

Functional Services In Relation To The Central Task Of Evangelism

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For the foreign missionary task, functional services are symbolic of the understanding of God and man which underlie the Christian faith. These functional services are therefore to be viewed not as designed for effecting socio-economic transformations, nor even for alleviating the condition of individual people, but as demonstrations to “win” non-Christian peoples to the God and the faith which have produced the circumstances of said functional services. In other words, they are to be viewed not as incidentally but as fundamentally and objectively related to evangelism. In yet other words, functional services are the modern counterpart of the “signs” in the sense that the Gospel according to John uses the term, especially in 20:30. This is not to imply, on one hand, that missionaries are to perform the various functional services as mere means to an end “bait,” without true, disinterested Christian love and compassion; nor, on the other hand, does it imply that those who become Christians out of other backgrounds are to have overt service as their understanding of Christianity. We are aware of the fact that almost without exception when men followed Jesus for the sake of the miracle of physical bread, for the sake of the signs themselves, He withdrew from them;

Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.’ Then they said to him, ‘What must we do, to be doing the work of God?’ Jesus answered them,

‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’¹

In this opening paragraph there is contained the essence of the writer’s position -- for our day, at any rate. One cannot go to the Orient, it is true, without being constrained by the compassion of Christ to do something to alleviate the hunger, general poverty, ignorance and degradation of the teeming millions. It is thus that Pierce Beaver, in a treatise that is so comprehensive and so correct as to make this paper really superfluous,² can state of the early Protestant missionaries:

There was little or no attempt to give a theological explanation for such activity, for it clearly appeared to be Christian duty ... Ambassadors of Christ, looking at needy humanity through the eyes of Christ, reaching out hands of compassion, knowing that inasmuch as they did it unto these least ones they were doing it unto Him their Lord.³

Without trying to ascertain the precise degree of credit and/or responsibility for the situation of Christian missions, on one hand, and on the other hand, of the general penetration of Western civilization and its outlook, it may be said that we are only too keenly conscious that we live in an era of “total revolution.” Untold thought and attention have been given and volumes written on what this means for Christian missions, all, to the writer’s knowledge, without really essaying what this revolutionary situation really should mean for the functional services of Christianity. Some generalizations have been made, such as that contained in the Report of the Methodist Conference Commission to Consider “The Missionary Obligation of the Church,” which states that:

The Christian knows that it is not only technological means that are required to make the world a fit place for the human family, but that qualities of mind and spirit are necessary ... World hunger is not only a material problem but a moral and spiritual one, and it may well be that, in the revolution of our time, God is recalling His Church from a false divorce of the spiritual from the material, and that it is His will that His people should show the

¹ John 6:26-29 (RSV).

² R. Pierce Beaver, *Toward a More Effective Ministry Through Missionary Institutions* (New York: Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1953).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5. THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

way toward a true brotherhood among men such as the modern revolutionary spirit strives after.⁴

The Division of Foreign Missions of the N.C.C. in 1952 questioned whether institutions are ministering to real needs in the present revolutionary situation.⁵

Actually, the problem of the relationship of “functional services” to the central task of evangelism is universally recognized and universally unresolved. Typical of many indications of this from missionary statesmen both in this country and Europe are the following. Dr. Visser’t Hooft says:

The important issue that needs clarification in this connection seems to me to be whether Diakonia has only a secondary place with regard to Martyria, or whether Diakonia has its own dignity. My own feeling is that on the basis of important passages of the New Testament, and very notably of Matthew 25, we must say that Diakonia is not merely an aid to Martyria, but rather a fundamental expression of the Christian faith. The practical problem therefore becomes how Diakonia and Martyria may be constructively related to each other.⁶

The Reverend V.E.W. Hayward, Foreign Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society in England, indicates that:

We would all agree that the institutional work of the missionary enterprise is auxiliary to the Church’s central task of proclaiming the Gospel and building up vigorous missionary-minded churches. It is indeed a very necessary adjunct. The problem is to keep it from fulfilling a major, rather than a minor, role.⁷

Dr. E. Jansen Schoonhoven, Principal of the Netherlands Reformed Church’s Missionary Academy at Oegstgeest, speaks of the grappling with the problem in his country:

The development of thinking in missionary circles in our country may be illustrated by the example of the

⁴ *The Report of the Methodist Conference Commission to Consider “The Missionary Obligation of the Church”* (London: The Epworth Press, 1955), pp. 27-28.

⁵ Referred to in Beaver, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁶ Letter to the writer, dated Feb. 3, 1958.

⁷ Letter dated March 11, 1958.

mission of the “Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.” This denomination, that in 1886 left the Netherlands Reformed Church and followed a stricter Calvinistic line, has a very important missionary work in Indonesia. They distinguish between “hoofddienst” (main service) and “hulpdiensten” (auxiliary services). To the first belonged evangelism and upbuilding of the Church, to the second, medical, educational and other activities. In our mission this distinction was not accepted, but the relation between the last-mentioned activities and evangelism remained a problem that did not find a satisfying answer.

After the war the distinction between main service and auxiliary services has been abandoned by the mission of the “Gereformeerde Kerken.” At present they conceive of the relation by the figure of a circle that is divided into sectors: the evangelistic and church work forms an inner circle that is surrounded by the sectors of medical work, educational work, etc.

In our mission the conception of Prof. J. C. Hoekendijk of the threefold witness by kerygma, koinonia and diakonia (see his article on “The Call to Evangelism” in the *International Review of Missions*, April, 1950) has found much response.⁸

“Tomorrow is Born Today,” as the title of the *Annual Report of the S.P.G.* for 1955 so aptly puts it:

This title is one to provoke thought and to challenge response... The inheritance into which we enter has been molded by the character of the past, and what we make of it now will be the raw material upon which our successors will have to work... The use or misuse of our stewardship will leave its mark upon the future direction of the missionary enterprise.⁹

The writer is keenly conscious of his lack of qualifications to give any full answer. But as Dr. George W. Carpenter of the I.M.C. says:

⁸ Letter dated March 13, 1958.

⁹ Dewi Morgan, *Tomorrow Is Born Today* (London: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1956), p. 2.

Often the questions we are wrestling with lie on the frontiers between past experience and emergent new situations. As each one of us tries to think creatively and to respond to the practical issues that call for decision day by day, the new pattern gradually takes form.¹⁰

In part it is hoped that this paper will be a contribution to the cumulative insights forming the new pattern, and in part that it will “jump the gap” more radically than can be true of day-by-day decisions. It is hoped that a basic but radical principle may be established so that today we may lay the proper foundation for the “tomorrow” that is currently being born. This principle declares that there must be two angles for the look at functional services. For the missionary endeavor, functional services are “signs,” symbolic of the Christian apprehension of existence, ‘that (they) may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing (they) may have life in His name.’ And in contradistinction, to those who do believe, there is an outworking of the faith that is in them, represented in functional services which evolve as concern for the total life and well-being of men in their cultural milieu, and an expression of functional services that will reflect the spirit of Christ in that environment.

I. DEFINITIONS

This statement of dual principle requires some definition of evangelism, functional services, institutionalism, and a term that is coming much to the fore in Protestant circles but which is quite unfamiliar to left wing groups such as the denomination to which I belong, namely, apostolate.

A. Evangelism. At Prapat, “evangelism was recognized as more important even than autonomy,” according to James K. Mathews.¹¹ Against the backdrop of almost utter inertia concerning evangelistic responsibility among mission field churches and of nearly half a century of struggle, often bitter, by the so-called younger churches for autonomy from the older churches, this is startling and would of itself be reason for investigating the meaning and character of this concern for evangelism. Professor Hoekendijk calls attention to the fact that the call to evangelism in our day finds us unprepared, and he says that the ecumenical enquiry on evangelism begins by confessing that “we do not know.” He declares that we need a new vision of evangelism which is “a disentanglement of all

¹⁰ Letter dated Feb. 18, 1958.

¹¹ Carbon copy of an address, “What Does ‘Partnership in Obedience’ Mean?”

secular complexes and secret ideologies, a recovery in short, of the Biblical sense of evangelism.”¹² That is to say, the understanding of evangelism must be from the point of view of the Christian faith and the theology of missions.¹³

God acts in His world. That is where we begin.. On this view, man does not take the center of the stage in history ... God wills to act for all mankind so that His redeeming love may be known by all ... He redeems us from ourselves -- from our weakness, our failings, our enmity to Him, our pride and our false securities ... The Old Israel failed. They had not seen themselves as chosen to suffer that others might be redeemed, but had made their calling the reason for a false, exclusive nationalism

The new note that Jesus struck when He took over from John the Baptist was that the announcement of the coming of God’s Kingdom, and the call to repentance because it was here, made good news to be accepted with joy. From now on the coming of the Kingdom was seen as something more than a purge of the Old Israel and of the world that Israel had been called to serve; more than putting down of evil and enthroning good. Now the mighty hand of God was stretched out in power to deliver His people from sin and trouble and distress. That hand of God which had been mighty in the Creation, which was always bringing something new to pass, was now remaking His people ... This is the New Israel. Through obedience to God’s call, which inevitably means suffering, it is able to go on with the work of showing God to men and of winning them for Him.¹⁴

Upon such foundation we can enunciate the Church of Scotland’s definition of evangelism:

By evangelism is meant the kind of attitude and impact characteristic of the witnessing Christian community as such and not the verbal message given by a particular class of people employed for this purpose. It means an emphasis on the congregation as the agency in evangelism:

¹² J. C. Hoekendijk, “The Call to Evangelism,” *IRM*, Vol. 39, p. 167.

¹³ *Report of the Foreign Mission Committee for 1951*, The Church of Scotland, p 9.

¹⁴ *Report of the Methodist Commission*, op. cit., pp 15-17.

a community of persons rooted in the Word of God, worshipping congregations in which human worth and mutual responsibility are acknowledged and realized and from which love goes out in the work of service to the neighborhood.¹⁵

In contrast there has been “a modern habit of judging Christianity by the effect that it has had upon the social order,”¹⁶ so that the New Israel has made its calling the reason for a false and exclusive idealism (of human welfare). “Wholeness” under these circumstances is too often defined (subconsciously at least) as physical well-being and prosperity, as social and political democracy. This is most fallacious, but it is that which gives ground for the erroneous hyper-emphasis upon functional services. Hoekendijk shows that throughout the Bible evangelization is seen as possible only in a messianic context, that it is accomplished only by God, and that its objective is found in God rather than man.¹⁷ Dr. Hoekendijk states that two obvious consequences of this view of evangelism have only very seldom been drawn:

The first is that the Messiah (i.e. the Christ) is the subject of evangelism. . . The second consequence is that the aim of evangelism can be nothing less than what Israel expected the Messiah to do, i.e. He will establish the shalom. And shalom is much more than personal salvation. It is at once peace, integrity, community, harmony and justice.¹⁸

Thus evangelism is a relationship and a character of existence, with mundane affairs utterly subsidiary if not irrelevant. (This is at once the reason Communism can charge Christianity with being “the opiate of the people” and the reason dynamic Christianity can exist under a Communist regime.) Hoekendijk states that “this messianic conception of evangelism means a total rejection of two very well-known methods.”¹⁹ The first of these is the rejection of propaganda, however subtle. “It is not difficult to make this distinction in theory. It is, however, one of our most painful and most frequent experiences that evangelism is almost always concealed in a form of propaganda.”²⁰ The second rejection would be of the

¹⁵ Report of the F.M. Committee, Church of Scotland, op. cit., p.13 of the Report for 1951.

¹⁶ Report of the Methodist Commission, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁷ Hoekendijk, op. cit., pp. 167-8.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

²⁰ Loc. cit.

“stubborn tradition in our midst which interprets the aim of evangelism as the planting of the Church (or even the extension of the Church).”²¹ There is much to support the definition of evangelism as the planting of the Church, but in our day when such hyper-emphasis is placed at this point Hoekendijk’s stringent warning needs consideration: “Evangelism and churchification are not identical, and very often they are each other’s bitterest enemies.”²²

This understanding of evangelism takes the three forms of expression to which reference has already been made: the kerygma (shalom proclaimed), koinonia (shalom lived out in mutual communion and fellowship), and diakonia (shalom demonstrated in humble service).²³ In this three-fold expression the koinonia is both the primary kerygmatic unit and the primary diakonic unit. Kerygmatic as the place where the shalom is really made present, diakonic because it has no other relation to the outside world than that of humble service :

We may call it the level of the laboratory, the diakonia of a little group, living in a concrete situation, and serving each other and their environment by reforming the structure of a segment of society ... (Thus) an object lesson is given of what shalom should be.²⁴

One has here a concept of evangelism which can give fuller expression to what has been termed “the spiritual revolution of today (which is) as enthralling as the material.”²⁵ But in the end, the Word must be spoken and heard, as Mathews rightly insists, recalling Luther’s statement that “Faith is an accoustical affair,”²⁶ “Faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ (kerygma),” This is the conclusion to which the Policy Group of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland came:

The deepest need of the Church and Mission is not better organization or training or self-support, but a firmer apprehension of the Gospel as a glorious fact ... The Policy Group therefore would put as the primary emphasis the

²¹ Ibid., p. 170.

²² Ibid., p. 171.

²³ Loc., cit.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 175.

²⁵ Morgan, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁶ Quoted by Mathews, op. cit., p. 9.



possession of great and good news which it is our privilege and duty to share.²⁷

This view of evangelism is seen to be in diametrical opposition to that of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Enquiry, whose conclusions have been stated in summary as that "ministry to the secular needs of men in the spirit of Christ is evangelism,"²⁸ It is seen, on the other hand, to issue in the "spontaneous expansion" of which Roland Allen (*The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*) and Donald McGavran (*The Bridges of God*) speak. Thus "confronting the world with Christ is evangelism -- but only if the stress is upon Christ rather than upon the amenities that follow from being "in Christ," and only if in such confrontation there is a continual primary communication of the awareness that real confrontation means decision.

B. Functional Services. The Reformers insisted that the "ministry of the Word" and the "ministry of the sacrament" are the indispensable marks of the Church and that they should never be separated, James Mathews says:

There is a certain sacramental character about Christian life and service. They do not stand in their own right. Rather they point to a reality beyond themselves which must finally be made clear and specific in the Word of Truth, which is the Gospel.²⁹

Deeds of Christian love are but partial witness if they do not point to the source of that love. (This) often demands selfless, endless service and suffering and sacrifice... But then most truly the service points to what great things God has done in Jesus Christ. So in the most unexpected quarters are to be found the answers to man's deepest search for meaning.³⁰

Such sacrament of life and service should mark the Church wherever it be found and regardless of how recent may have been its own particular historical origin. Even in this day of ecumenicity and of such extensive interchurch aid it is necessary to point out that it is difficult to retain the sacramental quality and keep aid or services from being largely

²⁷ *Report of the Foreign Mission Committee for 1951*, Church of Scotland, p. 9.

²⁸ Beaver, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁹ James K. Mathews, "One Lord Over All -- Let Us Proclaim Him," unpublished address, p. 4 of carbon copy.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8 f.

social in character when one gets beyond the immediate environment. This is because, as Beaver points out in another study, diakonia proves the genuineness of koinonia and koinonia is not fully present except in directly experienced fellowship.³¹

The concern here however is with the role of functional services in the missionary endeavor. The Dutch Missionary Council's Study Committee on the Biblical Foundations of Foreign Missions declares:

The task of missions is determined by its commission, and by its goal. The missionary commission speaks of Christ's royal authority, which is to be proclaimed all over the world, and which is to be realized in the faithful obedience of those who hear the Gospel.³²

The Report goes on to comment that in modern Protestant missions very often no attention is paid to the goal but only to the way to the goal.³³ My concern is to call for a radical departure from emphasis upon functional services as such to a stress upon them as the sacramental signs, performed in the midst of a people who know not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, that seeing evidence of what it means to be "in Him" they too will be drawn to commitment to Christ as Lord. The Dutch Report poses the same concern, asking, "Are missions really, in all these activities, signs of the Kingdom of God, or do they rather strive after the ideals of humanity?"³⁴ Despite all the amazing accomplishments of the services, the Dutch Report presses as "most important" the recognition that "life is restored, renewed, freed from devils not by modern technics and science ... but by the Crucified and Risen Lord, the source of all renewal."³⁵

When functional services are so defined for missions, not only is there the first and only real possibility of keeping services from assuming a major role and becoming ends in themselves, but only thus can they be given up or relegated to a less primary role when other agencies, as governments, take them over or the need and opportunity to render the Christian sacrament in a given form ceases to exist. That we are already on the road to this understanding of functional services in missions may be

³¹ R. Pierce Beaver, *The Christian World Mission: A Reconsideration* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1957), p. 35.

³² Report of the Dutch Missionary Council's Study Committee on "The Biblical Foundations of Foreign Missions," mimeographed copy, p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁵ *Loc. cit.*

seen, at least in theory, in the statement on “The Christian Mission in This Hour” presented to and received by the Ghana Assembly:

The Christian world mission is Christ’s, not ours. Prior to all our efforts and activities, prior to all our gifts of service and devotion, God sent His Son into the world.... We have seen this to be the only true motive of Christian mission and the only standard by which the spirit, method and modes of Christian missionary organization must be judged. We believe it is urgent that this word of judgment and mercy should be given full freedom to cleanse and redeem our present activities, lest our human pride in our activities hinder the free course of God’s mission in the world.³⁶

Only thus can be resolved the paradox of which the Church of Scotland’s Foreign Mission Committee spoke in 1954: the paradox that although man’s material needs must be met his ultimate needs are not material, and moreover, the more his material needs are met the more he becomes “a poor man” with reference to his ultimate needs.

C. Institutionalism. Frequently the writer has had questions raised about any tendency to equate functional services with institutionalism. Yet it is his experience and observation that there seems to be inherent in man, or at least in the corporate social body, the inevitable institutionalization of function. This is peculiarly evident in Western civilization. To quote Pierce Beaver again:

The International Survey of the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Christian Associations made a valuable contribution in pointing out that any collective undertaking tends to institutionalize itself; that is, it tends to realize itself in structure and to build itself into an external order of things. The prophets of a movement become the staff of an institution, and its message becomes elaborated into a program. Voluntary effort is transformed into professional service.³⁷

As a consequence, “institutions became as integral to Protestant missions in the 19th and 20th centuries as the Benedictine monastery had

³⁶ *Report of the F. M. Committee for 1954*, Church of Scotland, p. 28.

³⁷ Beaver, *More Effective Ministry*, p. 29.

been to the missionary conquest of Europe.”³⁸ This characteristic was not questioned by mission societies until Edinburgh, but since then an almost complete reversal in attitude took place, until Willingen was ready to give almost wholesale condemnation to the traditional institutional approach.³⁹ In a direct quotation from the International Survey, attention is called to the fact that “the validity of a movement is measured not by its ability to dispense with institutional features but by its power to command them.”⁴⁰ Thus the function not only becomes institutionalized but achieves a certain “guaranteed perpetuity.” This tendency is powerful even in such services as Christian literature and Bible societies, Sunday School and other functions of religious education, audio-visual programs, rural missions, etc. This runs counter to one of the basic principles recognized and adopted by the Division of Foreign Missions in 1953: “Every one of the functions assumes institutional form as the Church discharges it; but it is the enduring function, not the ephemeral institutional form, which is important.”⁴¹

D. Apostolate. Hoekendijk makes bold to declare that:

Even theologians -- who have been in the past among the most unconquerable saboteurs of evangelism -- seem to have rediscovered here and there its theological relevance. They realize that they play away the Biblical authenticity of their thinking, if they go on refusing to acknowledge that the Church is set in this world with the sole purpose of carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth. In some schools of Protestant as well as of Roman Catholic theology, the apostolate tends to become the all-pervading centre of thinking -- a total revolution in theology, with overwhelmingly wide perspectives.⁴²

Apostolate recovers for the Church and for foreign missions their true eschatological function and stresses the character of missions as grounded in the “redemptive-historical” past, so that what is proclaimed is the fulfilled work of Christ. When this is done, “life appears in an entirely new and startling perspective. The old aeon is past, everything becomes new.”⁴³ The “moment of fulfillment” is matched, in apostolate,

³⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁹ Norman Goodall (ed.), *Missions Under the Cross* (New York: Friendship Press, 1953), pp. 221-222.

⁴⁰ Beaver, *More Effective Ministry*, p. 29.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴² Hoekendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

⁴³ Report of the Dutch Missionary Council Study Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

by the “moment of expectation,” which knows that only in the future will the full truth, meaning, and victory of the Kingdom of God be realized. “One cannot escape this tension between ‘already’ and ‘not yet,’ and, what is more, one should not be able to.”⁴⁴

From the recognition that Christ whose coming is expected is the One who has come already, missions derive the courage to fulfill their calling to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, (and) to measure their task not by the favorability or other wise of circumstances but by the joyful certainty that Christ’s power is real ... The recognition that Christ who has come already is still to be expected preserves missions from dealing with a superficial social optimism instead of the Gospel of God’s grace, and also from a “comprehensive” approach where the word “comprehensive” is mainly applied to material needs and the message of reconciliation and forgiveness is lost.⁴⁵

Both non-institutionalized services and institutions of all kinds take on an utterly different coloring, with different objectives, emphases and procedures, if the apostolate understanding should be recovered.

II. HISTORICAL RESUME

The absence of the apostolate awareness in the modern missionary endeavor is well portrayed in the article, “The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission,”⁴⁶ by Walter Freytag:

A study of the modern missionary movement, of the history of missions for the last two hundred years, brings us to a significant observation. None of the waves of missionary enthusiasm and of missionary action which followed one another succeeded in adapting or preserving the full force of the missionary motive as set forth in the Bible. This fact can be seen, for instance, in the conception of the Kingdom of God.⁴⁷



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⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁵ Loc. cit.

⁴⁶ *IRM*, vol. 39, pp. 153-161.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 154.

Freytag calls attention to what he terms “four missionary streams which have emerged,” each of which “reveals a characteristic contraction of the Kingdom- of-God outlook.”⁴⁸ First is the Pietistic stream, which contracted the Kingdom of God to a purely spiritualized individualistic-ethical outlook, so that the Kingdom was the sum total of those “saved” out of the world. The second stream stressed the planting of the Church, until this objective supplanted the Kingdom, “Obviously,” he observes, “no one taught that the churches must be identical with the Kingdom of God, and yet the idea of the Kingdom of God was so narrowed that it collapsed with the Church” His description of the third stream is so applicable to our situation, and to the topic of this paper, that we shall look at it in full:

The third stream in missionary motivation, which gained ground earlier and over a wider field in the Anglo-Saxon countries than on the Continent, originated in the blending of the Enlightenment and philanthropy on the one hand with Christianity on the other. Here, men penetrated to the needs of mankind, and outstanding figures emerged who, with bold and practical devotion, wrestled with the misery of slavery, the lack of education, physical suffering and social distress. Here were envisaged, ingathering together all men of goodwill, the great goal and the great possibility of making “the world a better place to live in.” And automatically the Kingdom of God became identified with these increasingly improved world conditions. You could call it the idealistic-socio-ethical contraction of the conception of the Kingdom of God.⁴⁹

Freytag’s fourth stream is the outlook stemming from the work of such men as Simpson, Grattan Guinness, Franson and others abroad, and from the various premillennialist groups within our country. For this outlook missions is the means of ushering in the End. Here the Kingdom of God was still a great goal to be reached at the cataclysmic close of the Age, and the motive was largely self-centered.

Most devastating of all, as Freytag indicates, was “the one thing from which they (the four streams) have all in common failed to protect themselves: they all strayed into the torrent of the propagation of Western civilization. It is a disturbing thing to contemplate, but it is not surprising. Whether the different schools of thought clung too much or too little to

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 155.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

the world, the same result ensued, that they fell victim to the influences of this world.”⁵⁰

The crux of the problem lies in understanding that it is right to render services and to promote concrete action according to the will of God, but always in the sense of being primarily concerned with God’s will rather than with human needs. According to the extensive survey conducted preparatory to this paper, the most explicit implementation of this insight has been by the London Missionary Society, which reported as follows:

Four years ago the directors took the opportunity to overhaul the policy of the Society and spent some time in examining the broad outlines of our modern work. They went on record as saying that “the first and most urgent duty of the Society in the immediate future is to do, or cause to be done, everything that is possible to build up the local churches on the field in such a way that they may more fully manifest the Divine grace within their own life and in the evangelization of their neighborhood and beyond.” The report of the directors went on to list the ways in which this duty could be carried out, e.g. by training leaders and providing literature.⁵¹

Such an approach will avoid the inevitable consequence of viewing functional services as *preparatio evangelicae*, which is that in actuality instead of preparing the way for the Gospel there takes place an infiltration of a culture with some Christian idealism to the extent that the culture is modified but also the lines of distinction become so blurred that it is less, not more, likely that people will be “evangelized” in the sense of being brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Further, mobility, and spontaneity in actual rendering of diakonia are seriously hampered,⁵² and in any cut in personnel or funds the central task of evangelism always suffers first and most.⁵³

In this regard, integration rather than devolution can be a means to resolving the dilemma of local (mission field church) control, which naturally looks with self-interest upon services rendered and institutions established and largely supported through foreign funds and personnel,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Letter from the General Secretary, dated February 13, 1958,

⁵² Cf. Hoekendijk, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁵³ Cf. letter from Hayward of the B.M.S., *op. cit.*, p. 2.

versus the broader and less self-interested policy which a mission society might adopt. The S.P.G. provides an illustration of this potentiality, for it takes the position of adopting no particular policy beyond that of working on each specific problem with the bishop of each given local area.⁵⁴

Since functional services so easily pre-empt evangelism, “the primacy of evangelism means a watchful eye on the institution (or service) which, as a potential ally of the greatest value, may also be like a foreign body in the Church and therefore dangerous to its health and wholeness.”⁵⁵

In our day, the route to express our Christian-rooted concern for the mundane needs of other peoples is not through vast programs of mission directed services in their midst, but rather through our government and United Nations programs. This would take the form both of urging upon our government that such welfare aids be carried on and of urging earnest Christian lay people who are technically qualified to serve in government or U.N. or private efforts. In view of the magnitude and costliness of welfare projects in this revolutionary era, we can adapt a statement by Beaver to this situation: “Missions cannot take on the whole task but can pioneer on a scale small enough for human personality to remain a major consideration.”⁵⁶

This resume could not better close than by a reiteration of the conclusions drawn from a study entitled “The Growing Edge of the Church” by the Reverend Raymond A. Dudley:

The survey indicated that there is a “growing edge” and that lay evangelism, welling up out of a deep religious experience and fed by Bible study, plays a large part in it ... It does not appear as if (institutions) were directly affecting this “growing edge.”⁵⁷

III. TOWARD MORE CORRECT EXPLICATION OF FUNCTIONAL SERVICES

Robert G. Cochrane, M.D., has succinctly stated the practical objective of functional services: not to meet need, but to demonstrate how need can be met. Christian missions, especially in functional services, must no longer expect to dominate the local scene where a given service

⁵⁴ Letter from the Secretary of the S.P.G., dated Feb. 3, 1958.

⁵⁵ *Report of the F. M. Committee for 1951*, Church of Scotland, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Beaver, *More Effective Ministry*, p. 23.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31. THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

is rendered, but to be like “leaven,” hidden in the meal. This is a radical reversal of the pattern of the 19th and 20th centuries, and will be no easy achievement for societies, missionaries and nationals, and if pursued would perhaps eliminate a major ground upon which national governments today are willing to permit mission work. Expediency at this point is not the answer, however. It must be realized, in the words of a tract of the Board of Ecumenical Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., that missions “is the impact of the Christian minority and not a mass movement of the majority.” Not permissiveness nor collaboration with governments, but “encounter is the order of the day.” The Presbyterian leaflet goes on to say:

Invincible under persecution as in Hungary, China, Spain, Colombia; dynamic in evangelism, even behind the “iron curtain”; sharing in suffering; vitally involved in the world spiritual struggle which will determine whether the world revolution, for which the Church is essentially responsible, will be won by the Christian or anti-Christian forces -- encounter is the order of the day.

Next to understanding the character of our situation as one of encounter rather than service, and the practical objective of functions as not meeting need but demonstrating how need may be met within the sacramental Christian context, the most important factor in explication of functional services is the element of quick adaptability and effective mobility, together with full acceptance of the expendable element. Christian missions still need to learn much from Communist techniques at this point. An amazing amount of very costly time, thought and life still goes into perpetuating services and institutions which have come down from the past, and in regard to education especially, most of the effort is almost purely administrative. The Baptist Missionary Society has, at least in theory, apprehended this:

For all fields we are convinced of the necessity of short-term planning based on a long-term view, not because we know in relation to any of them that the time will be short, but because we know in relation to all of them (although for varying reasons) that the time may be short. We are to “discern the signs of the times,” and “work while it is day.” One of the obvious and impressive reasons for Communist successes is their aptitude for working in definite stages.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ *Review of the B.M.S. Work Overseas*, January 1954, p. 6.

Lessons need to be learned not only from the Communists but from Islam, which is experiencing such remarkable advance, especially in Africa. The 1956 *Foreign Mission Committee Report of the Church of Scotland* states that Islam's "strength lies in the simplicity of its creed, its ability to manage without expensive buildings or a professional ministry, and its comprehensive brotherhood open to all races."⁵⁹ Two very different illustrations may be adduced:

One very large mission, with nine medical doctors and thirty-four nurses in three fields, after an evaluation of their long standing medical work, came to the conclusion that large, centralized hospitals are not conducive, helpful, or needed in order to develop a strong national church. It was decided that a hospital with more than twenty-five beds is not a sound policy.⁶⁰

The other illustration is the long-standing efforts of Dr. John H. Reisner of Agricultural Missions, Inc., to get the various functional services implemented through more mobile and less institutionalized methods, particularly through programs of rural reconstruction.⁶¹

A novel suggestion is contained in the *Report of the Methodist Conference Commission on "The Missionary Obligation of the Church."* This suggestion is that mobile squads of missionaries -- commando units -- be trained and held ready and available for emergencies or for fitting into "planned attacks."⁶²

To turn to this outlook on functional services, particularly with reference to all aspects of education, requires both a rational and an emotional acceptance of the startling (to Protestants) but very accurate observation of Daniel Fleming on the "Limitations of an Intellectual Approach in Missions." Dr. Fleming points out that:

Westerners are apt to put too much trust in reason as a means of producing cultural change in another land ... The limitations of the approach through reason lie in assuming that facts and logic are the determining elements in the

⁵⁹ *The Unfinished Task: Expanding Frontiers* (Edinburgh: Foreign Mission Office, 1956), p. 12.

⁶⁰ Referred to in a letter from the Foreign Secretary of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, dated March 4, 1958, p. 4.

⁶¹ Cf. Beaver, *More Effective Ministry*, p. 29.

⁶² Original notes missing from the text.

situation... The most serious opposition to Christianity may not be from protest to its formulated thought but from its challenge to customary ways of thinking and acting.⁶³

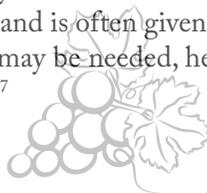
Thus again, sacramental functional service, not the improvement of the condition of people, is the role of functional services, and this is indeed an integral part of evangelism. As Fleming says, “The Cross has powerfully stirred the deepest emotions in men through all ages and in all lands. In lesser ways, also, we may well consider the use of non-rational, non-verbal ways of producing inner change.”⁶⁴

Undergirding this emphasis is the premise so well stated in the Methodist Commission’s Report:

One of the most stimulating paradoxes of the Christian faith may be expressed in the statement that “the eternal changes.” By this is meant that the eternal truth of the Gospel is changing its forms in India and Africa and elsewhere in order to come nearer to the native ways of expression. In our day the practical out-working of this principle calls for nothing more urgently than for mobility in missionary strategy.⁶⁵

James K. Mathews speaks of the contemporary missionary in a masterful piece of understatement: “His is a vocational dilemma.”⁶⁶

Turning to the Western missionary, in many areas his frustration is more acute than ever. In some places, he feels under the threat of being eliminated by governments for nationalistic reasons or even by the church itself, distorted as the latter is by nationalistic considerations. He must carry the unhappy connotation associated with the name “missionary” in some circles both inside and outside the church. His “foreignness” which could make the valuable contribution of objectivity has become a serious hindrance. He comes eager to serve and is often given little scope for service. Though his skill may be needed, he is often made to feel he is not wanted.⁶⁷



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⁶³ See footnote 62.

⁶⁴ See footnote 62.

⁶⁵ See footnote 62.

⁶⁶ See footnote 62.

⁶⁷ See footnote 62.

It is the writer's conviction that at least much of this "vocational dilemma," as well as many other problems involved among the churches in "partnership in obedience," would be greatly reduced if all functional services were continuously rendered as the sacrament which points to the meaning behind the deed and turns men to the Christ who is Lord of the deed, thus bringing to accomplishment the central task of evangelism.



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