations but rather by the humble meeting places and mud chapels of the unknown village Christians. This was perhaps a more lasting contribution to the integration of the mission and the church than many a deliberate strategical move on the part of the missionaries, though the latter certainly deserve credit for encouraging and promoting this process of the growth of a church to the best of their ability.<sup>36</sup>

B. Rajah Manikam is one of Asia's best known Christian leaders, and is a missionary at heart. In one of his last letters, Ziegenbalg conveyed the good news to Francke that the governor of the British East India Company was cooperating in the founding of a Christian school in the seaside town of Cuddalore, one hundred air miles south of Madras.<sup>37</sup> Many generations later, in 1897, Rajah Bushanam Manikam was born in Cuddalore.

Son and grandson of Lutheran schoolmen, and grandson of an Anglican clergyman on his mother's side, Rajah Manikam was in 1956 consecrated fourth Bishop of Tranquebar. He thereby became the first Indian Christian to head the Tamil Lutheran Church. His consecration took place in the courtyard of Tranquebar's old Danish fort. Before the service, a procession of nearly a hundred church leaders from seventeen countries had assembled in the historic New Jerusalem Church which Ziegenbalg had built and before whose altar he lies buried. Scriptural greetings were addressed to the new bishop by churchmen from various parts of Asia, Africa, Europe and America, and each spoke in his native tongue, as a reminder of the continuing reality of Pentecost. Later, at a public meeting, Bishop Manikam boldly declared:

We now stand on the threshold of a new era. The old missionary era with its dependence upon the superior political, economic and cultural resources of the West is over, and a new era is dawning, which demands that the Church in every land, while rooted in Christ, also be related to its own soil. The Church itself (and not a

<sup>36</sup> Gensichen, "Tranquebar Then and Now," loc. cit., p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Cudulur, 28 January 1718. Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, pp. 510-511.



foreign missionary society) must be the missionary to the nation.<sup>38</sup>

The boldness of these words is born of a rich and varied career. Their tone is that of a Christian leadership which is thoroughly Asian but also at home in other parts of the world. Even a brief synopsis of this man's life reveals how varied and important are the circumstances and movements compounded in the new leaders among Christians in Asia.

Neither a pastor nor a missionary in the conventional sense, Rajah Manikam prepared himself at Madras Christian College for government service. Induced to teach while working on for his M.A. degree, he presently found himself heading in an unpremeditated direction. His life would henceforth be spent for Christ and His Church. With his wife, Ruby Jesudasan, he came to the United States in 1924 and stayed for five years. Besides receiving his theological education at the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia, and doing further work at Union Seminary, he also earned his doctorate in philosophy at Columbia University.<sup>39</sup> Both he and his wife became thoroughly conversant with American life in its churches and communities. Paralleling his studies, she too had earned her degrees, including an M.A. in bacteriology, and had acquired that broad interest in health and welfare work which she was later to put to excellent use in India. The early death of their only child gave them a deepened concern for those who suffer loss. Via England, and a summer of further study at Oxford, the Manikams returned to India in 1929.

With Christian higher education as his field of specialization, Manikam's eight years of teaching at Andhra Christian College, in Guntur, were a time of growth also in administrative experience. As vice-principal under Dr. J. Roy Strock, he was closely associated with one of India's most capable missionary educators and one whose influence had worked decisively on many, including Frank Laubach.<sup>40</sup> In 1937 his work at Guntur presently appeared as preparatory to service in the Church at large.

<sup>38</sup> *Ecumenical Press Service*, January 27, 1956, p. 1. Biographical data derived in part from "Lutheranism's Indian Bishop," News Bureau, National Lutheran Council, 57-81 (June, 1957) pp. 1-3.

<sup>39</sup> Rajah B. Manikam, *Missionary Collegiate Education in the Presidency of Madras India; A Study of the Historical Development, the Contributions and the Religious Educational Program of Mission Colleges in the Presidency*. Lancaster, Pa.: Conestoga, 1929, 156 pp.

<sup>40</sup> Frank Laubach, *The Silent Billion Speak*. New York: Friendship Press, 1943, pp. 104-105.

Joining the staff of the National Christian Council at Nagpur, Manikam assumed responsibility in the field of Christian higher education, cultivated contacts with the 39 associated colleges, and helped bring to completion an extensive study of the Council on the Christian college and the Christian community.<sup>41</sup> Both as a member of the Council's staff and as a specialist in education, Manikam became engrafted into a partnership that was deeply indebted to such student-minded and missionary-committed Christian statesmen as John R. Mott, J. H. Oldham, William Paton, and others; all of whom, either in laying the foundations or guiding its course, had helped to make the Council a vital and cooperative force.<sup>42</sup> When in 1938 Manikam became the Council's first Indian general secretary, his rise to responsible leadership was more than matched by the gravity of coming events.<sup>43</sup>

Manikam's twelve years as general secretary began in 1938 on the threshold of the International Missionary Council's crucial conference in Tambaram. Against this ecumenical backdrop, with its deep involvement in world-changing events, were set the variety of consultative and other on going functions which linked the general secretaryship in one way or another to such matters as public relations, cooperation among the several churches and missions, Christian education from village school to university, literature and publications, theological education and the training of other Christian workers, Christian-sponsored health and welfare work, social action in matters like the opium traffic, the role of the Church in the changing rural and industrial areas, the cultivation and utilization of resources in the Christian community as a whole, the place of Christians in India's aspiration for independence from Britain, and many other matters.<sup>44</sup>

Amid the tragedy and turmoil of World War II came further involvement in the internment of German missionaries and the care of orphaned missions, a situation in which Manikam was anchor-man for

<sup>41</sup> Manikam, *The Christian College and the Christian Community*. Madras: The Diocesan Press, 1938, 144 pp.

<sup>42</sup> William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations, A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background*. New York: Harper, 1952, p. 213, and passim. Margaret Sinclair, William Paton. London: SCM, 1949, pp. 74-129.

<sup>43</sup> Cp. Sinclair, pp. 104-113. Also, Hogg, op. cit., pp. 318-334.

<sup>44</sup> Same, also Hogg, op. cit., 290-304 [re Tambaram]. Further background, Madras Series, vol. VII, *Addresses and Other Records*, e.g. J. R. Mott, "Supreme Obligation of the Tambaram Delegates" pp. 156-164; "A Message to All Peoples," pp. 168-171.

assistance channeled from abroad through the IMC. With war's end came the climax of the long struggle for independence, the mounting tide of nationalism, the resurgence of Islam and of Hinduism, and the breaking apart of India and Pakistan. If Christians had managed to keep free from the heat of the struggle, they were nevertheless partners in it and were generally respected for their fairness of attitude. But how responsibly would Christians now act in the new India, and how actively would they share in the duties of this Asian democracy? If as Stephen Neill observed the Christians were troubled with twin anxieties, what grounds were there to be anxious over the continued right to change freely from one religion to another, or to be apprehensive over the future of Christian schools under a secular democratic state?<sup>45</sup>

For Manikam this was a period of intensive personal application. Here his missionary vocation grew as it was tested by events that kept the National Christian Council ever on the alert. How effectively could he and such colleagues like Charles Wesley Ronson work? How sensitive could they be to the needs of both the Indian churches and the Western mission societies? There is more than meets the eye in W. Richie Hogg's conclusion that the India Council, like the councils in other lands, leaned heavily on subsidies from Britain and America, and were on occasion tempted to function "with something less than constant reference to member missions and churches." Nevertheless, the India Council also "served the Christian world mission magnificently."<sup>46</sup>

Out of this schooling in missionary vocation Manikam emerged as an able Indian Christian leader. Alongside his ecumenical duties he had remained active also within the Federation of Lutheran Churches in India. He thereby strengthened his rootage, in a spiritual heritage which, at its best, gave him evangelical freedom.<sup>47</sup> Then came a new challenge.

As soon as the war ended, the National Christian Councils of China and India adopted a proposal for an East Asian Regional Committee of the IMC. This committee, formed in 1945, operated under the constitution of the IMC and designated Manikam as its correspondent. Overarching these developments was the perplexing question as to the coming position of the Church and its mission among the revolution-bound peoples of

<sup>45</sup> Stephen C. Neill, *The Cross Over Asia*. London: Canterbury, 1948, pp. 142-3.

<sup>46</sup> Hogg, op. cit., p. 367.

<sup>47</sup> Manikam's Christian commitment, while Lutheran in nurture, was ecumenical in outlook. To some Lutherans in India he did not appear as Lutheran enough, yet all recognized his unusual abilities and his helpfulness in rising above provincialism.

Asia. Informal discussions in London, Geneva and New York were the counterpart of those going on in Asian centers. Early in 1947 the joint committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council cleared the way not only for a joint Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), but also for a joint East Asian office.<sup>48</sup> Although the representatives from Asia counseled caution at Whitby (1917) as well as at Amsterdam (1947), it was mainly because this proposal should be solidly grounded.<sup>49</sup> It remained for the Eastern Asia Christian Conference, at Bangkok in 1949 to provide the regional approval and also the job description. For this new and difficult post, the man selected was Manikam.<sup>50</sup>

In an original way, appropriate to the new era, the East Asian office symbolized the linking of “church” and “mission” in the ecumenical movement, and the partnership of the young World Council of Churches in association with the International Missionary Council. Manikam’s activities were, in this early stage, to be ambassadorial. Reluctantly he resigned his general secretaryship in India, and by April 1951 was trying out his highly specialized vocation of liaison. His duties, as defined at Bangkok, were reasonably specific. He was to give:

his full time to visiting the Churches and Christian Councils in East Asia, helping the Churches to share more fully their thought and experience, with a view to strengthening the Churches in their evangelistic task in East Asia, and establishing closer contact than at present exists between the East Asian Churches and Councils and the world-wide movement of the Church.<sup>51</sup>

Central to his task in every land visited was the heart of the Church’s mission, evangelism, plus its corollary, the training for Christian leadership. Everywhere Manikam has also emphasised a closer study of resurgent ancient religions. His report from the field, done with the help of co-workers, presents *Christianity and the Asian Revolution* (1954) as

<sup>48</sup> Hogg, op. cit., pp. 326-27, 337, 350.

<sup>49</sup> *The First Six Years, 1948-1954*. Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1954, pp. 102 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Hogg, op. cit., p. 327. *Ecumenical Review II* (Winter 1950), no. 2, “World Council Diary,” pp. 198-199. *Minutes and Reports*, World Council of Churches Central Committee (Chichester), 1949, p. 111.

<sup>51</sup> *Minutes and Reports*, World Council of Churches Central Committee (Toronto), 1950, p. 51.

a stirring call to all Christians, a call further amplified in *The Church in Southeast Asia* (1956), done in collaboration with Winburn T. Thomas.<sup>52</sup>

Over five years of travel and consultation, from one community and conference to another, Manikam quietly blazed a trail. His wife was often his indispensable helper on such missions. The outcome of his labors, done always jointly with others, was the East Asia Christian Conference at Prapat in March of 1957. Its theme was evangelism. If as someone has ventured, "Prapat will become one of the place-names in ecumenical history,"<sup>53</sup> then part of the reason is that one could be found who could personify the new era in missionary vocation. Now, as Bishop of Tranquebar, Manikam's title links his task with that of Ziegenbalg. Therein lies a reminder that historical depth in Christ's mission is always the living and hope-filled witness among people.

### III. THEOLOGY IN MISSIONARY VOCATION

It is possible to popularize missionary work as a career, and to publicize it as a special vocation. But who will venture to look for theology in missionary vocation? Yet it should not escape us that the contemporary breadth and the historical depth, with which we began this study, are simply preparatory. These are human dimensions of missionary vocation. Today there is a recognized need for recovering a theology of mission.<sup>54</sup> This means that despite the dearth of treatment so far, an attempt must be made to delineate the necessary presence of theology in missionary vocation. This calls not simply for a deeper personal commitment but for an understanding of the context in which the missionary calling is set and the message with which he is sent by the Church.

The origin of the missionary vocation is in God, its authority is Jesus Christ, and its content is the reconciling divine grace imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. In its statement on the calling of the Church to mission and unity, the World Council of Churches has declared:

<sup>52</sup> See above, footnote 14. Rajah B. Manikam and Winburn T. Thomas, *The Church in Southeast Asia*. New York: Friendship Press, 1956.

<sup>53</sup> *The Common Evangelistic Task of the Churches in East Asia, Papers and Minutes of the East Asia Conference, Prapat, Indonesia, March 17-26, 1957*, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Wilhelm Andersen, *Towards a Theology of Mission*. London: SCM, 1957. The focus of attention in this striking study is on the "encounter between the missionary enterprise and the Church and its theology." Stephen Neill has made an excellent translation. R. Pierce Beaver, *The Christian World Mission: A Reconsideration*. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1957. Especially valuable is Part II, The Theological Task, pp. 20-41.

In reconciling us to Himself in Christ, [God] has at the same time made us His ambassadors beseeching others to be reconciled to Him. He has made us members in the Body of Christ, and that means that we are both members one of another and also committed thereby to partnership in His redeeming mission.<sup>55</sup>

This partnership in mission while remaining general to all Christians becomes specialized in some. Here, then, let us venture a few thoughts on the necessary presence of theology in missionary vocation.

*A. The Missionary Is Theologically "Charged"* in that he in particular must always be "prepared to make a defense. . . for the hope" he holds, and to "do it with gentleness and reverence."<sup>56</sup> Whatever he may say about hope today, he knows one thing surely about hope in the ancient church. "It was," as Paul Minear has said, "bitterly contested by outsiders. The world held every Christian to a defense of it." And he was to defend it with gentleness toward those who abused him, and with reverence for his crucified and risen Lord.<sup>57</sup>

Today again the Christian as missionary is called upon to embody the faith which the Church believes, teaches and confesses in fidelity to the apostolic testimony. This is no easy matter, and the basic simplicity of the missionary task is made complex by the contingencies of human encounter. Deeply rooted in man, and permeating all his relationships, is the reality of radical evil.

The missionary himself, like every Christian, knows himself a sinner. In the call that has come to him from Another he recognizes his own guilt, his own unworthiness to be that which God intends for him. His call is not simply a call to humility and to a sense of unworthiness, but a call to genuine repentance. One who is truly penitent, however, remains humble in the knowledge that he is no better than other men. Indeed, he stands in the same solidarity of sin with them; in the same reality of guilt; in the same condemnation of divine wrath and judgment. In short, the missionary as sinner stands solidly with his fellowmen, whatever their religion or lack of it.

<sup>55</sup> *Minutes and Reports*, World Council of Churches Central Comm. (Rolle) 1951, p. 65.

<sup>56</sup> I Peter 3:15.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Minear, *New Every Morning: Bible Study of the First Epistle of Peter*, Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, 1954, p. 21.



Like every penitent, however, who responds to God's high calling in Jesus Christ, the missionary in repentance and openness to divine grace is a forgiven sinner. He knows something of that unfathomable *agape* whereby, for our sake, God made His Son "to be sin for us, who knew no sin," so that in Christ we might become rightly related to God.<sup>58</sup>

For the missionary particularly the realization that the Christian is "sinner and saint in the same breath" (Luther) can be nothing but a sobering reminder. Once he grasps this fact about himself, his approach to others is more likely to hold than to repel. Yet all of us know that such stern self-knowledge is hard to come by, harder still to live up to. In such self-knowledge, however, is the key to the missionary's understanding of his vocation as God's gracious calling of him. He must marvel and confess that it is God alone who can use such instruments for His purpose.

The failure of the missionary to take radical evil seriously in himself encumbers his work and may also make it harder for him to practice self-criticism regarding his Western and other ways. Conversely, once he grasps the meaning of sin and the role of God's Law in convicting him and all mankind of sin, he will then have a new receptivity for the gospel in his own life. Besides, he will understand that he is sent to call others because he himself has been called to decision. While much of God's ultimate purpose has been hidden from the missionary, as from the rest of us, we may declare with the Amsterdam assembly:

Three things are plain: All that we need to know concerning God's purpose is already revealed in Christ. It is God's will that the Gospel should be proclaimed to all men everywhere. God is pleased to use human obedience in the fulfillment of His purpose.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, the keynote of this summons to obedience and self-understanding was struck long ago when Jesus himself, beginning his missionary ministry, proclaimed: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel."<sup>60</sup>

*B. Seeking First the Kingdom of God* is both a challenge and a temptation. It is a challenge because we are summoned to concentrate on

<sup>58</sup> II Corinthians 5:21.

<sup>59</sup> *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam Report*, W. A. Visser 't Hooft, ed. London: SCM, 1949, Report of Section II, "The Church's Witness to God's Design," p. 64.

<sup>60</sup> Mark 1:15. THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

doing God's will, and a temptation because we always incline to do our own. Since the kingdom of God is the central theme in the teaching of Jesus, the missionary today must have a grasp of this theme in relation to his own vocation.<sup>61</sup>

When "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God" it was on the assumption that a relationship between God and the world already exists, that in the light of the Old Testament God is sovereign over His creation in general and over His covenanted people in particular. God's relationship is that of sovereignty, kingly rule, and the expression of this rule is in the law. In Israel the rule of God is formalized in the Law of Moses; among other peoples law is simply observable in the order, rather than chaos, by which "the kings of this earth" govern.

For the missionary this is a matter of first importance. He must know that even before he begins his task, wherever it may be, God is already there. Although God's sovereignty may be veiled, there is a world of difference between God-hidden and God-absent. For God-hidden, the *Deus absconditus*, is not simply an enigmatic form of presence but a dynamic and working reality?<sup>62</sup>

Now in Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, born under the Law, there is not simply a further manifestation of the Law-aspect of God's relationship to His creation; there is the fulfillment of the Law. Jesus is the personification of God's full intention and redemptive plan for man. In contrast to the abstract and impersonal nature of law as such, Jesus comes as the concrete and personal embodiment of God's everlasting *agape*. Jesus' presence as well as his proclamation is good news, is gospel. Good news, of course, presupposes other news -- something that man already knows. Jesus is himself the good news of God's sure promise to save errant mankind.

What missionary does not rejoice that in his vocation he is to make clear that, while the law condemns, the gospel brings life; that while the law gathers to the past, the gospel draws to the future. Yet this needs amplification. In Jesus' ministry of preaching, teaching and helping, and especially in his parables and miracles, he proclaims the sovereignty of God also over the evil and demonic power of Satan. This ministry of Jesus invites emulation today as always, and at first sight seems to reaffirm that

<sup>61</sup> "Kingdom," *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible*, Alan Richardson, ed. New York: Macmillan, 1952, pp. 119-121.

<sup>62</sup> John Dillenberger, *God Hidden and Revealed. The interpretation of Luther's Deus absconditus and its significance for religious thought*. Phila.: Muhlenberg, 1953, pp. 103 ff, 117 ff.

the gospel, as he proclaims it prior to the cross, is a profoundly social gospel. Yet this social aspect intensified rather than diminished the challenge with which the gospel confronts the individual.

As Jesus went about doing good, his concern for people was genuine. Yet he always met them at a deeper level than they cared to admit then -- or we now. To proclaim the kingly rule of God required the response of obedience. As obedience calls for the subordination of the personal will to the divine will, submission brings surprise. The obedience of Simon Peter in casting his nets reveals to him not only fish but also sin. As Simon discovered, and as the missionary should know, confidence in one's own way of doing things, professionally competent as this may be, needs to be transformed into confidence in God's way. To be shocked within our competence reveals the otherness of life apart from God, and the uniqueness of him who heralds the kingdom, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," is the recognition of man's condition. It is also prerequisite to the forgiven life of obedient faith. A new relationship is born: "Do not be afraid, henceforth you will be catching men." Simon and his partners left everything and followed him.<sup>63</sup> Obedience is the precondition of faith; yet God retains the initiative, and the faith to follow comes as a gift.

Along with the first followers of Jesus, as the Whitby Conference reaffirmed, all Christians are to be "partners in obedience."<sup>64</sup> For obedience, as the missionary must know, is that precondition of faith which implies Another who is in charge and who is Authority. Obedience, as required, results not in a blind but in an informed faith, a faith which, because it is informed, is indeed the gift of God. It is a purposeful gift. For the faith born of repentance is the means by which we receive the kingly rule and life-giving love of God. In this faith the followers of Jesus generally, and the missionary especially, receives and is to transmit the gospel. Such transmission is at a price. Jesus foresees the time when "you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake." Nevertheless (and how many missionaries have leaned upon these words!) "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Luke 5:8-11, Cp. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Macmillan, 1951, p. 56.

<sup>64</sup> *Renewal and Advance, Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World, Whitby Report*, C. W. Ranson, ed. London: Edinburgh House, 1948. Part II, "Partners in Obedience," pp. 173 ff.

<sup>65</sup> Matthew 24:9, 14.

The proclamation of the kingdom, the kingly rule of God, is a matter of setting His will over against the will of natural man. This is indeed that divine-human encounter in which the herald of the kingdom is also the victim. The Incarnation, so it appears, ends where all men end -- in death. In the Cross there stands momentarily the triumph of sinful man; he has made the Son of God equal with all men in death.

However, in the reality of the Cross man discovers something about himself. There really should be no "result" from death. Humanly speaking, death is the end and man remains what he is. Yet in the kingdom of God there is resurrection! And he who proclaims the kingdom rises to complete the proclamation that God is sovereign over sin, death and the devil. What is more, this is a self-giving sovereignty. Only God can afford not simply the patience of His law but precisely the passion of His love.

In the grace of God the missionary sees his vocation as one who stands in a succession of those who have proclaimed this gospel, this good news, of the kingdom. The proclamation is anchored in the Incarnation, in the Cross, and in the Resurrection. The kingdom is proclaimed in an emulation of Jesus' preaching, teaching and helping *diakonia* (ministry) only when these are seen as signs of the kingdom. Yet the gospel of the kingdom is more than a sign. It is the culmination of all signs in the reality of the life of the Son of God who gives all for man and who triumphs over man. In the Cross God reconciles the world to Himself. This reconciliation, like the greatest miracle of the Kingdom, touches man where he expects it least: at the point of his deepest sin and separation. It is there that God awakens the response of a new and right (righteous) relationship. The kingdom of God and His righteousness need seeking first. When this fundamental relationship is righted then all else follows; also for the missionary called and sent to proclaim that Jesus is Lord.<sup>66</sup>

To many, to the pious as well as to the liberal, the kingdom of God can become a dangerous temptation. For it is easy to become enthusiastic about ourselves becoming not only heralds but also builders of the kingdom in our own name and on our own terms. To do it this way means to go forth in our own unregenerate spirit instead of in God's Holy Spirit. Here, the pious or the liberal, the stay-at-home or the missionary, easily make the mistake of settling for the kingdom and neglecting the Church. Not only in the past have there been missionaries animated by a kingdom-consciousness that de-emphasized the Church. Yet today the pendulum has swung for many the other way, and there has been a mounting emphasis upon the Church, an emphasis which verges on pre-occupation.

<sup>66</sup> I Corinthians 12:3. THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

“The Church is the mission,” one hears people say. Whatever the case, it is necessary to distinguish as clearly as possible between Kingdom and Church, so that both may be recognized for what God intends. In Christ both Kingdom and Church are inseparably united and part of the one purpose of God.

*C. The Church of Jesus Christ* is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the new Israel, the people of God, the Body of Christ. It is those who have been called out of the world in order to go back into the world with the Word. It is those assembled together, the *ek-klesia*, to hear and to act upon the gospel of the Kingdom. The heart of the apostolic message is the *kerygma*. It is this which Jesus entrusted to those whom he sent. They now know the meaning of the signs of the Kingdom in the earthly ministry of Jesus, For they have followed those signs to the redemptive culmination, to the salvatory deed of God, done in the Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>67</sup>

Peter’s sermons in the early chapters of Acts, as C.H. Dodd has pointed out, set forth this *kerygma* with a six-fold emphasis: (1) the age of fulfillment has dawned; (2) this has happened through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; (3) Jesus, exalted to God’s right hand of power, is the messianic head of the new Israel; (k) the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ’s present power and glory; (5) the messianic age will soon reach its consummation in the return of Christ; and (6) repentance is required, forgiveness is offered, and the promise of salvation is included in the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>68</sup>

The Holy Spirit, in Luther’s words, is He who “calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”<sup>69</sup> The Spirit reminds us that the Church is not our Church but the Church of Jesus Christ. And the Church exists wherever the Word, the apostolic message, is clearly communicated and the sacraments properly administered. For it is in the Word and sacraments, this two-foldness of worship in the name of Jesus Christ, that the Church grows as the Body of Christ and becomes the living, corporate and transforming community of the forgiven, that assembly of

<sup>67</sup> *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, ed. Presents illuminating insights in connection with the articles on *ekklesia*, *kerygma*, *mathetes*, *basileia*, *euangelion*, etc.

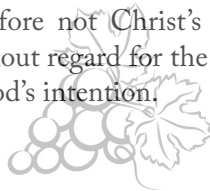
<sup>68</sup> “Preach,” Richardson, op. cit., p. 172. Also C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, New York: Harper, 1936, esp. Lectures I & II

<sup>69</sup> Martin Luther, *Small Catechism*, explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed. *Book of Concord*, H. E. Jacobs ed., p. 367.

the redeemed who are the first fruits of the new age. This Church is one, holy, catholic and, to sum it all up, apostolic. That is, the Church is sent. It is God's pilgrim people to whom He has entrusted His world-redeeming purpose while en route. The individual Christian is himself a *homo viator*, a man on his way with a message for all whom he meets. The work the Church thus does is Christ's work, and it is now done by those who are members together in His Body. This Church is not yet triumphant but it is militant in that it continues to wage Christ's struggle against the forces of evil; yet it knows that one day it will share in that victory which its Lord has Himself already secured. How this Church is organized is less important than that it does all things decently and in order; but above all, as the living apostolate, the company of those sent forth, it obediently keeps the faith and bears witness to Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.<sup>70</sup> In concert with the ancient Church, this confession of faith is central in the ecumenical movement today.

For the missionary in his vocation today it is necessary to know where his own task is set. First of all, he knows that the kingdom of God, both present and coming, is a reality that has to do with God's present purpose and plan. Next, he knows that the Church, both visible and hidden, is the means God uses to achieve his purpose and accomplish His plan. Third, he knows that God's purpose, the mission given the Church, is not to be derived from the Church but from God. In other words, as the German mission authority, Wilhelm Andersen, has cautioned, there is a danger today of seeking to derive our understanding of mission from the Church instead of from the gospel of the Kingdom. Thus the concept of mission becomes too narrow.<sup>71</sup>

From Jerusalem in 1928 to Willingen in 1952 a church-centered understanding of mission gained momentum. The churchly emphasis was well intended and rendered the service of restoring the Church to central place in the thinking of mission-minded Protestants. But church-centered mission is too easily dissociated from the gospel of the Kingdom and from the Head of the Church who expects His work to be done not behind closed doors but out in the world. Church-centered mission can become self-centered mission and therefore not Christ's mission at all, just as Kingdom-centered mission, without regard for the Church, becomes self-centered and thus contrary to God's intention.



<sup>70</sup> *Constitution of the World Council of Churches*, Article I, Basis. Amsterdam Report, The First Assembly, p. 197.

<sup>71</sup> Andersen, op. cit., pp. 38 ff.



Here we come to the serious task, also facing the missionary, of keeping Kingdom and Church together, and of neither confusing them nor exchanging one for the other. As the Body of Christ, the Church on earth is made up of penitent and forgiven sinners. With respect to the sin in its members, like the incarnate Son of God who was “made to be sin for us”, the Church continues in solidarity with all the peoples of mankind. In this regard, unhappily, the Church may also give those outside as well as inside its fellowship the impression that it is neither one, nor holy, nor catholic, nor apostolic. Yet with respect to the faith of its members, focused as it must be on Jesus Christ, the Church is already set apart as the one society of that new era of the Kingdom which Christ has brought and which, at His return in judgment and glory, He will bring to consummation.

Without going to extremes as that provocative Dutchman, Professor Hoekendijk, seems at times to do, it is necessary to regard mission as part of the *esse* or being of the Church.<sup>72</sup> Jesus Christ promises the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes; He calls, consolidates, informs, sanctifies, and sends. People respond in faith, enter fellowship, hear the Word, grow in grace, and go forth on a God-given mission with a Christ-centered message.

Inasmuch as the Church is thus the fellowship of those called by the Holy Spirit, all Christians have one general vocation, a calling in which there is also a sending. Yet the Spirit who calls also imparts a diversity of gifts.<sup>73</sup> Within the company of the called, some Christians therefore have a special vocation. Such a vocation is not apart from the generality of members but is set solidly among the members. All that has so far been said about the Kingdom and the Church here comes into sharp focus in the missionary. All Christians are to be missionaries, but some are to be missionaries in a special way, specially called, specially sent forth. As this is so, the missionary is to see in his vocation a personal summation of theology that is rooted in the Word and propelled by the Spirit.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> J. C. Hoekendijk, “Die Kirche im Missionsdenken,” *EMZ*, January 1952, pp 1-12. See also his article, “Mission – Heute!” in the symposium by that title, published by the Studentenbund fuer Mission in Germany, 1954 pp. 1-12. Note how H. is reinforced by his Dutch colleague, A.A. Van Ruler, “Theologie des Apostolates,” *ibid.*, pp. 13-33. Cp. “apostellein,” etc., in *Kittel, Theologisches Woerterbuch*. Eng. tr. of Hoekendijk’s first-named article above in *IRM*, July 1952, pp. 324-336.

<sup>73</sup> I Corinthians 12.

<sup>74</sup> Friedrich Meier, “Das missionarische Amt im Verstaendnis Karl Hartensteins” *EMZ*, December 1954, pp. 169 ff.

*D. Justification By Faith* for the Christian generally and for the missionary particularly is a mighty and propulsive power. This kind of faith, properly understood, is genuinely missionary faith. From Asia, for example, we are reminded that “the key point at issue is that now as never before God is calling the Church to proclaim the message of justification by faith over against [an omnipresent] justification by works.”<sup>75</sup> For every member in the corporate life of the Church justification by faith is that crucial point at which the gospel of the Kingdom is personally received and acted upon. Justifying faith, as the gift of God and the response of man, turns believers into missionaries. At least it should do this, because it relieves the believer of perpetual preoccupation with his own salvation and places his entire future in God’s keeping. In return, he lives in communion with Christ and is an instrument of God’s purpose. Good works are then no longer self-seeking but seek the welfare of others. Such works are the fruit of faith and the outward sign of personal gratitude for God’s unmerited grace.

Taken another way, justification by faith in the individual puts the accent on right-relatedness to God. Because God is righteous, He is always in right relationship to His creation and to His creatures. In His covenant relationship to the old Israel and now to the new. He offers His Word as true and His promise as sure in Jesus Christ. The parables and miracles of Jesus, as well as his message and life, are evidence of this tightness of relationship, a Tightness that, for man, can be gained only in repentance and faith. Yet once gained it becomes a dynamic power and expresses itself through service (*diakonia*).

To sum up: being justified by faith, the believer is both in the Kingdom and in the Church. For him this duality is both vital and crucifying. Responsible membership in the Church prevents him from escaping into a sectarian and self-gratifying “kingdom idealism”; while a living commitment to the Kingdom gives him confidence and hope despite all the trials or frustrations of the empirical Church. When regarded in this light, justifying faith enables the believer, and especially the missionary, to offer others not his own goodness but that of Christ. Justification by faith is both intensely personal and strongly corporate, for the life of all believers is comprehended in the Body of Christ.

*E. The New Life Together* is a partnership in obedience. This obedience focuses on faith in Christ and is sustained by *agape*, the self-giving love of God who has reconciled us in His Son. Therefore this is a

<sup>75</sup> U Kyaw Than, “The Christian Mission in Asia Today,” *IRM*, April 1958, p. 159.

new life together in Christ. This living together involves self-discipline in training as well as in self-giving service. Here individualism of the self-centered sort, so common among Christians, has no place. As Ziegenbalg insisted long ago, it is in the Church specifically that Jesus exercises his Lordship in Word and Sacrament, and that the believer receives the forgiveness of sin.<sup>76</sup>

For the missionary called and sent by the Church today this is timely and encouraging. He may be on some lonely outpost, or he may be one of a small task force. In the face of overwhelming odds and daily frustrations he is nevertheless not alone. His vocation is like that of every responsible Christian, only more so. For him especially there are elements of the new life together which need constant cultivating. Just when he is most isolated this oneness with fellow believers in Christ is most precious and asserts itself most powerfully. For his task is that crucial instrumentation through which the Holy Spirit gathers and plants the Church in a new place through means existing in the Church as already planted. Much therefore depends on the missionary's understanding of what lies behind the life together and how he communicates it. For he has been called and sent to communicate.

Elements of the common life in Christ, as the missionary should see it, include those that have been present in the Church from the beginning. Among these we may here take note of three which are bound together in the encounter of Christ with the world:

1. There is the impartation of the gospel (*kerygma*) through witnessing (*martyrein*), which includes the spoken word, the preaching (*kerysein, euangeligein*) and teaching (*didaskein*) of the good news of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection.

2. There is the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the congregation for the worship (*leitourgia*) of God in the name and presence of the living Lord; united in intercession, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving; once received in baptism and ever renewed at the Lord's Table.



*First Fruits*

<sup>76</sup> Gensichen, *op. cit.*, *The Indian Journal of Theology*, October 1956, p. 22.

3. There is the expression of this faith in loving service (*diakonia*) to all men through the full commitment of the members.<sup>77</sup>

In the missionary's vocation a vivid understanding of *diakonia* is indispensable. Because "service" has suffered from today's inflation of words, *diakonia* must help us rescue the meaning. *Diakonia*, in its scriptural connotation, suggests a dual function: it challenges the Church to enter the world and it requires an examination of the theological foundation of Christian service. The theology of *diakonia*, as Anders Nygren recently pointed out, may be discerned in a four-fold form:

1. Service, or *diakonia*, in the New Testament does not stand apart from the gospel as something secondary but is in the very center of the gospel. *Diakonia* is not merely an option because,
2. Serving stands at the center of Christianity. Christ, who is at its heart, came for no other reason than to serve. Behind Jesus' oft-quoted words, "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:45) stands the testimony of Isaiah 53, in terms of which the gospels must be read; Jesus Christ steps into complete solidarity with us. Our need becomes his need. His righteousness becomes our righteousness. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5; II Cor. 5:21). This unlimited solidarity is service in the deepest sense of the word.
3. To "live in Christ" (Gal. 2:30) is to live in the service of love. This means gratefully to accept Christ's service and to pass it on to others. It is impossible truly to accept the service of Christ and to keep it for oneself only. As he bore our burden, we are permitted to bear the burdens of others. Such service in fellowship with him is therefore a privilege and a duty. Our inclusion in the Body of Christ is something that must happen in reality. Even as Christ for our sake became a servant, a *diakonos* (Rom. 15:8), the

<sup>77</sup> Based on the report to the churches on *Policy and Strategy in Social Welfare*, adopted by official delegates at the National Conference on Policy and Strategy in Social Welfare, Atlantic City, New Jersey, May 7-10, 1957. New York: National Council of Churches, pp. 18 ff.

entire Christian life was shaped by his *diakonia* (Luke 22:27). Because this is God's world,

4. The service of the Church must be concerned not only with the spiritual but also with the physical needs of men. We distort the gospel if we spiritualize it and seek to contrast the spiritual as opposed to the physical needs of men. Christ was concerned with the whole man, and Christians are to share that concern.<sup>78</sup>

To these four points of Nygren may be added a fifth: As Christ continues to identify with all sorts and conditions of men, both Christian and non-Christian, his hidden presence among them is the test of our faith in him as we serve them. For, in proving God's love for all mankind, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). Some times we are guilty of limiting the gospel. When doors are closed to evangelism as we prefer it, we may be tempted to turn elsewhere. Do we then forget that the kerygma presupposes the signs of the Kingdom, and that a test of living faith and true humility is *diakonia* exactly among "the last, the least, and the lost"? And such service looks for no reward!<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, *diakonia* is itself a form of disclosure that raises one of the most baffling questions of the missionary vocation. If it summons faith to action and gives expression to the new life together, what light does it throw on the relation of the Christian to the non-Christian?

*F. Religion and the Christian Faith* stand in disputed relationship. How shall the missionary regard non-Christian religions? He may be tempted to see too much in them, but a greater temptation is to see too little in them. Ziegenbalg, with more evangelical insight than his superiors, was purposefully curious about Hinduism. His *Genealogy of the Malabar Gods*,<sup>80</sup> published, alas; only 150 years after his death, represents his personal effort to carry out a basic theological demand of the missionary vocation.

This demand is to see clearly, in the very context of the missionary situation, the dialectic of law and gospel. Earlier we have noted how the

<sup>78</sup> Anders Nygren, "The Context Within Which the Church Develops Responsible Service," Lutheran World Conference on Social Responsibility. Springfield, Ohio, August 7-10, 1957. Proceedings [to be published, 1958], Lecture on August 8.

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 25:37. Cp. "Theses on Christ Frees and Unites," *Proceedings of the Third Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation*, Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 15-25, 1957, Part IV, "Free for Service in the World," pp. 88-89.

<sup>80</sup> Ziegenbalg, *Genealogia der malabarischen Goetter*. Wm. Germann, ed. Madras. 1867.

proclamation of the gospel presupposes God's presence everywhere in terms of law, with order being a manifestation of the ultimate authority that is of God, "Even before the gospel is preached," as Gustaf Wingren insists, "God is at work among all nations, through the Law, through the secular power." To which Wingren adds:

All too easily our missionary thinking is corrupted by the notion that Europe and America are the home of the Christian religion, whereas that religion is not yet sufficiently established among the [other] nations. If we see things that way, we operate with the concept of 'religion' as the dominant idea. Christianity becomes one of the 'religions.' But religion is always a human matter, at the disposal of man; and therefore when we bring the 'Christian religion' to the non-Christian world, we ourselves – and not the Word -- are in the center of our missionary activity and quite logically, though perhaps not consciously, Europe and America are seen on a higher plane than Africa and Asia. We must seriously ask ourselves if not a great part of the practically universal irritation concerning missions does not spring from the fact that we have wrongly combined or even confused the preaching of the Word of God with the spreading of European-American culture.<sup>81</sup>

With the resurgence of ancient religions the question of differentiation between religions and the Christian faith becomes acute. It may well be contended with Alan Richardson that God discloses Himself to all men in so-called general revelation, while in the Hebrew Christian heritage He comes to us in special revelation. This has the merit of avoiding the pitfall setting "natural" versus "revealed" religion.<sup>82</sup> Hendrik Kraemer, moreover, in his discussion in *Religion and the Christian Faith*, indicates that the conversation of the ecumenical Church with the nascent religions of Asia has hardly begun but must urgently be undertaken.<sup>83</sup> To which Rajah Manikam gives his resounding second, as he continues to plead for the closer study of these religions by Christian scholars. For Manikam notes that our missionary generation is notoriously lacking in curiosity

<sup>81</sup> Gustav Wingren, "Lutheran Theology and World Missions," *Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation*, Hannover, Germany, July 25-August 3, 1952, pp. 74-75.

<sup>82</sup> Alan Richardson, *Christian Apologetics*. New York: Harper, 1947, pp. 110 ff, 133 ff.

<sup>83</sup> Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith*, pp. 27-30, 214 ff, 221 ff., 387 ff.



and competence in this regard, especially when compared with Christian scholars in this field of study a generation or more ago.<sup>84</sup>

For the missionary, however, this avowed openness to the resurgent ancient religions can be a serious hazard. The deepest danger may lie ultimately not in the several religions overwhelming the Christian faith but in the Church itself being tempted to pose as religion. Old as this danger is, it comes as a temptation when, so it seems, we lose our theological balance, making too little of the Kingdom and too much of the Church. Here Hoekendijk makes a timely observation: "In history a keen ecclesiological interest has almost without exception been a sign of decadence," the mark of "a race of Epigoni." On the contrary, "in the 'first generation,' in periods of revival, reformation or missionary advance, interest [is] absorbed by Christology ..."<sup>85</sup> Fortunately, as the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches bears out, the center of theological discussion is moving from ecclesiology to christology.<sup>86</sup>

What, however, is the missionary in his vocation to make of the Church? Is he to follow pious or liberal enthusiasts into the camp of non-Church Christians as in Japan? By doing so he would join the flight from the hard realities of this world and of actually living together with others in Christian fellowship; he would content himself with a deceptive idealism or an insidious docetism. Not only is the missionary to take the Church seriously, but at times he must be ready to admit also to the non-Christian that, on its human side, the Church partakes of the failings common to all religions. Unlike Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, in whom two natures, the human and the divine, were perfectly blended, the empirical Church is a paradox. For it is composed of people who, despite being the new people of God, are nevertheless "righteous and sinner simultaneously."<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Manikam, *Christianity and the Asian Revolution*, pp. 185 ff. Also in personal conversation, and in the Earl Lectures, 1958, at the Pacific School of Religion.

<sup>85</sup> Andersen, op. cit., p. 37. Also the EMZ and IRM articles as noted above, footnote 72.

<sup>86</sup> Robert L. Calhoun, "Christ and the Church," in *The Nature of the Unity We Seek*, Paul S. Minear, ed., St. Louis: Bethany, 1958, pp. bl ff. Cp. *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order*, Lund 1952; Oliver S. Tomkins, ed., London: SCM, 1953, pp. 17-18.

<sup>87</sup> For evangelical theology it is of first importance to re-appropriate Luther's grasp of the inter-relationship between the doctrine of the Church and the doctrine of justification by faith. For him both of these doctrines root in the Old Testament, and stand forth with special clarity in the Psalms. In them the unity of God's people at worship and of the righteousness "that

The Church is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit and the creation of the proclaimed Word. Yet while we confess it to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, see what we make of the Church!

In this contrite recognition the missionary joins with his fellow Christians, confesses the sins of disunity, and seeks to let himself be used as an agent of both the mission and unity of the Church. Living as he does amid the turbulent forces of the age, the missionary must confess that the Church belongs to Jesus Christ, that He builds it through people, and that from His Cross He would draw all men to Himself. To be called as His special servant thus means to be alive to theology in missionary vocation.

#### IV. MISSIONARY VOCATION AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

The vocation of the missionary as a subject of special study presupposes that the Church corporately and the Christian individually have a mission that involves movement and unity. For it is the mission of God. It is He who is at work in the world, making known to mankind the redemption He has made available in His Son. The God who has acted once-for-all in Jesus Christ seeks and calls persons through whom this action shall become effective among all peoples.

Like a divine relay, to use the late Karl Hortenstein's simile, this mission of God comes through His Son, is passed on through the apostles, and then through the succession of witnesses in His Church until it spreads among all peoples and times, till at last the End comes. The mission of the Son, the sending of the apostles, the calling of the *ekklesia* and of its every member to bear witness, all belong inseparably together.<sup>88</sup>

---

alone counts in the presence of God" ("die Gerechtigkeit die allein vor Gott gilt") is unmistakable. Luther's own development of this understanding becomes apparent first in his lectures on the Psalms (1513-15), and then in his lectures on Romans (1515-16). See Karl Hell, "*Die Entstehung von Luthers Kirchenbegriff*," pp. 288-325; and his "*Die Rechtfertigungs Lehre in Luthers Vorlesung ueber den Roemerbrief mit besonderer Ruecksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewissheit*," pp. 111-151. Re "simul justus et peccator," p. 144. Re the role of the Psalms as Luther's starting point in justification by faith, p. 111. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, Vol. I, Tuebingen: Mohr, 1932. See also Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God*, Luther Studies. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953, esp. chaps. 6, 7, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Karl Hartenstein on "The Missionary Office," EMZ, December 1954, p. 169. See above, footnote 74.

In our enthusiasm for this dynamic unity, something may be overlooked. In certain ecumenical circles and elsewhere, too, there are those who would “leave no place for a true missionary calling of individuals [or] a calling and sending by the Church of individuals to the ‘ends of the earth.’”<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, between the Church’s corporate and the Christian’s individual responsibility there is the middle position occupied by the missionary who is specially called and sent forth.

*A. The Rhythm of Calling and Sending*, like the circulatory system in a growing body, is the personal side of the missioning office of the Church. That this office is not simply an elective function becomes abundantly clear from the history of the Church. Near the head of this centuries-old process stands the experience of the Church in Antioch. While the members were “worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” After serious deliberation, prayer and more fasting, the leaders corroborated the Holy Spirit, solemnized the occasion, imposed their hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them off.<sup>90</sup> Parting with leaders who showed promise and could have been well used locally, the Church in Antioch stands not only as the gateway to Paul’s first missionary journey but also as an apostolic precedent for similar action by the Church ever since.

The vocation of the missionary is the discharge in a specific manner of the general calling entrusted to the Church as the people of God. It is therefore proper to distinguish between the general vocation (*vocatio generalis*) of all Christians and the special vocation (*vocatio specialis*) of the missionary. This specialization is in that same Spirit who provides the Church with a diversity of gifts among its members. It is for the work of the Holy Spirit, for the spreading of the gospel in a not exclusively *laissez faire* manner that certain qualified persons are thereto set apart.

Such setting apart means assignment to special duty within the fellowship and solidarity of the Church’s task. It does not mean separation from the home church. Rather it means that the home church is sharing some of its choicest leadership to help with the gathering and planting of churches-in-the-making, wherever these may be. The churches are thus comprehended in the Church, while movement is ventured and unity retained.

This setting apart for mission simply underscores the fact that the Church itself is set apart from the world. Yet such demarcation from

<sup>89</sup> R. Pierce Beaver, letter to E. Theodore Bachmann, May 26, 1958.

<sup>90</sup> Acts 13:1-3 THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

the world is deliberate not with respect to people as such, but from the forces of evil which, like the magician whom Paul calls a son-of-the-devil, corrupt people. These demonic forces keep people under the tyranny of sin and in rebellion against God unless they are liberated by faith in Jesus Christ. Those responding are called out of this tyrannical darkness into His marvelous light. Although they are thus set apart from the world with respect to the forces of evil, they are also set apart for the world with respect to the redemption of mankind. Mindful of this inclusive context, the setting apart of certain members of the Church for special missionary tasks becomes an act done in hope and eschatological expectation.

While the foregoing may be sound theology, it pales into theory when set over against the actual mission practice which calls and sends missionaries. Today we live with the gratifying as well as embarrassing consequences of the nineteenth century, the “great century” of missions. For us in America especially the picture is divided. On the one side are the achievements of missions and missionaries in promoting the ecumenical movement and the unity of the Church. On the other side are the still uncommitted forces, where the momentum of mission is perversely going its own way. As American Protestants we face the unpleasant fact that our missionaries form two camps. The one denotes churches cooperating in the International Missionary Council “in association with” the World Council of Churches. The other denotes three large independent combines of generally fundamentalist character, plus a number of major denominations like the Southern Baptists and the Missouri Lutherans.<sup>91</sup> If the case were simple, the independents might eventually be induced to cooperate. But it is complex, and before thinking of ultimate cooperation it is necessary to inquire into the nature of the churches or agencies that call and send the missionary personnel. For us in America some European experiences offer a clue to our problem.

Behind the general silence on the missionary vocation which has marked the German scene, there lurk the traumatic experiences of repatriated missionaries. As Walter Freytag reports, these men have had to ask themselves: Is our vocation for special missionary duty now done for?<sup>92</sup> As some since 1945 have waited in vain for an opportunity to serve at home, their repatriation came as a challenge to the church to re-think its relation not only to the missionary but also to its own missioning

<sup>91</sup> H. Lindsell, *op. cit.*, IRM, April 1958, pp. 202-209. See above, footnote 12. Also Norman Goodall, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-215.

<sup>92</sup> Walter Freytag to E. Theodore Bachmann, May 28, 1958.

obligation. What lies behind this returned missionary, not overseas but at home?

Unlike the pastors, and also unlike the university-trained and church ordained Ziegenbalg, this contemporary missionary had most likely been educated at a mission school. This separated him from the pastor who had studied theology at a state university. Now the mission school was also the headquarters of the mission society that had sent him. Formed in the old era of the state church, the society existed independently of the organized church on whose territory it was based. The friends who supported the mission society were active Christians, and their number included persons not only within but also beyond the immediate ecclesiastical boundaries. In effect these supporters were an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* constituting itself as a society to perform the task of mission which the territorial church appeared unable to do. The society recruited, trained and examined the candidates for missionary service. It passed upon their fitness for service and gave outward validation to their inward call. Then the society sent them forth to their appointed places, supported and encouraged them in their work, provided for them on furlough and in retirement.<sup>93</sup> In all this the mission society was to the missionary what the official church was to its pastors. While these parallel lines of development were frequently crossed, and the subject of “missions” had even received an official place in the theological faculties at certain universities,<sup>94</sup> the problem of the organized church as a missioning body long remained an enigma.

<sup>93</sup> Best overall account, including ties with England, plus interconfessional ties on the Continent, is Wilhelm Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission*, 3 vols. Basel: Missionsbuchhandlung, 1916. This is the centennial history of the oldest and in some respects most influential of the Protestant mission societies on the Continent. Its men were sent not only to Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands, but also to the home mission front in North America. A revealing sidelight comes in a recent word of appreciation from Ghana, Mr. R. A. Quarshie, first secretary of the Ghana Embassy in Paris, pointed out “the profound influence” of the Basel mission. He said that many Ghana cabinet members “were brought up in the traditions of the Basel mission. We are a secular state and the fact that those of us who are Christian or Mohammedan or hold some other belief can work together so amicably is a tribute to the ideas of toleration instilled by the Basel mission.” *Ecumenical Press Service*, No. 18/25th year, May 9, 1958, p. 7.

<sup>94</sup> The exhaustive work of Olaf Gottorm Myklebust, *The Study of Missions in Theological Education*, 2 vols. Oslo: Han Egede Institute, 1955-57, is a classic in this field only by intention but certainly not in achievement. Keith Bridston's critique in the *Ecumenical Review*, X, April 1958, No. 3, pp. 324-325, is sad but true. Here I would go further and say that only an academician could be content to define his subject so narrowly that he deliberately omits

Then had come the shattering encounter between the neo-paganism of the Nazis and the revived evangelical faith of the confessing Church. Suddenly a situation, presumably reserved for the overseas “mission field,” turned up at home -- with a demonic totalitarianism and a missioning apologetic of its own. The struggle under Nazism and the cataclysm of World War II brought the Church closer to the people, especially in terms of a confessing and serving fellowship. All mission work, both at home (Inner Mission) and overseas, was interpreted as a living concern, a *diakonia*, of the Evangelical Church in Germany and its 29 member churches.<sup>95</sup>

For the key tracer in this problem, the repatriated missionary, two developments of opposite polarity shed further light. On the negative side, it happened that one of the oldest and most prominent of the mission societies was offered an opportunity to be embodied into the regional Evangelical folk church, an offer which, of course, had been possible ever since the separation of Church and State took place in 1919. But the mission society declined. Steeped in a tradition of their own, its leaders feared that “churchification” would result in a loss of freedom in missionary enterprise. On the positive side, in the spring of 1958, the Church of Luebeck, whose bishop is a former missionary in India, was the first of the German folk churches to undertake in its own right the sending of missionaries overseas. Admittedly, Bishop Heinrich Meyer was encouraged to push this matter in his own church because of his work in connection with the International Missionary Council and also with the Lutheran World Federation.<sup>96</sup>

In short, these developments in the homeland of the Reformation and of the first Protestant missionaries to Asia, are symptomatic of what is happening in other parts of the world as well. The growing interest in the Church and the widespread inquiry into the nature of the Christian vocation are salutary. Just as the current secular quests for the meaning in a job take the worker seriously, so it must be in the Church. What happens to certain people becomes a live clue to what is going on generally. So the missionary vocation, in terms of calling and sending, may be seen more clearly for what it means both to the person and to the whole Church

---

pre-requisite references to the role and influence of the schools of the mission societies.

<sup>95</sup> *Die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD), Grundordnung: I. Grundbestimmungen, Artikel 15 and 16. *Kirchliches Jahrbuch fuer die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 1945-1948*. Joachim Beckmann, ed., Guetersloh: Bertelsmann, 1950, p. 99.

<sup>96</sup> News Bureau, National Lutheran Council, 58-60, April 15, 1958, p. 6.



when at one point, as has been noted, the process is suddenly interrupted. The dilemma of a few returned missionaries can thus become an aid to reflection and decision on the part of many Christians. Not only so, but new kinship may be disclosed in unexpected places.

One of these points of kinship lies in the functional similarity between the mission society on the European continent and the denomination in the United States. It may be no exaggeration to say that both the European mission society and the American denomination are the voluntary commitment of like-minded people to carry out an agreed purpose. As such their action embodies not only dedication in behalf of a function but also protest in behalf of a freedom essential to the task. Both sought to be free from a state-church situation. The German practice of creating societies which paralleled and supplemented the proper work of the Church was actually derived from England, the classic land of societies. The American creation of denominations, achieved after a rejection of state-church imitations in the colonial era, also drew inspiration from England. John Locke, in 1706, had given a definition to the Church which was to become determinative in American thought, when he wrote: "A church then I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to [engage in] the public worshipping of God in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls."<sup>97</sup> While Locke's definition presupposed freedom, the application of it was far from simple. In his fascinating analysis, the thoughtful church historian, Sidney E. Mead, has shown how American Protestants were far from championing religious liberty as a pure ideal but rather lapsed into it by default. He writes:

The true picture is not the triumph in America of right-wing or left-wing, of churches or sects, but rather a mingling through frustration, controversy, confusion, and compromise forced by necessity, of all the diverse ecclesiastical patterns transplanted from Europe, plus other patterns improvised on the spot, to form a complex pattern of religious thought and institutional life that was peculiarly 'American,' and is probably best described as denominationalism.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> See Anson Phelps Stokes, *Church and State in the United States*, 3 vols. New York: Harper, 1950, I, p. 143.

<sup>98</sup> Sidney E. Mead, "From Coercion to Persuasion: Another Look at the Rise of Religious Liberty and the Emergence of Denominationalism," *Church History*, XXIV, December 1956, No. 4, p. 335.

“The resulting organizational form,” he concludes, “was unlike anything that had preceded it in Christendom, and for purposes of distinctive clarity it is best known as the ‘denomination.’”<sup>99</sup>

Institutionally the denomination grows out of a societal or “free church” idea which is actualized by the separation of Church and State. The denomination, as Mead shows, “is the organizational form which the ‘free churches’ have accepted and assumed. It was evolved in the United States under the complex and peculiar situation that there existed between the Revolution and the Civil War.” Moreover, “the denomination, unlike the traditional form of the Church, is not primarily confessional, and certainly not territorial. Rather it is purposive.”<sup>100</sup> Among its purposes three may here be singled out:

1. Differentiation in emphases and practices. This involves the justification, preservation and propagation of those things for which the denomination stands. This is its “sectarian” tendency.<sup>101</sup>

2. The voluntary principle. As the necessary corollary of religious freedom, voluntarism “tends to push practical considerations to the fore by placing primary emphasis on the free uncoerced consent of the individual.”<sup>102</sup>

3. The missionary enterprise. Just as in voluntarism, a “sense of mission forms the center of a denomination’s self-conscious life.”<sup>103</sup> Not only does this then express itself in the form of revivalism and competition across the “unchurches” land, but it also provides a base “for the inter denominational and superdenominational consciousness and cooperation which has been such an outstanding aspect of American religious life.”<sup>104</sup>

One result of denominationalism is that, while busily at work, it tends to be unreflective, to become anti-intellectual, and to harbor confused thoughts about the nature and responsibility of the Church. Each denomination “solves” the ecclesiological problem simply by calling itself “church,” and doing what it considers the work of the Kingdom.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>100</sup> Mead, “Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America,” *Church History*, XXIII, December 1954, No. 4, pp. 291 ff.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 295.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 302, 306, 315. ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

The calling and sending of missionaries, as done by the denominations, not only expresses a basic functionalism but also, as in the case of the European mission societies, reminds the Church of its unfinished task. Even the far-flung independent and non-cooperating agencies, from precarious “faith mission” to imposing church body, have a place in this process, although it is often hard to see where. Ecclesiastically many of these may be “fringe” groups, yet they may also be closer to the people among whom they flourish and induce in them a stronger commitment. While a fringe group may be a denomination in process of formation, (which would understandably be denied by the group), it at least recalls features frequently found in 19th-century American life when many of today’s cooperating denominations were growing up.<sup>105</sup>

Besides, many of these “fringers” are militantly missionary. The experiences they cultivate are bursting for communication. More than compensating for a frequent asceticism toward the “world” is the prized ecstasy in the “Spirit.” Many of them, like modern Montanists, forego the Church in favor of the Kingdom whose consummation is at hand. While the message is usually one-sidedly simple, the mood of this ascetic-ecstatic apocalyptic combination is magnetic. People respond. In the Pentecostal movements, for example, many individuals and even whole families have volunteered for missionary service, sold their possessions, and started for some overseas field. Once baptized in the Holy Spirit, no sacrifice seems too great. Today, little over fifty years after the Apostolic Faith Mission of Azusa Street in Los Angeles sparked a national revival, some 3,000 men and women, half of them Americans, have been sent from Pentecostal churches into foreign fields. The Pentecostal World Conference, operative since 1947, now claims an adult constituency of over eight million in all parts of the world.<sup>106</sup>

At this point it may seem that the rhythm of calling and sending in Protestantism has been powered by a centrifugal force which has scattered missionaries all over the place but has failed to hold them in a “unity of the Spirit.”<sup>107</sup> For comparison, if not for consolation, the example of the Roman Catholic Church is instructive. Far from itself being a monolithic structure, it nevertheless presents the Church as a constant factor amid many variables. Among the array of variables are the orders, many of which are or used to be ardently missionary. In them the rhythm

<sup>105</sup> Cp. Henry Pitney Van Dusen, “The Third Force in Christendom,” *Life*, June 9, 1958, pp. 122-124.

<sup>106</sup> David du Plessis, “Golden Jubilees of Twentieth-Century Pentecostal Movements,” *IRM*, April 1958, pp. 193, 195, 196-197, 201.

<sup>107</sup> Ephesians 4:3

of calling and sending has repeatedly been dramatized as their “regulars” have blazed missionary trails everywhere or have revived a spirit of mission in the Church at large. Usually when the orders have pioneered some missioning enterprise they have also prepared it for consolidation into the Church. After the regulars come the seculars, and the hierarchy takes over. For Americans it may also be sobering to realize that in the methodical advance of the Roman Church, it was only in the early years of the 20th century that the United States was taken off mission status.<sup>108</sup>

In Roman Catholicism, moreover, there is within the hierarchical structure a dialectic of growth that encompasses Kingdom and Church. Yet the Kingdom here seems to be appropriated into the Church, leaving the Church supreme in its own foreshadowing of the glory that is to be. That this quasi inversion of the Kingdom and exaltation of Church lacks scriptural authority is really no problem in Roman Catholicism. The unity of the Church is not entrusted to a capricious preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations. As Roman Catholic missiologists are pointing out, the mission of Catholicism is Church-centered and specifically seeks the furtherance of catholicity. What is meant thereby is a progressive demonstration of the everywhere-ness of the Church.<sup>109</sup>

Perhaps, like the Roman Catholic missionary orders, both the cooperating and the independent Protestant agencies and missionaries can one day be induced to practice a greater partnership in obedience for the advance and renewal of the Church. Indeed, ever since the days of Zinzendorf and the adventuresome Moravian missionaries, Protestants have had their equivalents of the Roman missionary orders; entire denominations or faith missions have assigned themselves the missionary task. Not often, however, has it happened, as once in Greenland with the Moravians, that when a mission project was completed it was turned over to the Church. And while today it has been happening in all parts of Asia and Africa that so-called mission fields have become churches, and so-called mission properties owned by the parent church have been surrendered to the new indigenous church, the decision has frequently been prompted

<sup>108</sup> Joseph Schmidlin, *Catholic Mission History*. Techny, Ill.: Society of the Divine Word, 1933. Passim.

<sup>109</sup> Harald Kruska, “Zum katholischen Missionsdenken der Gegenwart,” *EMZ*, März 1953, pp. 33–44. First published in that indispensable Protestant scrutiny of Roman Catholicism, *Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts* (Bensheim, nr. Heidelberg), 1953, No. 2.

by expediency and the transaction accomplished within denominational limitations.<sup>110</sup>

To what extent a new devotion to the wholeness of the Church may be induced among those who are called and sent forth to mission remains to be seen. The conditioning of generations and centuries here needs to be modified so as to awaken a larger understanding of the vocation of the missionary. This holds for ordained ministers and also for commissioned lay workers. Ever since the often-justified protests of left wing and other Protestants against the state churches in Europe, a protest that bore its greatest fruit in America, there has been a generally narrow and subjectivist criticism of what Europeans now call the folk church. Yet today, in keeping with the outlook of the ecumenical movement, the folk church is being understood more and more in missionary terms. Just as in Asia or Africa, so in Saxony or Sweden the gospel is here for all people. The Reformation heritage, which was more concerned for the true catholicity of the Church than later pietism and rationalism, reminds all Protestants "it is the Word and Sacraments that constitute the Church of Jesus Christ."<sup>111</sup> As the representatives of the cooperating North American churches have been grappling with "the nature of the unity we seek," so also must those who are called and sent as missionaries be steeped in the subject.<sup>112</sup> This is an exercise in the obedience of faith, and it forces us to Him who alone can deliver us from these frustrations of our own making.

*B. Christ Frees and Unites for Service* all those who genuinely seek deliverance from human willfulness in the doing of His work. He does this

<sup>110</sup> "The United Lutheran Church in America has turned over property valued at more than three million dollars to the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church at Guntur, India. [Included are] eight hospitals, a college, five high schools and training schools, 800 elementary schools. At the same time the United Lutherans are handing over 2,000 churches, chapels and other buildings. The president of the Andhra Church, Dr. G. Devasahayam, has praised the ULCA for 'inaugurating this new era of partnership.' The Andhra Church has 2,300 congregations and 250,000 members in five synods. It was begun as a mission in 1842." *Ecumenical Press Service*, No. 17, May 2, 1958, p. 4. For the life story of C. F. Heyer, who began the work in Guntur in 1842, see E. Theodore Bachmann, *They Called Him Father*. Phila.: Muhlenberg, 1942. The current transaction was carried out by Dr. Earl S. Erb, Executive Secretary of the ULCA's Foreign Board; present also was the Board's Candidate Secretary, the Rev. Frederick Neudoerffer.

<sup>111</sup> Wingren, op. cit., *Proceedings*, LWF, Hannover, 1952, p. 75. See footnote 81.

<sup>112</sup> W. A. Visser't Hooft, "The Ground of Our Unity," *The Nature of the Unity We Seek*, pp. 121 ff. See footnote 86.

by calling us, by giving us a vocation. The specific vocations of which the New Testament speaks are never considered as private affairs, but always as part of the overall call to the people of God. In a remarkable way the early Christians were reminded of this when they were pointedly admonished: "Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession."<sup>113</sup>

With great penetration the World Council of Churches' general secretary, Visser't Hooft, told the Oberlin Conference last September: "We are not called to construct laboriously our unity out of a great many fragments which do not seem to fit together... What we are called to do is to manifest what is inherent in our common call, to liberate the Church of God from the man-made prisons in which we have sought to capture it."<sup>114</sup> But more than that, we are called to join in that mission of which Jesus Christ is the apostle and pioneer. Just as there is only one Church so there is only one call and one mission; and the mission refers to the total task of the Church.<sup>115</sup> Thus the missionary is a key figure, and his special vocation is one of vast concern not only to the Church but also to himself. Let us consider this personal aspect along lines sketched by the experienced director of the Basel Mission Society, the late Karl Hartenstein.<sup>116</sup>

The service of these called into the missionary task of the Church is founded not in enthusiasm for people far away, nor for a romanticized notion of service. It rests not on sympathy for "the poor heathen who sit in spiritual darkness," nor on the euphoristic desire to "do something for Jesus," If we have no deeper understanding of the missionary vocation than this, "we would never be in a position to persevere against the temptations and loneliness, perhaps on a doomed outpost or among great disappointments under the power of paganism."<sup>117</sup>

The true missionary vocation is quite different from this. It is, says Hartenstein, "a deed and intervention of God... a judgment of God which comes to a person from without and which, empowered by the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, he accepts from within."<sup>118</sup> Consider this inner acceptance further. Here the same conditions hold as for our being called to salvation in Jesus Christ. For it is clear, as Luther put it, that "I

<sup>113</sup> Hebrews 3:1. RSV.

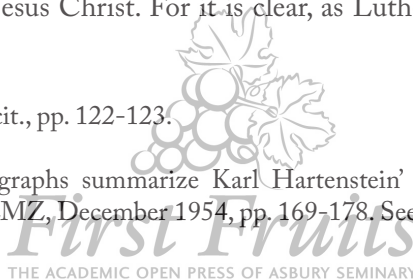
<sup>114</sup> Visser't Hooft, loc. cit., pp. 122-123.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>116</sup> The following paragraphs summarize Karl Hartenstein's concept of the missionary office. EMZ, December 1954, pp. 169-178. See footnote 88.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.





cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel.” Vocation therefore is not simply the obedience to let oneself be sent somewhere by a mission board, even though it is important for the good order of the Church that a person be properly called. Actually, we need an inner certainty, a personal conviction that God is saying to me: I send you!

This personal conviction is reached by different persons in different ways and is hard to put in words. Yet it has a common denominator which may be described like this: The secret of my vocation to be a missionary is that I, as a sinner condemned to death, permit myself to be served by Jesus Christ; and in my being served by Him, He sends me into His service. All genuine service is thus rooted in the personal encounter of my life with the Lord Christ; and out of this encounter there arises the conviction that He has called me; and that in this calling He has forgiven my sin and taken away my guilt; and that henceforth it is He who guides and takes care of my life.

All who have been called in this special way should share the common understanding that they have become objects of God’s action, Jesus Christ has taken hold of them. Therefore they can raise their voice in praise, saying: I have experienced mercy. This intervention of God into the life of the believer takes on the character of service. This is especially true in the case of the missionary. To him then comes the simple assurance: I am on the way He wants me to take, and now it is a matter of remaining faithful in my calling.<sup>119</sup>

If this is the vocation of the missionary as seen from within, then it also has definite features when seen from without. This outward side is no less divine in its implications than the inward side. For it is on this outward side that the Church checks and double checks the special vocation. While a candidate may with inmost conviction insist that “the Lord of the Church sends me,” this very insistence presupposes that the Church also has something to say about his being sent forth. For the Church has been entrusted with the office of the missionary, and the missionary becomes the holder of an office for which the Church bears responsibility. Also the Word, through which God calls the missionary, has been placed in the Church’s keeping; and the Holy Spirit uses this Word in the calling of the missionary and of all others who are to do God’s work.

The Church thus has both the right and the duty to test and examine the qualifications and fitness of the prospective missionary. This

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

is all in line with the Church's faithfulness in discharging its trust toward God. This must be done conscientiously even though, on occasion, the Church must decide against the qualifications of a prospective missionary. On his part, the prospect must reckon with the fact that at times God may alter the course and lead him into other paths of service. Such experience should not shatter the prospect's faith. Rather, let him remember the words of his Lord: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide."<sup>120</sup>

In concluding his interpretation of this special vocation, Hartenstein underscores St. Paul's conviction that the missionary is an ambassador for Christ, and that he carries out his assignment in "existential obedience." In this regard the missionary must be at least three things: a person of faith, a person of complete dedication, and a person of readiness to suffer for his vocation. Not simply by good example will he bring the gospel, nor by the most gifted rhetoric. Rather, his effectiveness as a missionary depends entirely on God's reconciling grace and redeeming action in Christ.<sup>121</sup>

Again, therefore, we recall that Christ frees and unites for service especially those who are called as missionaries. To see how He does this requires attentiveness not only to His calling but also to what is happening both in the Church and in the world. As the pattern and practice of the Christian world mission had been changing from paternalism to partnership, so the missionary vocation has been seeking and finding new forms of expression.

While this discovery of fresh usefulness belongs to other presentations [on "The teaching mission in the light of the ecumenical movement," on "The role of the missionary today," and on "Functional services in relation to the central task of evangelism"], we need here simply note that in this new day missionaries are wanted in new ways. When, for example, the Asia Council on Ecumenical Mission (ACEM) was formed in 1955 in Hongkong, its declared principle was this:

We believe that the missionary task of the Church is the responsibility of the entire Church, the whole body of Christ. There are, therefore, in reality no sending churches as applied to the 'older Churches' and no receiving churches as applied to the 'younger Churches.' Both 'older' and 'younger' are sent and both have received. It is the Lord who has commissioned and sent them ... This

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp. 176-177. (John 15:16)

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., pp. 178-179. THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

implies a deeper sharing of resources in men and money, from all Christian agencies, and employing them in the most effective way to win the goal Christ has set before us. This means the participation of all together in the total task.<sup>122</sup>

The aim of this announced principle underlying the ACEM is to “shift the center of gravity in Christian mission from just one section of the world-wide church to the Church of Christ in every land,” The label of Western imperialism would thus be removed and “the missionary enterprise would then become demonstrably ecumenical.”<sup>123</sup> Thanks to the effective liaison of Rajah Manikam as East Asia Secretary of the IMC-WCC and also of others, “there is arising among the churches of Asia a strong sense of missionary responsibility . . . marked by a deep desire [to] exchange church workers and to internationalize the personnel working among the churches.”<sup>124</sup>

The emphasis in the Asian churches is not on a divisive sectionalism but, as the IMC’s president, John A. Mackay, asserted, on a practicable regionalism.<sup>125</sup> Therefore the sending of missionaries is by no means ruled out. As the need for more highly specialized missionary assistance is increasing, so the importance of understanding the missionary vocation in timely perspective is pressing. As in Antioch of old, Western churches must be ready to release some of their ablest workers for at least temporary duty in sister churches in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere. That this process has already begun and been found acceptable in such varied lines as journalism, agriculture, welfare, and especially theological education, speaks well for the future.<sup>126</sup>

As missionaries from the West continue to come to the East at the request of the churches there, so the brethren in the East must be

<sup>122</sup> *The Common Evangelistic Task*, Prapat Report, p. 87. See footnote 53.

<sup>123</sup> Bishop Enrique Sobrepena of the Philippines, Chairman of the Prapat Conf. Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 5. Cp. U Kyaw Than, “The Christian Mission in Asia Today,” *IRM*, April 1958, pp. 160-161.

<sup>125</sup> *Prapat Report*, p. 92.

<sup>126</sup> E.g., the sending of Dr. Roland Wolsey, professor of Journalism at Syracuse University, N, Y, to teach this subject at Hislop College in India; he was succeeded in this task by the Rev. William E. Dudds, who in turn is now (1958) being succeeded by the Indian, J. Victor Koilpillai, until recently editor of *The Guardian*. In time this should helpfully influence the development of an indigenous Christian journalism.

given opportunity to send missionaries to the churches in the West. To us Western Christians this would be a salutary exchange. Christian brethren among us from another part of the world would have something vital to share, and could also help us in the struggle against compromising the Christian witness with an all-pervasive secularism.

In such two-way missionary exchange lies an essential application of the Church's apostolate. For its purpose is to make the spread of the Gospel more effective and to free the Christian faith as much as possible from man-made and culturally-conditioned handicaps. Only in this way, paradoxical though it appears, can the rootage of the Gospel and the life of the Church become wholesomely indigenous. Just as the missionary is one who experiences in his own person this simultaneous identification and otherness, so he is also the indispensable agent in stimulating both the unity and the mission of the ecumenical Church. It takes many Manikams and many Newbigins to blaze this new missionary trail into the believing and doing of Christians everywhere.

Do we need to be reminded that amid the world's booming harvest of babies the number of Christians is increasing only one-third as fast? In Manikam's oft-repeated play on words there is the disturbing fact that "the birth rate is moving ever farther ahead of the re-birth rate."<sup>127</sup> For majority-minded Western Christians the motive for missionary vocation may be prodded by reflections on "The Common Evangelistic Task" which the Philippine chairman, Bishop Enrique Sobrepenna, addressed to his fellow East Asian conferees last spring at Prapat, Indonesia. He declared:

The summons to us is urgent ... The forces in Asia arrayed against the gospel of love and righteousness are many and mighty while we who here carry the banner of Christ are few and scattered. We must consolidate our forces and our gains... And if we do so in common obedience to Christ, our Lord, then we are set to go forward under his banner.

128

To the congregations that stand atoll-like in a vast sea of unknowing, the Lord of the Church breathes the Spirit of His confidence.

<sup>127</sup> Bishop Manikam's address, Third Assembly, Lutheran World Federation, Monday, August 19, 1957. News Release, LWF-23, The substance of this, and some of Manikam's other characteristic utterances, appear in his article, "A New Era in the World Mission of the Church," *National Christian Council Review*, (Nagpur, India), May 1958, pp. 207-216.

<sup>128</sup> *Prapat Report*, p. 94, THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” To which He adds this often-overlooked beatitude. “Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.”<sup>129</sup>

Finally, Christ frees and unites for service those whom He has called as His missionaries in time past, those whom He has called in our time, and those who are still to answer His call and carry forward His mission to final fruition. In Him the mission of the Church militant already partakes of the joy of the Church triumphant. For us today the vocation of missionary may be epitomized in the life of one who risked and won where others before him had failed.<sup>130</sup> It is Ludwig Nommensen, that pioneer of the Rhenish Mission, on the scene of whose labors of a century ago the Prapat Conference met. Might he have felt his heart strangely warmed if he could have slipped in among the representatives of the Asian churches? What might he have sensed as he heard how the vocation of the missionary was blended into the mission of the Church in the simple welcome extended precisely at Prapat by the leader of the Batak Church. The words of the Ephorus rang like a doxology as he confessed:

It is a great miracle that we are able to meet here. In the ancient days our forefathers did not permit any foreigner to enter into our country; it was especially prohibited that any outsider should visit, or even see, Lake Toba, because the land and the lake were regarded as holy.

But at the present time it is the greatest joy to us to have foreign guests visit the lake and have a meeting in our land as brothers ...

[In] the Communion of the Holy Spirit ... we have the same faith, the same hope, the same love. We believe that this is not the result of man’s work.

This Communion of the Holy Spirit is the greatest gift of God that man can receive. It crosses all borders ... of nations and lands ... of human relations ... friendships ... communities and families.

It is the kind of Communion which makes us conscious of the whole world; we realize through it the unity of all men before God ...

<sup>129</sup> Luke 12:32, 37.

<sup>130</sup> Johannes Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission*. Berlin: Warneck, n.d. Passim.

We know that our community, the community of the Church, is here to serve the world. We know that it is to be a bright and shining light in every place. As in the human body, its true gracefulness lies not in the face but in the health of the whole body, so we believe also that this is true of our relations as Churches to one another and our relation as Churches to the whole society.

We therefore pray that ... God's will may be done on earth as in heaven. His kingdom come! Amen.<sup>131</sup>



## *First Fruits*

---

<sup>131</sup> *Prapat Report*, pp. 154-155. ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY