

The Significance for the Professors of Missions in the IMC – WCC Merger

*Leonard T. Wolcott
Scarritt College for Christian Workers
Nashville, Tennessee*

The IMC-WCC merger poses the professor of missions with several questions about his understanding and teaching of missions in the theological seminary:

1. What is the relationship of the missionary program of his denomination or group to that of other denominations or groups?
2. What is the relationship of “missions” to the church?
3. What is the relationship of missionary going and missionary sending from his country to the church in other countries?
4. What is the relationship of mission to evangelism?
5. What is the relationship of mission to every phase of church life and expression, and hence, within the seminary, what is the relationship of mission to every discipline and skill taught the Christian worker?
6. In the context of modern social change, what is the relationship of mission and communication in mission to the common experiences of man?

These questions are obvious. None of them is new. They have been part of the thinking of all who teach about the Christian mission. The

answers each makes to these questions have affected his course offerings and course content.

The merger of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches last November in New Delhi is itself the consequence of a long process of adjustments which already have affected the teaching of missions.

The IMC-WCC merger is an organizational conclusion in the logic of modern missionary history. The teacher of missions alert to that logic already will have been tracing it and reflecting it for his students.

The IMC-WCC merger is an organizational analogy to the logic of faith. The teacher of missions sensitive to that logic will already have been seeking to communicate it to his students.

Christians were told in the First Letter of Peter: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9 RSV). Here, the explanation of the church and the purpose of the church are declared in one sentence. The purpose illuminates the explanation. The mission of the church is to proclaim him who called the church into being for this very mission. This is no simple circle. It is the solid sphere of a life of faith. There is no departmentalization here. The clause beginning with *hopos* in the Greek of the epistle, is a clause descriptive of the church. It makes the calling of this new Israel. And this new Israel, by the way, is not conceived of as a fragmented Israel.

I. THE ECUMENICAL CONTEXT

The first implication of the IMC-WCC merger is the ecumenical context of missions. It is only one of the many implications of this merger and it is by no means new. The International Missionary Council had already been, for forty years, a vivid ecumenical experience.

This ecumenical context bears upon the missions professor's interpretation both of the Biblical bases of mission and of the history of missions leading as it does to the modern ecumenical movement.

It also suggests, however, that the teaching of missions should provide an ecumenical experience to the student, analyze the present position of ecumenism in mission, explore the meanings of Christian unity, and relate all this to the missionary education program of the churches.

A. Biblical Basis of the Christian Mission

The decision to merge the IMC with the WCC was made not without serious Biblical study. One can hardly ignore, when teaching the Biblical basis of mission, the teachings of the New Testament on unity which have been used by the contemporary mission movement in its ecumenical setting.

Frequent texts used in the call of Christian unity in mission are John 17:18-23, I Corinthians 1:12-13, Philippians 2:1-5, Colossians 3:14-15. There are, of course, many other texts as well as extensive passages in the story of Christian beginnings which are used.

“Missionary texts” and “ecumenical texts” cannot fairly be studied out of context. Ecumenism must neither be read into, nor read out of, the total New Testament message. That message as a whole must be studied with its bearing on mission and unity in mission.¹

B. The History of Missions

No teaching of mission history can avoid the ecumenical significance of the modern missionary movement from the time of the Plutschau and Ziegenbalg mission. It is evident, for example, in the proposal of William Carey for decennial ecumenical mission conventions and in the founding of the London Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and other early organizations of mission concern such as the Bible societies, interdenominational missionary meetings, councils and cooperative enterprises that came into being on the “mission field”, and the student volunteer movements and the missionary education movements.

As Bishop Newbigin has said, “Men who were divided from one another in their home churches, found themselves working, praying, and witnessing together on the world-wide frontiers of the Christian mission.”²

No history of the Christian Mission is complete that does not introduce the life of the new churches that have come into being as a

- 1 For centuries, men were able to read, study, and debate the New Testament without consciousness of its missionary message. Many have read and proclaimed its missionary message without attention to its teaching on unity. See further Biblical notes in I, F below.
- 2 “The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement,” Assembly Document 14, Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, 1961, p. 1.

consequence of the modern missionary movement. Any attention to the life, problems, needs and challenges facing these new churches cannot overlook the passionate yearning among so many of their leaders for ties broader than those with their parent denomination only.³

C. Ecumenical Awareness

Even if he has not done so before, surely the IMC-WCC amalgamation must make the missions professor examine with his students the meaning of ecumenism: etymologically, historically, theologically, and experimentally. The teaching of missions should the misunderstanding as to what ecumenism is, that is, the misconception of it as a mono-ecclesiastical structure rather than as a conversation sharing, planning fellowship of Christians, in all their variations, around the world.

1. Awareness of Other Denominations, Churches, and Mission Societies

Just as a “history of missions” course leads a student to at least an acquaintance with the names of outstanding missionary pioneers of various denominations and missionary societies, and perhaps with comity arrangements, so a survey of contemporary missions will surely lead him to an awareness of what other churches – besides his own – are doing in “missions.” The student should know about the cooperative activities of other churches with his own in mission projects, as well as possible cooperative programs with them where needed. Churches with missionaries serving united churches overseas should be helped, through their ministers trained in mission classes, to know something about the life and structure of these united churches as well as about the other denominations sending missionaries to help them. It is not uncommon, at present, to have churches of several denominations in the same town supporting missionaries to the same church abroad – such as the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan – without genuine awareness of, or fellowship with, each other.

There is no excuse, today, for any missionary proceeding from one of our seminaries to another place without knowledge of, and charity toward, other churches and missions already at work there.

3 “Witness Together” report of the first assembly of the East Asia Christian Conference, U. Kyaw Than, Secretary, 1959, p. 102.

The same day that the International Missionary Council was integrated with the World Council of Churches, four large Eastern Orthodox Churches were admitted into the Council. Their application, and their admission as one of the major groups in the Council, indicated not only the desire for closer fellowship in Christ; it indicated Eastern Orthodox acceptance of the integral place of mission in the meaning and life of the church. This has increased the attention a professor of missions may wish to give a) to the history of missions under the Eastern Orthodox Churches as a part of the total history of missions, b) to the interest in contemporary missions that may be expected from Eastern Orthodox, and c) to the place of Eastern Orthodox missionary activity today in its relation with that of non-Eastern Orthodox churches.

2. Awareness of Ecumenical Mission Service

The merger of the IMC and WCC extends possibilities for fellowship in service already well developed by both merging bodies.

The increase of international and ecumenical service teams is being studied and recommended by the enlarged World Council of Churches. Their significance in modern civilization with its shifting centers of influence is important to professors of mission who themselves might encourage or help prepare students for participation in such service.

The IMC-WCC merger calls our attention to the worldwide, church-wide service and relief agencies it sponsors. Seminaries should make known to their students – and through them the churches – these agencies as well as their own denominational agencies, many of which work in cooperation with those of the world body.

The policy of ecumenical agencies of Christian service deserve careful examination by students in mission classes. They need to understand the missionary motivations which brought them into being. Many churches in Asia, for example, have rebelled against the insistence of denominational tags in service to humanity. They have expressed their confidence that ecumenical witness can husband precious resources for more effective evangelism.⁴

Several years ago a proposal was made that a united mission board in America be formed, representing all the denominations, to channel aid and personnel, presumably in consultation with the churches which were to receive that aid. No such proposition comes from the new Commission

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. Nevertheless the new Commission will be expected to suggest standards for inter-board relationships and cooperation. It would be well if some professors of missions and student project groups study and design a set of standards for greater unity in work among mission boards.

3. Awareness of Ecumenical Conversations in the Christian Mission

The missions professor's professional competence requires him to keep up to date with ecumenical conversations that are taking place. Conversations within the IMC-WCC framework are not a facile ecumenism. Here the disciplines, beliefs, traditions, practices of various denominational families meet squarely in hard discussions. As a result, no uniformity of thought and action grows out of these conversations, but rather a deepening of missionary foundations, and a strengthening of missionary functions by each participating group.

A professor of missions will want his students to consider the statements that have grown out of these discussions in so far as they have a bearing on the theology and methodology of missions. This process should develop a readiness on their part to learn from the representatives of many denominations who themselves "...have learned to receive correction from each other, under the Gospel, as they seek to fulfill their missionary tasks."⁵

4. Ecumenical Experience

Education in mission is inadequate if it does not give students laboratory training in the communicative and service functions of mission. The ecumenical dimension of mission may be learned through such laboratory activities with members of other denominations. Where seminaries of more than one denomination are situated in the same town or general area, service and community-contact work may be undertaken cooperatively. Otherwise, student community programs may be conducted jointly with ministers and laymen of several denominations.

Mission students may be encouraged to participate in summer ecumenical work camps. Students with an experience gain more from their own studies of world mission, and share an enlarged vision with fellow-students. Contacts, conversations, and interchange of ideas with

5 "The Missionary Task of the Church: Theological Reflections" in BULLETIN of the Division of Studies, World Council of Churches; VII, 2, p. 17.

missionary personnel and students of other denominations are also to be recommended.

Community-wide missionary education workshops on an inter-denominational level afford one of the best ways for creating among seminary students a deeper and broader awareness of world mission.

D. Missionary Education

Missionary education is for the ecumenical church. The IMC-WCC merger suggests that seminary students be prepared to use more than denominational missionary education literature – or other exclusive press material. Missionary education in the local church that teaches the congregation the meaning of missions *only* in terms of what the denomination is doing, is stunting their understanding of the total Christian mission. They need to see mission as a worldwide concern of a worldwide church.⁶

E. Ecumenical Organization

The ecumenical implications of the IMC-WCC are with us regardless of our approval or disapproval of that integrated body. The forces that were in its making are current forces which no mission today can or tries to ignore. For ecumenism means more than merely its largest visible expression in the world today. There are other ecumenical movements, related, opposed, or parallel to it.

“Ecumenism” cannot and must not appear to be an end in itself, apart from mission. In true perspective, ecumenism must be studied in terms of the missionary character of the church and in the day-to-day missionary expression and activity of the church. Organization is a means, not an end. There must, therefore, be no undue emphasis on organization. Certain dangers in ecumenical organization need to be clear among students. There is the danger of bureaucracy and institutionalism – a danger, of course, that faces every church organism. There is the danger of conference-centeredness. Teaching of the ecumenical dimension of missions must not concentrate only on conferences or inspire students merely to wish to be delegates to ecumenical meetings. A tendency to breed a few ecumenical queen bees prepared to produce ideas without having themselves been active in the hives of service must be avoided.

6 As is done, for example, in W. Richey Hogg, *One World, One Mission*. [New York: Friendship Press, 1960.]

On the other hand, criticism of the ecumenical movement must be thoughtfully examined by professors and students. Is some of the criticism of the ecumenical movement a rationalized nostalgia for the “romance of missions” in the days of “the white man’s burden,” for the days of the exportation of Western Christianity, and even of “the American way of Christ”? This merger has helped to loosen the apron strings by which younger churches were held to the parent body in the West. The way has been further cleared for the uniting of small churches in the non-West. Could it be that, like an anxious mother, parent churches are sometimes against the marriage of their daughters to mates considered unworthy lest they lose some of their loyalty to instructions given to them as children? They may think for themselves!⁷

F. Our Basic Unity of Christ

The IMC-WCC merger reflects the ecumenical attempt to get into focus those concepts and conditions of Christian life which have become refracted by man’s disobedience to Christ. The organizational unity is not an assurance positive of focus achieved. In this body, just as in denominational and “non-denominational” and “inter-denominational” bodies, men may expend energy in organization and programming as an escape from concentration on Christ. Nevertheless, this merger is a confession and acknowledgement of the unity that the church must find in its head, Christ, if it is to be the church. Such a knitting together requires extreme discipline: the discipline that comes with submission to the one Holy Spirit. We, as sinful human beings, will ever struggle against this discipline, yet must ever submit ourselves to it. Thus it may be said, that the ecumenical aspiration toward unity in the church is a reflection of every Christian’s need for unity with Christ.

A devotional study of our basic unity in Christ, then, becomes an essential concern of every professor of missions as he seeks to communicate the meaning of mission to his students.

Koinonia, used in the New Testament for fellowship and unity (Acts 2:42), is used for fellowship with God (1 John 1:3b, 6)⁸ and fellowship with Christians (1 John 1:3a, 7). Paul uses it to express fellowship with

7 There has been further criticism that IMC-WCC related churches are sending out fewer missionaries than agencies unrelated to the unity movement. The fact, by the way, that Communism has sent out a larger number of dedicated agents into the world than any missionary group, is no reason to doubt the church but reason enough to rediscover it.

8 Cf. Philo; Mos. 1, 158.

God's Son (1 Corinthians 1:9) and for fellowship with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14).⁹ This expression, "fellowship with the Spirit."¹⁰ means to Paul the unity among Christians created by the Spirit. He also uses the same word for a fellowship whose purpose it is to proclaim the Gospel (Philippians 1:5).¹¹ These passages all say one thing: there must be this common center: God, his Son, his Holy Spirit,¹² which is the uniting factor making *koinonia* possible. But this *koinonia* is made for the purpose of the Gospel, and hence for the fulfillment of God's intent to create *koinonia* in himself (2 Corinthians 5:18ff).

Denial of such fellowship, as an ecumenical fact (regardless of particular organizational expression), would be an effectual denial of the Center and His evangel. This is the concern of the ecumenical mission. As stated by Bishop Newbigin, Director of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism, "The obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world, and the obligation to draw all Christ's people together, both rest on Christ's whole work and are indissolubly connected. Every attempt to separate these tasks violates the wholeness of Christ's ministry to the world."¹³

Contemporary Biblical study of the Christian mission has led to recognition that we belong to one another in the task of reconciling men to Christ. The East Asia Christian Conference stated its concern that fellowship in Christ is necessary if we are going to win men to Christ.¹⁴ Is this not implicit in the urgency that pleads for ecumenical unity? We cannot live toward the non-Christian if we cannot all learn to live with our fellow-Christians in Christ. If this is so, the professor of missions engaged in preparing people for missionary service, must help prepare them to appreciate and seek to work with, not in opposition to, other groups who differ in theological perspective. For, as stated by a special theological commission of the churches at Bessey in July, 1961, "That essential unity of the mission of God's people to the world implies that the church is called to be both wholly committed to its mission – all churches accepting responsibility for participation in it – and also one in its mission – *all*

9 i.e., fellowship brought about by the Holy Spirit, if the genitive here is a subjective genitive or genitive of quality.

10 "participation in the Holy Spirit" RSV : *koinonia pneumatos*.

11 *he koinonia eis to euaggelion*.

12 See 2 Corinthians 6:14.

13 "The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement," *op. cit.*, p. 15.

14 "Witnesses Together," *op. cit.*, p. 141.

*churches seeing themselves as the one people of God in their witness to His one purpose for the world.*¹⁵

The mission professor's own awareness of a universal faith in a universal Lord cannot but strengthen his students' view of the common missionary task, of the whole church. The teaching of missions, then, really begins with an exposition of the essential nature of the church: its unity in Christ for the mission of Christ. Mission springs from that unity and acts toward that unity.¹⁶

II. THE INTEGRITY OF MISSIONS AND CHURCH

A second implication of the IMC-WCC merger for the professor of missions is the integrity of mission with church.¹⁷

As a fellowship of Christians from all parts of the world, the World Council of Churches could never escape the missionary connotation of their fellowship. Many concerned with the mission of the church have hailed this merger as a recognition that the church *is* mission and neither a lateral interest nor a branch of the church. It is an acknowledgement that the church dare not live "as though the work of Christ were limited to us in the churches."¹⁸

The church of today finds itself in a rapidly changing society that ignores it and challenges its presuppositions. World ecumenical organization is not, and must not be looked upon as, a mutual gathering for security in a hostile world, although it does afford encouragement and inspiration to Christians. It is not, and must not be looked upon as, a self-assertion to a heedless world. Rather, it is a dedication in unity for self-giving mission in Christ. Only as the church stands ready, as a total church of Christ, to consider itself expendable, ready to be crucified, in its daring mission of reconciliation, will it discover for man everywhere the inescapable cohesive power of God's love, and its eternal, universal

15 "The Missionary Task of the Church: Theological Reflections," *op. cit.*, p. 15.

See also "Witnesses Together," *op. cit.*, p. 60.

16 An attempt to build up a distinctive denominational theology of missions, incidentally, would be divisive of that unity.

17 This integrity is a fact not dependent on organizational merger, as pointed out at Ghana. See *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council*, Ronald K. Orchard, ed. [London, Edinburgh House Press, 1958], p. 158.

18 Document 25, Section on Witness, Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, 1961.

community. This rediscovery of the church is the rediscovery of its marching orders. Those marching orders are its mission. The mission is to communicate with men where they are in a language they understand,¹⁹ with a fellow feeling that becomes one with them in order that they, with the Communicator, might become the community of God.

The fear has been expressed by some that the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism might become simply one of many interests of the world church fellowship. The new constitution of the WCC and the constitution of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, purposely integrate functions of the old WCC and the IMC and avoid language that would tend to confirm this fear.²⁰

There are at least four major inferences for professors of missions in this expressed integrity of church and mission.

1. The first inference is seen in its theology of the church. The early years of the World Council of Churches saw an extensive re-study of the meaning of the church. This led to a deeper realization that church and mission are inseparably one. *The church*, as the body of Christ, *incarnates the mission of Christ*: to reconcile all mankind to God (II Corinthians 5:18). The church does not send (missions) except in that the church is itself sent (mission) into all the world.

It is therefore important to the professor of missions that any presentation of the Christian mission be founded in a clear theological apprehension of the meaning and function of the church.²¹

2. Consequent to the first, the second inference is seen in a broadened understanding of what mission includes. The narrow concept of mission as something foreign and distinct from the general life of the local congregation is untenable. If the church incarnates the mission of Christ, then *mission is every activity* of the church that seeks *to carry out the purpose of Christ*.

19 See Section VI Below.

20 See Section I of the amended "Report of the Committee on the Division of World Mission and Evangelism," p. 31, of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, 1961.

21 A new and valuable resource for this study is Johannes Blauw's *The Missionary Nature of the Church*. [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961]. Also see statement in *The Ghana Assembly*...*op. cit.*, p. 159.

The professor of missions, therefore, will hope to help his student interpret the missionary significance of, and instill the missionary motive in, every activity of his church.²²

3. A third inference is seen in a deepened study of the work of the Holy Spirit. The same Assembly which saw the integration of mission and church also emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit. The Great Commission as variously expressed in the New Testament never was separable from the action of the Spirit. (Cf. Matthew 28:19,20 and 20b; Luke 24:48 and 49; Acts 1:8; John 15:16 and 26, 27. See also Mark 16:15 and 20; Acts 9:5,6 and 17.) The mission and the church began under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” received at that time was itself a release for the fulfillment in the nascent church of the commission of Jesus. Hence, may it be said that every aspect of church life that is moved by the Holy Spirit becomes a part of the missionary outreach?²³

In the study of the Book of Acts and in the beginnings of Christianity the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Great Commission has been recognized. Yet this relationship has been neglected in the study of the Christian mission today. Many a professor of missions may want to reorganize his basic course to include this recognition of the place in mission of the Holy Spirit. He asks himself and students not only: “What is the significance of the Holy Spirit for Christian mission in Luke-Acts and in Paul’s letters?” but also, “What is the significance of the Holy Spirit and the church’s commission in our time of rapid social change, in communication with modern man and for the developing life, leadership, and expression of younger churches?” It was suggested by one of the participants of the Witness Section at New Delhi that the Holy Spirit always finds new structures for new situations whereby His commission may be fulfilled among a people alert to His leadership.

22 See Section V. below.

23 The first letter of John advises Christians to “test the spirits, to see whether they are of God.” “The Spirit of God,” the letter continues, acknowledges “that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh...” (1 John 4:1-2). May we not reverently proceed on this advice to say that among varieties of claims and demonstration for the Holy Spirit this might also be said: that every motion that leads to the fulfillment of the mission purpose of Christ (who has come in the flesh) through his body, the church, is of God? Does this not require a more penetrating study, by all seminarians, professors and student, of the place and leadership of the Holy Spirit in his church?

4. A fourth inference is seen in the community concept of mission. The Renaissance-born and Protestant-nourished secularism of the West intensified individualism in Christian missions during “the great century” and after. The reawakened awareness of total church-mission integrity as symbolized in the IMC-WCC merger is that the church is a community-in-mission. That is, *the church is a community of the redeemed who*, having been brought into the fellowship of Christ, thereby discover, realize, and continue that fellowship only as they *move out and through society to restore the unredeemed into the Christ-community*. In other words, the church is only truly the church in so far as it is the living fellowship in outreach.

Dr. Donald McGavran’s studies on church growth, and the church growth studies sponsored by the IMC (now by the CWME of the WCC), as well as older works by Allen, Pickett, and others, furnish resources for study in community witness.

There is much space to be explored in community mission. Rewarding studies could issue from class work perhaps compositely led by various disciplines. Classroom analysis of community life and community witness, and application to local church witness at home and abroad, is suggested. Undoubtedly the nature and pattern of Christian groupings in a secular society have become standardized impediments to actual and total community witness. Church polity and policy developed in an earlier day and planted perforce in many alien societies will need vast re-arrangement before effective community mission will take place.

It is doubtful whether community witness moving into unchristian phases of society could really be effective today in any but a well-accepted ecumenical form.

5. The merger of the IMC with the WCC and its Department of the Laity recalls to the professor of missions the place of the laity in Christian mission.

If the church is the people of God as a witnessing community (1 Peter 2:9-10), it is obvious that the place of every layman in that mission has been sadly lost and needs to be recovered.

The professor of missions may help prepare future church workers in his classes not only to understand the place of the laity in the mission of the church, but to train that laity for its apostolate.

For a long time we have been concerned about the orientation of the lay – that is non-ordained – missionary to full mission service. We have varied from requiring divinity training and anthropological orientation for missionaries all the way to sending out lay missionaries without any training in Bible and Christian beliefs, and with little cultural orientation (and there are many such serving in the field today).

We have said much, but done little, since the Second World War, to train laymen who go abroad into non-churched or sparsely churched areas of the world under business, government, defense (unfortunately), or education and service foundation auspices. Instead of such laymen capturing opportunities to witness, or to associate themselves with local church and mission, there has been a tendency for these laymen to become lost to the life of the church under the colonial atmosphere of life abroad.

We scarcely have approached the opportunity, in a new era, of preparing laymen to proceed, on their own, to live in mission situations, earning their own livelihood, as living witnesses to Christ.

We have done little, in missionary education programs at the local church level, to bring members of the congregation into actual mission participation in society.

Because “the major witness of the church is where the laity is doing its daily work,”²⁴ great concentration in mission teaching needs to be placed on lay instruction in faith and witness.²⁵

Finally, there needs to be developed among church congregations the consciousness that we are a witnessing community with a continuing responsibility. Pastor-centered, or purely pastor-led, missionary concern in the local church has often been like the seed sown by the sower among stones.

III. THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD

A third implication of the IMC-WCC merger for the professor of mission is the recognition that *there is a church around the world*, with one Lord, a common mission, an equal partnership, a mutual love.

24 *Witnesses Together*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

25 The Kulal Lumpur report suggests lay training programs for witness in industry, rural life, medical work. *Ibid.*, pp 122ff.

The World Missionary Conference in 1910 regretted the unawareness by most Christians in the West that there was indeed a church where once there had been but “mission fields.” Surely, since then professors of missions have been increasingly introducing that church around the world to their students.

“Missions” is no longer taught as a mission from the church in the West to other parts of the world, but as the mission of God through the church everywhere to the world everywhere. Professors of missions will wish to demonstrate this fact.

Today’s world will not receive any witness that is from one part of the world alone. The IMC-WCC merger is an indicator that consultation between older and “younger” churches will be set within the total concept of world mission, and that even those partnership consultations restricted to parent and daughter churches are antagonistic to the need for total mission today.

There has been increasing growth and maturity of churches in most countries of the world. The fellowship of churches in the WCC, with its direct representation of all churches, meeting on an equal footing, has made even the designations, “Older” and “Younger” Churches, appear unrealistic. The church everywhere today is a minority in a non-Christian society, with maturity and immaturity to be found in its congregations and leadership everywhere.²⁶

The professor of missions can illustrate, from World Council of Churches assemblies, former IMC assemblies, and meetings sponsored by the East Asia Christian Council, the All-Africa Christian Conference, and similar groups, the mature proposals and able leadership from many lands coming together in mission concern, in consultation, in joint enterprise.²⁷

It is noteworthy that the IMC studies in the life and growth of the younger churches – a great ally to the teaching of missions – are being expanded. Church studies in the West are being planned which will be made by churchmen from the non-West.

26 The professor of missions must be careful, however, not to exaggerate the development and maturity of the churches that have grown out of the modern missionary movement. A careful presentation of church facts is sufficient.

27 Indeed, excellent missionary study resources are to be found in the E.A.C.C papers and in those of the earlier Asian conference on the Christian home and family life, on rural life, and on areas of rapid social change.

The professor of missions can help congregations, through his students, to learn from this church around the world. His sources for the study of Christian missions today come not simply from western churchmen, but from African, Asian, and Latin American churchmen. He will want to make the resources from all these spokesmen equally available in the study of universal mission problems and needs today. Western leaders have so long been accustomed to speak to the world church with authority! There will follow a period when some non-Western leaders will speak with criticism, sometimes harsh, even bitter, against western missionary practices. Much of this is merited. Much is due to the failure by some critics to disassociate western missionaries from their resentment against western military and commercial expansion of the past, and some is due to reaction against excessive tutelage from the western church. Professors of missions in the West will do well to expose their students to these criticisms that they may not only learn from them, but also learn the response of grace and love needed in a modern world mission. There must also be the admission that the moral bankruptcy of the Western world requires a shift in the center of gravity for mission from the West.

The professor of missions will see in the IMC-WCC merger indications of new directions in mission toward human need wherever it is found regardless of geographical bias. Perhaps the most important immediate consequence of the IMC-WCC merger is the plan of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism set forth in their "Joint Action for Mission" proposal. This Division proposes surveys of the needs and opportunities confronting the church within certain geographical areas. According to this proposal, churches and missionary agencies would make the study together. Available resources from all the churches and agencies would be examined with a view to their best possible use in meeting the "needs and opportunities." The survey would be followed by consultation of the churches and mission bodies in the area in order to secure "effective redeployment of resources in that area in the light of the agreed goals."²⁸

This plan indicates next steps in mission as an act of the total church wherever it is. These joint mission actions will not be conducted by Western churches for small non-Western churches and missions. They will be conducted by local churches (hopefully, all of them)²⁹ with the assistance of foreign and world ecumenical groups as needed and called for.

28 *Joint Action for Missions*, Division of World Mission and Evangelism, Geneva, February, 1962.

29 The DWME admits that such a survey can be conducted effectively only on the basis of "repentance and reconciliation on the part of all bodies concerned." See above document.

By keeping abreast of such surveys, consultations, and actions as they take place, and communicating them to his students, the professor of missions can graphically help them leap into a consciousness of the world mission of the world church.

He can point out exchange missionary programs that are taking place and that can take place between churches in different countries. His pastors-in-preparation should be able to guide their churches both to give and to receive and to share the responsibility for witness with others at home as well as abroad among the pagan masses in the West as in the non-West. Churches need to be for this increasing pattern of inter-change in missionary personnel from one country to another.

Mission classes must face the meaning of interdependence in Christ's church. They may even search for new ways to express meaningful and joyful fellow-workmanship among the churches. The professor of missions can point to international teams already serving together in the Christian mission. He can point to the increasing number of missionaries from churches in Asia, Latin America and Africa, – and may even describe the hope of many for the day when it will be common practice to appoint missionaries to mission tasks through inter-church consultations purely on the basis of need and the ability to meet that need without other regard to national origin or income. This would necessitate the kind of resource pooling already done in a limited way by a few denominational families. It also would demand a more radical confrontation with the problems of unequal facilities, standards of living, incomes and similar problems involved in international missionary teamwork. A matter of discussion for more than half a century, it is urgent that every Christian worker become aware of these problems and that he share his concern with his fellow-churchmen.

Many professors of missions will be in a position to provide at least limited experience in international church consultation and teamwork, through visiting churchmen from abroad and foreign students in his seminary. Visitors can discuss common church problems with the classes. Students abroad and from home can participate together in mission laboratories and mission workshops in the community.

The orientation of missionary candidates for this new era can never be adequate apart from an international setting in which representatives of many nations spend a period of study, worship, and discussion together.

Christians need one another in their task of mission. The recognition is growing around the world; in the ebb of the Christian

ethos, that, in utter dependence on Christ and as members of his body, the churches need each other, can help one another, can work together around the world (1 Corinthians 12:21).

IV. MISSION AND EVANGELISM

A fourth implication of the IMC-WCC merger for the professor of missions is seen in the composition – by title, at least – of the commission that replaces the functions of the IMC: *The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism*. The constitution of the new World Council of Churches declares that one of the functions of this Commission will be “to remind the churches of the ... unfinished evangelistic task and to deepen their sense of missionary obligation.”³⁰ There is no clear evidence that the full connotation of that title is yet clear to anyone. There remains a Department of Evangelism under the Division of Studies of the WCC. In Commission discussions the word “evangelism” is used, sometimes, interchangeably with the word “missions.” At other times it is considered in its narrower sense as a stimulation to spiritual reawakening in the local congregation. When used in that sense the Commission offers the services of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism as needed.³¹

There are implications in the title, however, for the total mission and so for the teaching of mission. There is space, in this paper, to mention only two.

1. The merged IMC-WCC, in the title of its new commission, appears to recognize *the oneness of mission and evangelism*. The mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel. Evangelism within a church and mission beyond the church are inseparable. A revival of spiritual life and faith is not genuine if it does not awaken the church both to missionary interest and to missionary action in the community and out to the ends of the earth. Mission is not genuine if it is not the expression of love to all society by the “community of the Gospel.”

A professor of missions, therefore, in teaching missions cannot avoid this twofold relationship of mission and evangelism.

The professor of missions will teach the *evangelism of mission*. He will want to convey to his students an awareness that the outreach of the church is not effective if it does not stimulate growth, any more than are the hanging roots of the banyan attaining their object unless they

30 Art. VI, Sec. 3, pt. ii.

31 See Constitution of Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, V (v).

reach the ground and become rooted. This means a) to win people to Christ, and to form new congregations in Christ, is not a fully live mission unless it thereby transplants concern in the new Christian and in the new congregation to encircle with the reconciling love of Christ his neighbor, near and far; b) by the same token, educational, medical, and other types of compassionate service, although always unconditioned, are never fully mission if they do not infect some of those helped with the same Christ-driven compassion to help others.

The professor of missions will also teach the *mission of evangelism*. Missionary education in the local church is quite incomplete unless it affords, or is associated with, the experience of Christian witness, outreach of fellowship, and service by members of the local congregation.

2. *Evangelism is, in its proper function, the communication of the life of faith in Christ.* Communication requires a solidarity with those addressed, an understanding of their mental environment, and the use of an idiom they understand.

The professor of missions is concerned that his students learn to communicate the gospel whether it be as a messenger in a burgeoning city of East Africa, transmitting the life of faith in Christ in a tribal tongue to the changing needs of its uprooted citizens, or as a messenger in the American inner city speaking to the needs of its Citizens whose English vocabulary is divorced from all conception of Christian meanings. Geographical areas and social needs may differ: the communication concern is the same, and basic to mission.

A vital missionary part of *any* Christian worker's training is the ability to know what he is saying according to the mental translation of his hearers. This requires a discipline in patient, alert, sympathetic listening on his part.³²

V. THE RELATEDNESS OF MISSION TO EVERY PHASE OF CHURCH EXPRESSION

A fifth implication of the IMC-WCC merger for professors of missions is *the relatedness of mission to every expression of church life*.

The merger has related to the IMC concerns with the WCC Division of Studies, its Division of Ecumenical Action, Interchurch Aid, Refugee Service, and its Commission of the Churches on International

32 See Section VI below.

Affairs. All of these correspond to long-standing concerns of the IMC whose activities greatly overlapped, and needed coalescing, with the activities of the WCC. It is quite proper, therefore, that the WCC studies on faith and order, on the laity, and on social change would be integrally related to the Division of World Mission and Evangelism.

Is this not typical of the overlapping of the concerns taught by the professor of missions and those of all seminary disciplines? Mission, in its witnessing, teaching, and service functions, is the universal responsibility of every area of church life reaching into all society.

Every student Christian worker must be allowed to see every aspect of his training in the context of the mission of the church.

Church History includes a study of the motive, methods, approaches, reception, reaction, and environmental conditioning of church expansion. The theology of church and mission is basic to Christian faith. Throughout the message of the Bible runs the thread that develops into the Commission to proclaim the Gospel to the world. Social and practical courses are weakened if they are not taught in a world setting and a mission context. The meaning of Christian Mission is rootedly related to the meaning of a healthy mind and a whole society.

If mission inheres in every aspect of the church's life and is pertinent to every discipline in the seminary, how can this fact be implemented in the curriculum for the student preparing for Christian service in the church? There is no single answer to the question. Discussion on this matter has been going on since the work of Commission VI of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. All current discussions have benefited by O. G. Myklebust's two-volume *The Study of Missions in Theological Education*. There will not be space in this paper to analyze seriously this significant implication of the IMC-WCC merger. A few suggestions may be made:

- a) The missions professor will in his courses or in his one basic course – attempt to indicate this total relatedness. This is a frustrating task at which many professors of missions labor.
- b) The missions professor may be invited by various departments to contribute lectures in their courses, as for example, in Theology on “the theology of mission.”

c) The missions professor may be considered primarily a missions scholar on the faculty who is used as resource person in both academic courses and extracurricular programs.

d) The missions professor may teach compositely with other faculty members. Missionary and Christian Education, Church History and Missionary Expansion, Theology of Church and Mission, are only three of several possibilities.

e) The missions professor may, with colleagues in other departments (e.g., Evangelism, Social Ethics, Social Group Work), discuss, and work out laboratory programs, using community contacts.

f) A comprehensive seminar may be planned for the middle or final seminary year. This seminar should seek to bring all the disciplines together in the context of missions. It could be taught compositely.

Whatever his teaching program may be, a professor of missions will not want to miss the resources of the various agencies of the new World Council of Churches, for these sum up, and represent, much of the thought and activity of the Christian mission around the world. The IMC-WCC merged in part to coalesce their overlapping functions. Such overlapping, however, is also increasing among the various boards or agencies within denominations. Agencies of the denomination in evangelism, in education, in social concerns, are taking in a worldview that overlaps or cooperates with church mission agencies. All of these, as well as other world church agencies, like the YMCA and Bible societies, provide resources for the professor of missions in his teaching today.

VI. MISSIONS AND HUMAN SOLIDARITY

The sixth implication of the IMC-WCC merger for professors of missions is the urgency *to communicate to man the Christian message* so that he understands its *relevance to his total life-situation*.

At New Delhi the report of the Section on Witness said: "We call upon our churches to demonstrate in deed and not in word only, a

new solidarity with all men of every nation, class, color and faith, without distinction.”³³

There was painful awareness at the Third Assembly that the Christian message seems irrelevant to millions caught in the pressures of social change. Professors of missions can transmit this concern in the classroom to their students of missions.

It can be said then that the teaching of mission calls for *the reassertion of human solidarity in Christ*. The barriers, within the church, between nation and nation, race and race, class and class, as well as between the church and outside society, between the Christian and the non-Christian, minimize in a devastating way the effectiveness of Christian mission. It was, indeed, its division-shattering solidarity with men which was one of the great appeals of the early church. Said the conference at New Delhi, “We have lost the sense of urgency in witness because we have tried to escape from the solidarity Christ has established with our neighbor and our brother of every class and color, creed, and tongue. In penitence, we have sought the Spirit to lead us again into the truth that is Jesus Christ. We have tried to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”³⁴

The teaching of mission calls for *the recognition of rapid social change*. If the gospel message is universal, then its message must be adjusted to speak to man where he is, and not where he might have been yesterday. It must be recognized that the cultural environment of the West in which the modern missionary movement matured and organized itself is now in dissolution. Any attempt by “missions,” in the name of Christ and the church, to preserve the cultural milieu, and the international and interracial context in which the Christian mission grew in the great century is foredoomed. The church is not “sent” into the world to reconcile it to “Westernism,” to capitalism, to traditional Protestantism, or to the twentieth century, but to God in Christ. The world, pled the Asian Christians at Kuala Lumpur,³⁵ must see the witness of a universal church, not of a Western church.

The professor of missions will want his students to think through the relevance of the Christian message in turbulent society. Even the anthropological orientation given to mission candidates must be guarded

33 Section Paper 25, Section on Witness, Third Assembly of the WCC, New Delhi, p. 2. Italics mine.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

35 *Witnesses Together*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49; 58.

against a tendency to provincialism. It too often assumes a static pre-western society abroad on the one hand and a rather static westernism on the other. If the “non-western world” is impatient with the Christian’s failure to understand and appreciate the culture of its past, it is also impatient with the past. While we seek to demythologize the Christian message from its western context, we must be aware of its remythologization in its new environment.

The world must see the ambassadors of Christ working together – not in competition – to meet man’s needs where he is – not where the institution was built some time ago. The professor of missions and the Christian workers who go from his classes need not feel impelled to direct Christian attention, money, and personnel into the cavernous maws of missionary institutions established as outposts of mercy by a denominational empire. Attention rather should be directed to the flux of social change in terms of man’s need from ever-shifting contexts. Modern mission teaching must prepare the church for alert, commando teams for service and witness. It must not be taught in terms of great institutions. The institutional investment of the days of Western missionary expansion must be considered readily expendable.³⁶

The ambassadors of Christ must be taught to speak words that men in the storm can quickly understand and apply.

The world must be conscious of the ambassadors of Christ living alongside of them in a divine love that reaches their loneliness.

The teaching of mission needs to echo the call to the *apostleship of every believer in his daily place of work.*

Instead of an organization man representing one organization for mission “back home,” the ambassador of Christ must be prepared to infiltrate society, to be a colonist of heaven, accepting citizenship with his comrades on earth that he might be the means for winning them into the universal community of God’s love in Christ.

Hence, as the professor of missions teaches Christian mission, he is conscious that each of his students, as a Christian, must thereby be a missionary. And as a missionary each must learn to enter into the common experiences of man. The church has become an insulated refuge from society. It was never intended to be such nor can it be, if it is truly the body of Christ. Like him who had no place to lay his head, the church

36 See World Council of Churches Division of Studies BULLETIN, VII, 2, p. 16.

must mingle with, live with, communicate daily with “publican and sinner,” having the living presence of the Father as its sanctuary.

The teaching of missions needs to help students explore possibilities for a more vivid, immediate, communication with man in society. The professor of missions will want each student to learn sympathetically the religious, social, ideological and total cultural environment of the people he serves. Thus can he better understand their translation of his message. He will want each to associate with, and listen to, those to whom he ministers until he understands their vocabulary, their framework of reference, their emotional and thought life.

Ours is a universal message, speaking to universal need regardless of, man-made boundaries. Ours is an eternal message that is therefore relevant to man in every time.

Ours is a message to everyman because it is God’s message to all men.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental significance for professors of missions in the IMC-WCC merger is the love of Christ which constrained it (2 Corinthians 5:14). The IMC-WCC merger has symbolized what the church really is. It is God’s bringing us together in love in order to send us out in love in order to bring all mankind together in Him who is love. It is the centripetal and centrifugal action of love: instant, continuous, and inter-acting.

“And over all these put on love which completes them and fastens them all together,” wrote Paul (Colossians 3:14; Goodspeed). “And the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which also you are called in one body,” (Colossians 3:15).

Whether organized, or unorganized, His love is the foundation of Christian unity in mission, the cohesion of effective service in mission. It is itself the witness in our mission.

It is His love which is the uniting content of mission, which integrates the life of the church in mission, which is the cause of that church around the world with its common mission to everyone who knows not Christ’s love; which is, then, the evangel of mission, the very expression of Christian life, the only communication that breaks down the barriers between man and man.

It is this love of Christ that we, above all, would teach. For it is His love that compels our mission; it is His love which is our mission; and it is His love which fulfills the purpose of our mission: the community of His love.

There is one Christ who gives one commission to all. Our commitment to him, if true, will be compelled by his love which can, by his very nature, create but one community, one *koinonia*.

To teach missions is to teach this love, to inspire response to it, to lead in prayer for it. To teach missions is to transmit to our students the holy emprise that moved the men and women at Pentecost and the men and women at New Delhi, with whom we can declare:

“We confess Jesus Christ, Saviour of men and the light of the world;

Together we accept this command;

We commit ourselves anew to bear witness to him among men;

We offer ourselves to serve all men in love, that love which he alone imparts;

We accept afresh our calling to make visible our unity in him; We pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit for our task.”³⁷



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37 From the closing service, Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, December 5, 1961.