

## The Theology of the World Apostolate

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What is the *theology of the world apostolate*? This term is now making headway in Protestant circles but, so far as I am aware, there is no consensus as to just what it means. Thus at the very outset we are confronted with a terminological difficulty, viz., to come up with a working definition of our subject. It occurs to me that we are not talking about a limited or well-defined discipline, but about an area of theological enquiry that can be construed to include almost any and every activity of the Church. Like the blind men in the Hindu tale, we can take hold of the elephant's leg, trunk, or ear, and in each case encounter something substantial. Where do we want to begin?

Let me suggest a few theological sub-headings which might easily be accommodated under a "theology of the world apostolate."

### SOME INTERPRETATIONS OF WORLD APOSTOLATE

There is the *theology of mission*, with which we might well include the theology of the modern missionary enterprise. Since 1950 the theology of mission has blossomed as a self-respecting discipline in its own right. The Willingen (1952) meeting of the International Missionary Council stimulated a host of books and articles on a wide range of subjects dealing with the nature, basis, and goals of the Christian mission. Johannes Blauw's *The Missionary Nature of the Church* summarizes the results of Biblical exegesis relating to mission over the past thirty years. The theology of the missionary enterprise has been approached somewhat more empirically with respect to the validity of its motivation, methods, and concepts. Johannes van den Berg's *Constrained by Jesus' Love* is a good example of

an attempt to analyze British missionary motivation during its formative period from a theological viewpoint. These are only isolated illustrations.

Surely the *theology of the Church*, with its calling to be the instrument of God's salvation to all peoples, must also be considered. Bishop Stephen Neill has forcefully argued that the theology of the Church, properly understood, always includes the missionary dimension and makes a separate theology of mission superfluous. In a day when world mission has become, technically at least, the task of the total Church, and when the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council have ceased to exist as separate entities, it seems quite consistent to regard the theology of the world apostolate as an aspect of ecclesiology. It has a most intimate relationship to the doctrine and work of the Church.

Others will want to develop this subject along the lines of a *theology of the laity*, i.e., an attempt to understand the calling of the faithful men and women who form the Body of Christ and who represent the Church in the world. The pioneering work of Fr. Yves Congar, Hendrik Kraemer, and the W.C.C. Department of the Laity has had a profoundly missionary orientation. Talk about the "missionary structure of the local congregation," and of the life of the *ekklesia* as alternating between the poles of gathering and scattering, aims at the recovery of the lay apostolate. As with the theology of mission, this is closely bound up with an understanding of the Church's very calling and purpose in the world.

Again, some will find in our subject a mandate to develop a theology dealing with the Church's apostolic functions: proclamation (*kerygma*), teaching (*didache*), witness (*martyria*), service (*diakonia*), worship (*latreia*), and so on. This list could be extended to include such early apostolic phenomena as healing, exorcism, and speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*). The sacraments would certainly also be included. What is the missionary significance of these functions? How shall they be employed in an apostolic manner? A well-developed theology of the world apostolate could not exclude consideration of such matters.

Since the nineteenth century there has grown up an apologetic branch of theology and ethics that deals with the theological critique of history, culture, society, religions, science and secular life. In academic circles and in the evangelical academy movement, the proclamation of the gospel is held to be meaningful only as the secular spheres are penetrated by insights from the Word of God. This type of analysis is not a substitute for the proclamation of the gospel but it can be a *preparation evangelica*. In the area of culture critique, the work of Paul Tillich has been enormously

significant. Max Warren, Lesslie Newbigin, and the late Walter Freytag have frequently addressed themselves to the problem of discovering the theological significance of western imperialism, national revolutions, technological change, urbanization, industrialization, the welfare state, and the like. A corps of specialists is also at work on the theological reinterpretation of the Christian task vis-à-vis non-Christian religions. The missionary advance of the Church is markedly aided by this type of theological reflection.

Finally, there is a very obvious relationship between the theology of the world apostolate and the *theology of oikoumene*, i.e., the movement for Christian unity. Apostolicity and ecumenicity are correlative terms not merely in the creedal sense (“one holy catholic and apostolic church”), but also in the sense that the continuing apostolate lays the basis for an ecumenical church. Such a theology must quite definitely come to terms with the causes of separation and disunity, as reflected in the proceedings of the Earth and Order Movement. But it must be equally concerned with the movement for Christian unity, which begins with comity and cooperation, passes through the stage of conciliarism and federation, and has now reached the point of organic church union in some Asian churches. Because “the obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world, and the obligation to draw all Christ’s people together both rest upon Christ’s whole work, and are indissolubly connected,”<sup>1</sup> mission and unity may not be separated theologically. Both are essential to the being of the Church and its function as the Body of Christ.

## COMPREHENSIVENESS OF EXPRESSION

I have no doubt that this list could be prolonged. Each of the above headings represents in itself a fruitful area for intensive theological research. Yet to view any one of these fields as an autonomous subject would be to sacrifice inner coherence and relevance to the total task. Let me illustrate this point. We need a working theology for the modern missionary enterprise, but we can no longer develop such a theology in isolation. The areas of overlap with such problems as history, culture, religion, unity, preclude a narrow theological solution. The theology of the world apostolate encompasses all that the Church is doing in the world – the whole Church in the whole inhabited world. It goes still further: it expresses the sense of what *God* is doing in *His* world (*Missio Dei*). The primary sense of “world apostolate” must always be God’s *sending* of His

1 W.C.C. Central Committee Statement on the Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity, Rolle, 1951.

only begotten Son into the *world*. The Church's apostolate is a reflex of that first act of sending. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

A corollary of this point, viz., that the theology of the world apostolate deals with the widest and most inclusive ramifications of *Missio Dei*, is that scientific precision demands a narrowing and a specialization of the subject matter to be covered. The subject is too broad for scholarly analysis; it defies academic manageability. This may be indicative of the pioneer character of the discussion, and of our naiveté and inexperience in dealing with it. We see only the surface of the subject beckoning us to make inquiry; underneath links an enormous iceberg of undreamed of scale and complexity. Anyone working with the term "missiology" knows that the pursuit of this subject leads, like the shoots of the banyan tree, to the farthest reaches of cultural anthropology, linguistics, religious phenomenology, world history and political economy, not to mention the traditional theological disciplines. Because the Triune God has revealed Himself to us not only as Creator, but also as Incarnate Redeemer and Sanctifier, there simply is no way of segregating areas of sacred and secular knowledge. But as students with a limited grasp of relationships, we have no choice but to divide the total spectrum of problems into a few distinct areas. These we must seek to define, grasp, and subject to special analysis.

Since this paper has to move in some direction, I have arbitrarily chosen to limit my presentation to a consideration of one aspect of the theology of the modern missionary enterprise, viz., its understanding of the significance of the term "apostolic," and the bearing of this understanding upon missionary activity. I shall make reference to the apostolic (or non-apostolic) character of missionary motivation, means, and methods. The period under primary consideration is that from the middle of the seventeenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. But I think it necessary to establish some continuity between this period and what precedes and follows it. In closing, I hope to draw some conclusions for the study of the theology of world apostolate in our own day.

## MEANING OF APOSTOLATE

Every theological inquiry needs a criterion, and we are here concerned with the normative understanding of the terms apostle, apostolic, and apostolate. Heirs of the Reformation, at least, are bound to draw this criterion from the Holy Scriptures. I propose to make use of the results of New Testament research into the meaning of *apostolos*, particularly as set forth in the article by K. H. Rengstorf in Kittel's

theological wordbook.<sup>2</sup> Passing over the secular and Jewish antecedents of the New Testament term, we note that the Hebrew *shaliab* generally refers to an “authorized agent,” whether of God or of the local synagogue, and that its usage is highly technical. We note also that there is considerable variation even within the New Testament writers’ use of the term. Can we draw up a composite picture of Christian apostleship as it emerges from the scriptures?

The New Testament clearly sets forth the qualifications of apostleship. The original twelve apostles are those who were called by Jesus to be disciples and to receive power and authority, and then sent out to preach the good news of the kingdom, to cast out evil spirits, to heal in Jesus’ name, and to report back to the Lord (Mark 3:13-14; Matt. 10:1, 5; Luke 9:1-2). In every case an apostle is one who has been with Jesus as a disciple, though not every disciple is an apostle. The disciple becomes an apostle when Jesus makes him a fellow-worker in the kingdom and authorizes him to speak and to act in Jesus’ name. He becomes a “sent-out-one,” and his words and acts carry the full authority of the sender (Matt. 10:40; Luke 10:16), and ultimately of God Himself. The apostle has no authority of his own, only what is delegated to him by his Lord. This first, probationary apostleship has the character of a temporary commission, limited in time and place, and concerned with the business at hand. It is not an office, nor does it convey a special eminence. In dignity and rejection are definitely expected as a result of it. The sending out of the seventy (Luke 10:2) suggests that even this probationary apostleship was not limited to the original twelve apostles.

After the resurrection the apostolic conception is renewed in final form. A new qualification is added, viz., that an apostle should have been a witness Of the Lord’s resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). The post-resurrection apostleship includes preaching, teaching, and healing, but it is now primarily a witness to the presence of the Living Lord and the power of the new age. Unlike the pre-resurrection commission, the new commission has an unlimited character and remains valid from Pentecost to *Parousia* (“to the close of the age”) and from Jerusalem and Samaria to the ends of the world (“to the uttermost parts of the earth”). The well-known Matthean text underscores the universality of the new commission. The Risen lord receives from the Father all authority (*pasa exousia*) in heaven and on earth. He sends his apostles to all nations (*panta ta ethne*) to make disciples, to

2 *Apostleship*, by Karl H. Rengstorf, (In the series of Bible Key Words from Gerhard Kittel’s *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*.) Tr. By J. R. Coates. London: A. & C. Black, 1952.

baptize, and to teach his ordinances. He promises his presence for all days (*pasas tas hemeras*) to the end of the age.

Within the wider framework of New Testament teaching, there are special emphases found in Luke-Acts, the fourth gospel, and the Pauline corpus. Luke-Acts stresses that the missionary activity of the Church begins with Pentecost. Witness is an activity of the Holy Spirit, the renewed apostolate being inconceivable apart from the Pentecost event. The Holy Spirit, whom Luke represents as the presence of the Exalted Christ after his ascension to the Father, establishes the Church and guides its missionary outreach. He initiates new advances and breaks down all opposition. He also powerfully demonstrates that the gospel of grace and salvation is for gentiles as well as Jews. The fourth gospel emphasizes that the Risen Christ unites the apostles with himself and gives them power for their work. He himself as the Paraclete is their strength and bears the burdens of the office. They go nowhere that he does not accompany them. In John the reception of the Spirit and the giving of the commission are simultaneous (20:21-23), but the idea of authorization is subordinate to the thought of mutual indwelling, consolation, and encouragement (chapters 14-17).

These emphases are not alien to St. Paul, but the latter's concept of apostleship is primarily determined by his encounter with the Risen Christ on the Damascus road. He is an apostle "not from men nor through man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father," (Gal. 1:1). Paul is not one of the original twelve disciples, but his apostleship is not for that reason inferior. Like the prophet Jeremiah, he surrenders himself completely to the commission laid upon him. No other apostle so clearly expresses the compulsion to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16). He boasted that he had preached the gospel more widely than any apostle before him, and done so where no apostle had set foot before (Rom. 15:19-20). The substance of his message is Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). In its visible form, Paul's apostleship is a representation of the death of Christ in his own body (2 Cor. 4:10) through apostolic obedience and suffering. Paul gladly endures hardships because his suffering is a source of life in Christ for others. The apostolic calling demands utmost discipline (1 Cor. 9:24ff) and requires conformity to the mind and spirit of Christ (Phil. 2:5ff and 2 Cor. 6:1-10). The idea of servanthood dominates the Pauline apostolate. Yet when all has been said about Paul's preoccupation with compulsion and disciplines, this apostle is no stranger to the joy of fellowship with his Saviour (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:8ff). The Christ who is preached as crucified and risen is also "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). It is Christ who enables Paul to fulfill his calling (Phil. 4:13).

## FEATURES OF NEW TESTAMENT APOSTLESHIP

These are the salient features of apostleship in the New Testament. They represent a composite of many elements. Is it possible to lift out and identify the central elements in this description? Let us try.

1. There is the note of commission, authority, and responsibility to fulfill the will of the Lord, as reflected in all the gospels.
2. There is the transcendent universalism of Matthew 28 and Acts 1 which declares the apostolic commission valid for all times and places and issues in the sending out of apostles to the ends of the earth.
3. There is the Lucan emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the initiator of missionary witness and the power that transcends religious, political, and cultural barriers.
4. There is the Johannine Christological interpretation of the task, according to which Christ himself works through the disciples and bears their burdens.
5. There is the Pauline note of evangelical compulsion, conformity to Christ, personal suffering, and ascetic discipline as an inescapable part of the calling.

It should be obvious that none of these features is peculiar to a single New Testament source. On the contrary, the virtual unanimity of our sources on these points is a strong positive indication. The differences lie mainly in accent and emphasis. Because of the greater richness of the Pauline source, that apostle's description of the apostolic vocation has received preponderant attention.

There remains an important problem which Biblical theology leaves for the most part unresolved: the relationship between New Testament apostleship and divine election. What has the calling and sending out of the apostles to do with God's creation of a people of His own possession to show forth His praises in the world? Abraham is given the promise that in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. 12:3). From Deuteronomy to First Peter (2:9-10), the calling of Israel to be a "holy nation" is protected against all secular and ethnocentric distortions and steadily directed toward the end of missionary witness. Israel's election is for service, not for self-glorification; Jesus constantly reminds the disciples of this (Luke 22:24ff). The vocation of priests, prophets, and apostles can

never be understood apart from the vocation of the total *laos theou*. Indeed, Israel is called a “kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6; cf. I Pet. 2:9). In the last days prophecy would become a general gift (Joel 2:28; cf. Acts 2:17). Are we right in suggesting that the pouring out of the Spirit was intended to make of Israel an *apostolic people*, not merely a people sending out apostles? As the Old Testament centripetal emphasis on the nations of the earth converging on Israel, who is the Lord’s witness, shades over into the New Testament emphasis on sending and going out into the world of nations, the question of election merges imperceptibly into that of apostleship. One could almost say that in the New Testament, divine election and apostolic calling have become one.

We are not justified in speaking of a “lay apostolate” today unless the apostolic commission somehow devolves upon the total people of God in the world, and does not merely bind select individuals who are set apart and sent forth to continue the Lord’s work. This question should rank high on the agenda of problems for Protestant-Catholic dialogue, since Catholics have held that apostolic authority is passed on to the Church only through the personal successors of the apostles. Protestants have generally believed that the Lord of the Church commits such authority directly to his people, who in turn choose their own representatives to exercise it. In the one case this authority has the character of an indelible office, while in the other it becomes a function of the corporate body. In practice, if not in theory, however, Protestant clericalism remains a powerful deterrent to the development of a lay apostolate.

Apostolic authority is for mission, and election favor is for service. The two elements in the apostolic commission cannot be separated. The Lord grants apostolic authority, which is to be used to extend the kingdom of God to all times, and places. All authority belongs to Jesus Christ who entrusts it to the apostles until his coming again. As stewards of divine mysteries, the apostles – and by implication, the Church – can claim no monopoly over such authority. In the Kingdom of God authority does not confer human privilege or social prerogatives, as in the secular world (Luke 22:24ff); its true expression is servanthood. The apostles perhaps anticipated high cabinet appointments in the government of a restored Israel (Acts 1:6), but Jesus tells them that the baptism of the Spirit is given for witness. When apostolic authority is converted into a power to rule in the Church, it frustrates the dynamic movement of the Holy Spirit and the spontaneous expansion of the kingdom.

If there is an inherent relation between form and function, as I have argued, what bearing has it upon the present discussion? It seems

to me that we must begin by trying to recover the primitive sense of “apostolic” from centuries of usage during which its dynamic, missionary character has been pre-empted, largely by static, formalistic concepts. For both Catholics and Protestants, “apostolic” has come to be identified with ecclesiastical, dogmatic, or scriptural authority. The apostles were held to have bequeathed to the Church a fixed deposit of tradition, which was to be faithfully conserved, and transmitted to succeeding generations. It was soon forgotten that the apostles were not domaticians or canon law experts but world evangelists. Thus Paul, the gentile missionary *par excellence*, came to be revered by Protestants primarily as an inspired theologian. Yet his only serious boast was that he had preached the gospel to the fullest extent of his ability, and done it at no charge to his hearers.

During the second and third centuries after Christ the Church took steps to fix the canons of church order (episcopacy), faith (Apostle’s Creed) and scripture (New Testament). In Catholic tradition the bishops came to be regarded as successors of the apostles, and their presence was formally determinative of the Church (“*Ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia*”). Apostolic authority was similarly claimed for ancient creedal statements and for each of the New Testament books. Except for the matter of apostolic succession, Protestants have widely acquiesced in this attribution of apostolic authority to the dogma and tradition of the first three centuries.

## DEPARTURE FROM PRIMITIVE APOSTOLICITY

The net result of this development is that apostolicity has received a wholly static connotation, associated with the conservation of a primitive tradition and its teaching authority, with pastoral oversight and discipline, with ordination, and with the avoidance of schisms. Continuity and tradition came to overshadow missionary expansion. Ironically, mission and apostolicity were almost totally divorced. There were missionary bishops, to be sure, but they were the exception rather than the rule. Missionaries were usually recruited from the missionary orders and societies. Apostolicity came to have a purely intra-ecclesiastical meaning, transforming the authority that had been given for the discipline of all nations into hierarchical authority within the Church. From the time of Constantine, apostolic authority provided the ecclesiastical pillar for the formation of *corpus christianum*, that amalgam of church, state, society, and culture that has characterized the West until recent centuries.

Medieval missionary methods reflect the loss of the primitive concept of apostolicity. Missions are the extension of the pattern of *corpus christianum* into pagan areas. The prevailing method is to incorporate

non-Christian peoples into the framework of Christendom through mass baptisms and the creation of an ecclesiastical establishment. The external pressures, political coercion, and even military violence used to bring about conversions represent an extreme departure from the spiritual methods of the apostles. With the abandonment of the concept of a believer's Church, infants are routinely baptized and whole peoples are sided to the Church. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration becomes the theological mainstay of the medieval Catholic church and of Protestant folk churches that are heirs to this tradition. The apostolic teaching of salvation by grace through faith recedes into the background. Heavy reliance upon secular power to pave the way for Christianization is also a departure from the practice of the apostles, who knew only an oppressed minority Church.

A genuinely apostolic vestige is seen, however, in the vocation of the missionary monks, friars, and priests who propagated the gospel during this period. They practiced ascetic rigor and were frequently subjected to calumny, abuse, and even death. In many cases they protested against the unspiritual methods employed by Christian rulers to bring about conversions, though usually without avail. Monastic communities practiced a form of primitive communism. The mendicant orders (Franciscans and Dominicans) produced many missionaries who lived in strictest poverty. The Society of Jesus with its Ignatian discipline overcame the logistical problem of placing highly trained and dedicated missionaries in the right places at the right time. We should be immensely grateful for the perpetuation of this ascetic element of the apostolic vocation during an otherwise unapostolic period. Medieval missions are a paradoxical blending of apostolic and non-apostolic qualities.

When the outward Christianization of Europe had largely come to a standstill, the age of exploration, technology, commerce, and colonization suddenly released a powerful new dynamic of missionary expansion. This did not, however, betoken a return to apostolic missionary methods, but rather a perpetuation of medieval practices. Catholic nations now came into contact with the "new world" – the coast of Africa, India, the East Indies, and the Orient. As the Vicar of Christ, the pope claimed total authority for the discharge of the apostolic commission to make disciples of all nations. In practice, however, he delegated this authority to Catholic monarchs who were virtual heads of national churches. A series of papal bulls issued between 1454 and 1493 recognized the territorial claims of Portugal and Spain to commercial and colonizing rights in the new territories. In return for this recognition, the monarchs were to propagate the faith among their new subjects by securing priests and setting up bishoprics. The missionary agencies were the mendicant orders of the

thirteenth century and the newly created Society of Jesus. The monarchs had what amounted to dictatorial control over ecclesiastical appointments. Papal responsibility and control were virtually non-existent. The Portuguese and Spanish monarchs acted with Christian compassion and concern, but they were far removed from the overseas colonies and occupied with many other affairs. They were forced to delegate much authority to local officials whose avarice and incompetence frustrated the good intentions of the rulers.

The overall framework was that of *corpus christianum* which knows only one missionary approach, viz., assimilation to the politically and culturally dominant Christian society. Where political and commercial considerations dominated, apostolic methods scarcely had a chance. An unenlightened ethnocentrism characterizes much of the missionary activity of this period. New converts in Goa and throughout India earned the epithet of “Portuguese”; they were registered as having given up Indian ways. After token resistance by indigenous peoples in the New World, the process of assimilation through syncretizing the old with the new went on. The Church in the New World was deficient in the use of the sacraments and markedly unsuccessful in producing a corps of native clergy. Its orientation to the old world, together with the retention of a colonial mentality, contributed to this. The Word of God was generally unavailable in the language of the people. The central rites of the Church were conducted in a foreign tongue. It was sufficient if the faithful could recite the Paternoster, the commandments, and the words of the creed. Large numerical gains were registered wherever the Church had the support of a Christian *imperium*. In Japan and China, where the Church was not allied with a dominant political power, the mission suffered severe setbacks and underwent periods of persecution and exclusion.

Protestant theologians such as the historian and hymn writer, Philipp Nicolai, were quick to assail these methods as pseudo-apostolic, barbarous, and superficial. On the basis of his reading of Catholic sources, Nicolai in his *De Regno Christi* (1598) accuses the Spanish of decimating the Indian population in the New World and introducing the worst methods of the inquisition.<sup>3</sup> Protestants were in part salving their own consciences, for Catholics had reproached them with a singular indolence in fulfilling the Lord’s apostolic command. But Catholics were also aware that a good offense is the best defense. They challenged Protestants to vindicate their own claims to apostolicity in the light of the very impressive

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3 Cf. Willy Hess, *Das Missions-denken bei Philip Nicolai* (Hamburg, 1962), pp. 124ff.

Catholic missionary effort. Catholic missions, it was held, were the best evidence for Rome's claim to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. The famous controversialist, Robert Bellarmine, made missionary activity throughout the earth one of the eighteen marks of the true Church in respect to which Protestants were deficient.

Heretics are never said to have converted either pagans or Jews to the faith, but only to have perverted Christians. But in this one-century the Catholics have converted many thousands of heathens in the new world. Every year a certain number of Jews are converted and baptized at Rome by Catholics who adhere in loyalty to the Bishop of Rome; and there are also some Turks who are converted by the Catholics both at Rome and elsewhere. The Lutherans compare themselves to the apostles and the evangelists; yet though they have among them a very large number of Jews, and in Poland and Hungary have the Turks as their near neighbors, they have hardly converted even so much as a handful.<sup>4</sup>

This deficiency in missionary activity led also to the further Catholic charge that since Protestants were deficient in amplitude or geographical extensiveness, they could not vindicate their claim to being the true catholic Church. Thereafter Protestant writers were quick to cite every evidence of Protestant missionary activity among Jews, Lapplanders, Eskimos, American Indians, and others. From this time forward intensity and scope of missionary activity became one of the major polemical issues between Catholic and Protestant theologians.

A second line of Catholic defense was tacitly to acknowledge that there had been abuses and deviations from apostolic purity in sixteenth century Catholic missions, but to attribute any weaknesses to the fact that the effort had been directed by kings and civil administrators, rather than by the papacy. The true apostolic intention of the papacy, it is claimed, was frustrated thereby. That there is considerable truth in this statement is shown by the fact that when Pope Gregory XV took action to place Roman Catholic missions under central direction by creating the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith at Rome in 1622, things began to change for the better. The policy of the Propaganda was to secure detailed reports about the state of affairs, to free missions from the stranglehold of Portuguese and Spanish political control, to create new

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 221.

bishoprics through the appointment of vicars apostolic, and to work for the development of an indigenous clergy. The Christian religion was to be freed from its association with colonialism and foreign culture, as an instruction sent out by the Propaganda in 1659 shows:

Do not regard it as your task, and do not bring any pressure on the peoples, to change their manners, customs, and uses, unless they are evidently contrary to religion and sound morals. What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy, or other European country to China? Do not introduce all that to them, but only the faith, which does not despise or destroy the manners and customs of any people, always supposing that they are not evil, but rather wishes to see them preserved unharmed ... Do your utmost to adapt yourselves to them.<sup>5</sup>

The logical development of the policy of cultural accommodation was later checked in the celebrated cases involving the Jesuits, de Nobili and Ricci. So far as personnel was concerned, however, the policy of a native clergy under an indigenous hierarchy was firmly fixed. The Paris Foreign Mission Society (1663) worked steadily to improve the training of indigenous clergy. It is presumed that the decline of Spain and Portugal and the ascendancy of Protestant colonial powers may have contributed to the revision of Catholic missionary policy. To what extent sensitivity to Protestant charges that Catholic missions were “pseudo-apostolic” had any effect, it is difficult to say.

## PROTESTANT VIEW OF APOSTOLICITY

Through the period of the Protestant Reformation the Roman Catholic Church, while clarifying its dogma through the Council of Trent, developing its tactical forces through the Counter-Reformation, and refining its missionary methods through the Propaganda, maintained its claim to apostolicity unimpaired. This claim was secured by the supremacy of the Roman see and the succession of bishops, and expressed through the sacramental system and the Church’s hierarchical character. Essentially it rested, as we have seen, upon possession of the authority entrusted to the apostles by Jesus Christ. While this authority included responsibility for propagating the gospel through overseas missions in colonial territories, it was most closely connected with the preservation and extension of the Church as a divine institution. Thus apostolic authority was only

5 Quoted in Neill, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

marginally related to missions. What was the corresponding attitude within Protestantism? Were the reformers more successful than their Catholic contemporaries in recovering the New Testament sense of apostolicity?

This question cannot be answered unequivocally. The reformers repudiated papal supremacy, and with it the claim to a monopoly of apostolic authority. They countered with their own claim to apostolicity and catholicity, based on conformity to the witness of the prophets and apostles as recorded in the scriptures, rather than on the continuity of an outward institution (bishops, priesthood, and sacraments). While Catholics saw apostolic authority as churchly authority under the supreme rule of the pope, Protestants saw it almost exclusively in terms of apostolic authenticity and fidelity of proclamation. Gospel preaching, however, was understood within a Christendom orientation. The meaning of apostolicity seems to have been exhausted by the restoration of evangelical preaching to Christian congregations, and the administration of the two sacraments according to scriptural ordinance. Apostolicity was teaching authority in accordance with scriptural norms. It was not the active function of disciplining the nations or witnessing to the ends of the earth and the end of time. However much Protestants may have disagreed with Roman Catholics, they were at one in seeing apostolicity as a static authority within Christendom.

This Protestant view of apostolic authority as primarily scriptural conformity was reinforced by the prevailing Lutheran and Calvinist belief that apostolic authority in the missionary sense had expired with the original apostles, and that they had left no successors. This was obviously an effort to undermine the Roman claim that the pope and the Roman hierarchy were the true successors of St. Peter and the apostles, but it also rested on an exegetical foundation, viz., that those who came after the apostles did not possess supernatural gifts. Protestants were further driven to making extravagant and unhistorical statements to the effect that the Great Commission had already been fulfilled by the apostles in principle, if not in literal fact; and if not by the apostles themselves, at least by the train of apostolic witnesses that succeeded them. The apostolate in the primitive sense of unrestricted authority to preach the gospel anywhere had ceased to exist. The only dissenting Protestant voice was that of Hadrian Saravia, a Reformed-Anglican who used the missionary authority of the apostles as an argument in defense of episcopacy.<sup>6</sup> Protestants generally held that the apostolate survived only in the strictly limited functions of preaching,

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6 Cf. G. Kawerau, "Hadrian Saravia un seine Gedanken uber Mission," *A.M.Z.*, 26 (1899), 333-343. THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

teaching, and administering the sacraments in a Christian congregation. This authority was administered by church governments set up on a national, territorial, or town basis, and entrusted to pastors and local church councils. Lutherans and Calvinists set up strict controls, licensing preaching and limiting it to prescribed ecclesiastical districts and parishes. They unhesitatingly banned the charismatic ministries of wandering prophets and apostles. Thus while approving “apostolic doctrine,” the reformers developed an attitude of aloofness and reserve toward “apostolic activity,” which they associated mainly with the Jesuits and the Anabaptists.

Warneck and his followers have been mistaken, however, in implying that we miss even the idea of mission in the thought of the reformers.<sup>7</sup> Good Biblical scholars that they were, the reformers’ sermons and writings are replete with references to gospel universalism and the vocation of the gentiles. They understood very well that it was God’s purpose to call all nations to obedience. But for them the real missionary agent was the Word of God, the *verbum externum* of Luther, which possessed its own efficacy and would accomplish God’s will. God’s Word was not limited by ecclesiastical or political obstacles and would make its way among Catholics, Greeks, Copts, Turks, and pagans. So great was the reformers’ confidence in the efficacy of the Word alone that the question of human agency does not seem to have been important for them. At times the Word would go forth from the mouth of preachers (including Jesuit missionaries), while at other times it would be carried by merchants or captive soldiers into the strongholds of unbelief. The human agency was incidental, for God Himself would bring about the salvation of the gentiles. A strong doctrine of divine transcendence, coupled with a belief in the omnipotence of the Word, made a special missionary agency unnecessary. The Calvinist doctrine of predestination reinforced this tendency, making the salvation of the heathen a purely divine possibility. Furthermore, when Protestants abolished monastic orders, they eliminated the only existing missionary agency known at that time.

There was, of course, some practical missionary activity on the part of Protestant powers during this period, but it followed the pattern of *corpus christianum* and was virtually indistinguishable from Catholic missions during the same period. Protestant nations did not at first participate in the movement of colonial expansion, but when they began to compete for overseas possessions, they usually accepted responsibility for propagating the gospel among their pagan subjects overseas as well

7 Gustav Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions*. Tr. By George Robson (3<sup>rd</sup> Eng. Ed., New York: Revell, 1906), p. 9.

as among their own colonial people. This was in accordance with the principle of *cuius region, eius religio* as laid down by the religious peace of Westphalia in 1648. Thus the Dutch introduced the Christian religion to their subjects in Ceylon and the East Indies, the Danes did the same in Greenland, the West Indies, and their African and Indian colonies, and the Swedes attempted to convert the Lapps and the Delaware Indians. These overseas colonies were considered geographical extensions of the homeland, thus obligating the church government to provide at least a nominal ministry. Missionary activity also went on among the Turks and Jews residing in the German principalities. All such activity fell within the colonial understanding of ecclesiastical responsibility, and was designed to maintain the unity and integrity of the *corpus christianum*. It had little, if anything, to do with Matthew 28:19. Missionary work under colonial auspices does not seem to have been propagated with much zeal, knowledge, or concern for the welfare of subject peoples. This was not to be the case until after the movement of pietism and the evangelical awakening. The mass Christianization of pagan subjects by Protestant powers, though on a smaller scale, has much in common with Catholic missionary efforts during the same period. It has little claim to be apostolic in the primitive sense.

## POLEMICAL USE OF MISSIONS

For both Catholics and Protestants missionary activity became an item in the religious polemic of the period. Ecclesiastical competitiveness served only to confuse the issues and to delay the development of a truly Biblical understanding of the apostolate until the eighteenth century. Catholics were spurred by the Reformation to greater missionary activity overseas in order to recover their losses to Protestantism in Europe. Protestants were somewhat reluctantly goaded into missionary activity by Catholic charges that lack of missionary fruits was an indication of the non-apostolic and non-Catholic character of Protestantism. Theologians saw missionary activity as a weapon in the arsenal of reformation and counter-reformation propaganda, while rulers exploited missions in the interests of maintaining a Protestant-Catholic balance of power. This is clearly illustrated by the Protestant response to the formation of the Propaganda in Rome in 1622. Johannes Hoornbeek, a Dutch Calvinist theologian, in 1653 suggested the establishment of a Protestant missionary agency modeled on the lines of the Propaganda.<sup>8</sup>

8 Cf. M. Galm, *Das Erwachen des Missionsgedankens im Protestantismus der Niederlande* (Oberbayern, 1915), pp. 69-70.

The Lutheran émigré, Baron Justinian von Wetz, in 1664 laid before the Corpus Evangelicorum of the Reichstag of the Holy Roman Empire a proposal for the inauguration of a “Jesus-Loving Society” for the support of itinerant Protestant preachers in colonial territories and pagan lands.<sup>9</sup> Designed to encourage and coordinate missionary efforts by Protestant princes, its very name was suggested by the Society of Jesus. Neither of these proposals materialized. In Puritan England the Lord-Protector of the Commonwealth, and champion of theocracy, Oliver Cromwell, in 1652 or 1653 gave his endorsement to a Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, which was chartered by the Long Parliament in 1649. A Cambridge tract of that period speaks of the urgency of finding zealots to combat “popery.”<sup>10</sup> Cromwell was unquestionably aware of the strategic geo-political advantages of excluding Catholicism, or at any rate containing its spread, in North America.

On the more theological side, Catholics found Protestants deficient in missionary response because of their surrender of the Catholic idea of the Church and its magisterial authority; subjectivism and inner enlightenment; the doctrine of the universal priesthood and the rejection of asceticism; the abandonment of ecclesiastical authority and consequent loss of unity and fixed responsibility; the abolition of religious orders and the counsels of perfection; and the teaching of Justification by faith and the futility of works.<sup>11</sup> Protestants were busy clearing themselves of the reproach of unfaithfulness. The dogmatician of Lutheran high orthodoxy, Johann Gerhard, set forth in fine detail the reasons for the expiration of the apostolate. He accused the Jesuits of apostolic methods, frequently citing Jesus’ words about the Pharisees (Matt. 23:15). Yet, paradoxically, Gerhard claimed the results of Catholic missions for Protestantism, implying that these made special Protestant missions unnecessary. Wherever the Jesuits made true evangelical converts – a distinct possibility for Gerhard since Catholics also possessed, though in impure form, the gospel, and the sacraments – they belonged to the same evangelical Catholic Church as the Lutherans.<sup>12</sup> The ultimate in theological sterility, however, was reached when the Wittenberg theological faculty in 1651 categorically denied that

9 Cf. W. Grössel, *Die Mission und die Evangelische Kirche im 17. Jahrhundert* (Gotha, 1897), pp. 33-67.

10 Cf. Wm. Kellaway, *The New England Company, 1649-1776* (London: Longmans, 1961), pp. 15-16, 26-28.

11 Cf. M. Galm, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

12 Cf. Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, Vol. II, Tome 6, Locus 28 (Berlin ed., 1886), pp. 141, 145-148; also Grössel, *op. cit.*, pp. 72ff. Gerhard’s arguments are a point-by-point refutation of the Roman controversialist, Robert Bellarmine.

the apostolic commission had any current validity. It held that God was not obliged to save those heathen who had rejected the offer of salvation from the apostles, even though the offer had been made to their remote ancestors rather than to them directly.<sup>13</sup> In the light of such theological judgments, it is not strange that Justinian von Weltz's ambitious proposals met with harsh rejection at the hands of the theologians of his day, and that he himself was branded a fanatic and an enthusiast. Weltz, a layman, had the temerity to challenge the great Gerhard and to argue that because the dominical command to baptize was still being obeyed, the commission to disciple the nations must also be valid! Theological defensiveness made it virtually impossible for Protestants to do Justice to the eschatological and universal dimensions of the New Testament apostolate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Yet the Reformation did make an indirect theological contribution to missions by preparing the ground for the missionary awakening of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Luther and the reformers recovered the apostolic gospel of God's salvation as a pure gift of grace, and placed this gospel at the center of the Church's life. The clear soteriological teaching of the Reformation, based on justification by faith, distinguished between faith in the promises of the gospel and all obedience to law, works, or human religiosity. A corollary of this teaching was that no coercion might be used to bring men to faith. The Church was a free congregation of believers, gathered by the Holy Spirit. Its life was nourished by the Word and sacraments, therefore the Bible had to be translated and made available in the language of the people, and the sacraments administered in accordance with the teaching of Christ. This necessitated a theologically trained clergy and a well-catechized and Biblically literate laity. The Reformation contribution to evangelical hymnody and devotional literature is a matter of record. Because the Word and the sacraments were the center of the Church's life, every local congregation had freedom to adapt its life at the periphery; uniformity in rites and customs was unnecessary. Every layman became a priest before God and received a share of Christ's ministry. His vocation in the world was to glorify God and minister to his neighbor, a responsibility, which included evangelical witness.

Having said this, we must add that the spiritual fruition of these teachings did not come fully until much later. The Protestant churches of the Reformation remained for the most part official churches of an institutional character, aligned with the state and supporting the *corpus christianum*. They enforced religious conformity and persecuted or

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13 Cf. W. Grössel, *op. cit.*, pp. 84ff.

banished dissenters. Ecclesiastical machinery was geared to the needs of Christendom and was not available for missionary undertakings, except within the colonial framework. The vocation of the laity was, except in certain prescribed matters, all but smothered by clerical control. While the conversion of the heathen in the wider sense was regularly prayed for, it was left to God to carry out. The soteriology of the Reformation radically separated gospel from law, saving faith from works, and free grace from ascetic discipline. The Divine Word became the sole missionary agent, dispensing with the obedience of human agents. This appears to have cut, temporarily, the nerve of churchly missionary motivation. While the theology of the Reformation thus provided a critique of missionary activity carried out for propagandistic purposes (political, cultural or ecclesiastical) and served as a corrective of unapostolic methods, it did not engender missionary obedience on a large scale. But when the relationship between the divine initiative and human response was understood in a more apostolic way – through the uniting of grace and *askesis* once again in pietism and the evangelical awakening – Protestants could repeal the prohibition of missionary activity and accept the whole world as their field of labor.

### ANABAPTIST CONTRIBUTION

We cannot conclude this section without some recognition of the Anabaptists, or left wing of the Reformation, whose concept of apostolicity forms a vital link between the apostolic church of primitive times and the modern missionary movement. Anabaptists retained the original spiritual vision of the reformers and sought to give it consistent expression in a voluntary fellowship, or brotherhood, of truly converted believers in Christ, all of whom were committed to following him in full obedience as Lord. The whole of life was to be brought under the Lordship of Christ in a covenant of discipleship. What saving faith represented to the reformers, living discipleship was to the Anabaptists.<sup>14</sup> Apostolicity included, of course, faithfulness to the doctrinal teachings of the apostles, but more particularly it meant apostolic practice and loyalty to the spirit of the apostolic church with its disciples, martyrs, and witnesses. The Great Commission, prominently mentioned in Anabaptist sermons, was binding upon Christians in all times and places, and upon every Christian. Scattered abroad by the persecution of Catholics, Lutherans and Zwinglians, Anabaptist “pilgrims” gave their testimonies and formed

14 Cf. Harold S. Bender, *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1957), p. 43.

new brotherhoods. Itinerant evangelists, such as those going out from the “Martyr Synod” of 1527, crossed national and ecclesiastical boundaries, driven by both zeal and persecution, and frequently sealed their testimony with imprisonment or death. The apostolic characteristics of the Anabaptist movement, when compared to the more conservative expressions of the Reformation, consist in the use of purely spiritual methods of persuasion, the practice of freedom of conscience, the apostolic discipline, the rejection of the medieval parish pattern, the complete separation from the state, the lay witness, the supreme confidence in the power of God and the guidance of the Spirit, the readiness for suffering and martyrdom, and the uninhibited universalism.<sup>15</sup>

One of the great tragedies of church history is that Anabaptists, who had much to teach Catholics and Protestants about the nature of primitive apostolicity, were not allowed to make that contribution. They were lumped together with “Schwarmer,” enthusiasts and dangerous visionaries, and banished from the scene. In a day when only legally tolerated churches could survive, the Anabaptist principle of complete separation from the state made existence impossible for them except as oppressed and persecuted minorities. Later, generations of Anabaptists, settling down as separatist communal brotherhoods or denominational types, lost much of this primitive apostolic consciousness. But in Germany Lutheran pietists under P. J. Spener revived the apostolic idea with their emphasis on *praxis pietatis* the formation of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*, while in Great Britain, Independents, Quakers, and Baptists began emphasizing the concept of a gathered Church. Whatever their differences, these groups had in common a sense of the Church as a brotherhood, the necessity of spiritual regeneration, and the obligation to witness. Through them the apostolic concern comes to practical expression much earlier than it does in the official churches. Intimate brotherhoods, each independent at the local level, possessed a flexibility and a freedom unknown in the inclusive state churches with their cumbersome ecclesiastical apparatus. The dissenting churches could elicit support, fire the imagination, and provide the mobility needed for the renewal of the world apostolate. Resembling private religious societies themselves, the free churches suggested the pattern for the Protestant missionary societies that replaced the Roman Catholic orders as agencies for recruiting and sending missionaries. So successful were these societies that even groups within the state churches

15 Cf. *Menonite Encyclopedia* (4 vols. 1955-59), I, 594-597 and III, 712; also F. H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church* (Am. Ch. Hist. Soc., 1952, Ch. V, “The Great Commission,” pp. 94-112.

imitated the voluntary society pattern when they began to do missionary work.

## EMERGENCE OF A PROTESTANT THEOLOGY OF THE WORLD APOSTOLATE

In the next section we shall sketch briefly the maturing of a theology of the world apostolate within Protestantism. It will be our thesis that the main lines of this theology begin to emerge during the eighteenth century, attaining considerable clarity by the opening of the nineteenth century. The work of the Tranquebar mission, the Moravians, and the “Serampore Trio” will be cited as examples of the “classical period” in the Protestant apprehension of apostolicity. In the nineteenth century the clarity of this classical period was increasingly obscured by a variety of non-theological factors that became impediments to apostolic practice. Among these were the spread of western imperialism, the colonial mentality among mission supporters, the transfer of the western denominational pattern to the lands of Asia and Africa, involvement of missions in colonial administration through grants-in-aid, and a widely diffused, though often unconscious, sense of cultural and religious superiority on the part of Europeans. The nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century added certain important refinements in missionary method and means, as well as in the concept of an indigenous church. But these gains are counter-balanced by an apparently diminished sense of apostolic urgency and clarity of approach that characterizes the Church in the present ecumenical age of indigenous churches and inter-church aid. Our examples will illustrate the concept of apostolicity during the classical period. We shall then raise a few questions germane to a discussion of a contemporary theology of the world apostolate.

The New England Company, a missionary society established by English Independents and others for work among the American Indians, represents an experimental Protestant way station on the road to apostolicity.<sup>16</sup> As the oldest English Protestant missionary society, and the earliest form of missionary activity carried on in the American colonies, it has an importance far transcending the meager results achieved. The truly heroic missionaries who carried on this lonely work — among them men like John Eliot, David Brainerd, and the Mayhews — inspired a later generation of Anglo-Saxon missionaries to apostolic obedience through their tracts and devotional diaries. Eliot’s determination to place the entire Bible in the

16 Information is from William Kellaway, *The New England Company, 1649-1776* (London: Longman’s, 1961).

hands of the Indians resulted in three painstaking editions of the Mohican Bible (which is not intelligible to anyone today) and the building up of an entire “Indian Library.” Itinerant preaching by missionaries, concern for the thorough theological training of Indian ministers at Harvard College, and efforts to bring about an indigenous testimony to the grace of God among Indian tribes were certainly commendable apostolic aims. But the work of the New England Company was seriously compromised from the beginning by its colonial setting. Its association with the limitations of *corpus christianum*, and a hyper-Calvinist spirit that was often antipathetic to conversions.

The conversion of the Indians had been frequently cited by English clergy as an argument for colonizing the New World. Just as “God, glory and gold” alternated in the minds of the Spanish *conquistadores* so the joint prospects of enlarging the Kingdom of God and expending the influence of England seem to have alternated in the minds of the Puritans.

No vision of empire appealed more to that age than this of English men carrying the banners of the Protestant religion to the New World and placing there a check upon both Spanish and Catholic aggrandizement.<sup>17</sup>

Failure to convert the Indians, it was feared, might bring about the collapse of the entire colonial enterprise. Ironically, the American commissioners for the New England colonies who acted as local deputies for the company in receiving subsidies from England and making disbursements were also charged with home defense and in this capacity had to take measures against Indian uprisings! No doubt plans to convert the Indians and military measures to contain them in case of attack were often discussed at the same meetings.

In giving the Indians the gospel, the English believed they would not only save their souls but also introduce them to the blessings of English civilization. The Puritan concept of theocracy rather uncritically lent itself to the notion that, as simulation into *corpus christianum* it was the correct missionary method. A preamble to the parliamentary act of 1649 chartering the society contained the information that as a result of the preaching of the gospel to the Indians by some godly English, the Indians were becoming civilized, forsaking their own gods and calling upon the name of the Lord, sending their children to English schools, putting away all wives but one, and praying to God morning and evening

*First Fruits*

17 Kellaway, *op. cit.*, p. 1.<sup>17</sup> THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

in their families.<sup>18</sup> The Puritans believed that the Indians must first be civilized before they could be converted, for the heathen could not receive the grace of God in a savage state. Hence the Indian should give up his nomadic existence and follow a civilized calling. Civilizing the Indian, however, required money and subsidies from England and the company existed to provide it. Subsidies were expended upon schools, meetinghouses, clothing, shoes, blankets, axes, hoes, spades, and later for materials to support the Indian basket weaving and spinning trades. Eliot's proposal that the Christian Indians be integrated into English towns and congregations met with little favor from the Puritans, who considered them morally degenerate and spiritually immature. The proposal to form them into "praying towns" such as Natick may have been a compromise measure. It seems clear that the apostolic intentions of the missionaries were checked by political and cultural limitations arising from the colonial framework, as well as by Puritan theological reserve toward conversions. The method of establishing Indian communities proved abortive. When the American colonies declared their independence in 1776, the English society terminated its subsidies and transferred them to Canada, holding that the conversion of American Indians was no longer its concern.

## TRANQUEBAR MISSION

In South India the Tranquebar mission was also begun under Danish colonial auspices, but it was more successful in setting itself free from the limitations of the *corpus christianum* idea.<sup>19</sup> Zlegenbalg wrote for months (1706) that the scandalous and corrupt life of the Christians living among the Tamils, presumably meaning both the Danes and the half-caste Portuguese converts, was a major obstacle to making converts. The Danish commandant's initial hostility, combined with the coolness of the Danish colonials and the colonial clergy, increased the difficulties. The irregularity of funds from Denmark was also a concern. The work thus began amidst hardship and opposition, causing the missionaries to rely much upon power and the leading of the Spirit – rather than upon official advice and helpful contacts. It was not difficult for them to identify their situation with that of the apostles in the book of Acts. The Tranquebar missionaries were thus compelled to work out their methods over against, rather than in harmony with, the forces of *corpus christianum*. It remained true that the missionaries came to Tranquebar with the support and sponsorship of

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

19 Cf. E. Arno Lehmann, *It Began At Tranquebar* (Eng. tr., M. J. Lutz; Madras: CLS 1956), and J. F. Fenger, *History of the Tranquebar Mission* (Eng. tr., E. Francke; Tranquebar, 1863).

the Danish king, and stayed under the sufferance of the local authorities, though seldom with their cooperation. But the virtual exclusion of the missionaries from the colonial community became a positive factor in developing an apostolic approach. This was in accordance with the theological convictions of the missionaries' pietest mentor at Halle, Dr. A. H. Francke, who advised them to act with restraint and forbearance and to meditate upon the apostolic method and doctrine of St. Paul. They should seek to draw Paul's apostolic method into their own internal practice and express it in their acts and decisions.<sup>20</sup>

Ziegenbalg seems to have possessed a natural genius for laying solid foundations and for pressing on with crucial priorities in pioneer mission work. Working with his Tamil tutor, he mastered the intricacies of Tamil in a remarkably short time. Luther's Catechism, evangelical hymns, gospel portions, and by 1714 the entire New Testament in Tamil flowed from his pen, and were printed locally on a press sent from Europe. Study of the Tamil language led directly into Tamil religious literature, which Ziegenbalg analyzed and classified in several books for the benefit of future missionaries and European readers. A grammar and a dictionary were also prepared. The missionaries began public preaching and catechetical work almost immediately, and opened "charity schools" to win the younger generation. Other methods were itineration outside the Danish crown colony after 1709 to gain publicity for the gospel, secure new openings for work, and engage in religious conversations with Brahmins and Muslims. Ziegenbalg carried on an active correspondence with learned Tamil religionists, showing himself a master of the art of religious disputation. Catechumens were carefully examined in the chief parts of the faith and required to give public testimony to their faith before baptism. That the missionaries were also thinking of the establishment of an indigenous church is shown by the fact that in 1709, three years after the beginning of work, Ziegenbalg wrote requesting that the *potestas ordinandi* be given to one of the missionaries on the field.

The Tranquebar mission has a record of unique achievement in the transcending of confessional differences and the abandonment of the colonial presuppositions of missionary work. Even before going to India, Ziegenbalg informed King Frederick IV that he envisioned a mission to the whole of India, not merely to the Danish colony. From Tranquebar the missionaries appealed to Christians in all nations to support the work.

20 Cf. "A. H. Francke's Zufällige Gedanken über die königliche dänische Mission, etc." printed in W. Gersten, *Ziegenbalg und Plutschau* (Erlangen, 1868), Pt. II, pp. 127-167.

An English translation of the missionaries' field reports was made by the German court chaplain in London and presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who lauded the mission work. The Anglican S.P.C.K. began assisting the work of the Tranquebar missionaries and eventually assumed the entire support of Danish-Halle missionaries working outside the Danish colony in English-controlled territory. For more than 100 years Anglicans supported ordained Lutheran ministers, mostly from Germany, who established native Indian congregations in the Lutheran mould but read services from the book of Common Prayer when they acted as chaplains to the British military and colonial officials. C. F. Schwartz was the best known of the Danish-Halle missionaries who exercised a wider ministry in India. In 1715 the royal missions-collegium in Copenhagen extended an open appeal to the clergy of England, Germany, Norway, and Denmark to cooperate in the undertaking. The collegium instructed the missionaries to follow up opportunities that might present themselves outside the colony, and to assist Anglican and Reformed congregations in case of need.

Within Lutheranism, this represents a break with the colonial-political approach to missionary work, and an entry into a worldwide ecumenical task.<sup>21</sup> The apostolic nature of the work is seen in the close relationship between mission and unity, and in the abandonment of the parochial land territorial limitations of *corpus christianum*. This example was widely influential in Germany, England, and Puritan New England.

## ZINZENDORF AND THE MORAVIANS

With Count Zinzendorf the problematical aspects of the theology of the world apostolate come into still sharper focus. His contributions to the theology of mission and unity are too substantial for us to do justice to them here.<sup>22</sup> Zinzendorf follows Luther in taking Christ as the key to the scriptures and in making the redeeming work of the Crucified Lamb the basis of missionary proclamation. But he goes beyond Luther in seeing the compulsion to witness as an activity of the Spirit in the present age, and in giving dynamic expression to this compulsion in a universal apostolate. Zinzendorf's understanding of the Spirit is not that of a subjective

21 Cf. E. Beyreuther, "Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg und der ökumenische und missionarische Aufbruch des 17. Jahrhunderts," *Lutherisches Missions-Jahrbuch* 1956, pp. 46-49.

22 A. J. Lewis in his *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer: A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (London: SCM, and Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) provides a useful account in English.

spirituality but of a gift of witness that is always tied to the objective Biblical proclamation of Christ crucified. For him the entire Church is the mission. The field is the entire world, including western Christendom. The missionary is simply the Christian witnessing where he is, rather than a religious professional. Zinzendorf thus makes the apostolate independent of clerical office, territorial church, and colonial government. As he works out his own relationship to the refugee Moravian community sojourning on his Herrnhut estate, Zinzendorf fashions entirely new relationships with both church and state. In the end he develops a missionary approach that breaks cleanly with *corpus christianum*.

In 1727 a dissident group of Moravian refugees entered into a covenant of unity at Herrnhut and placed themselves under their own apostolic discipline. Even before the “Macedonian call” from overseas was heard, they knew themselves to be called to bear witness to the reconciling power of the Lamb as they had experienced it in their own community. The Brethren agreed to accept none as brother or sister except those whose hearts were converted; to acknowledge no church except where the pure Word was preached; to separate themselves from none who believed in Jesus Christ as Lord to observe discipline; and to be ready to lay down their lives for the truth. In 1731, while in Copenhagen, Zinzendorf came into contact with Greenlanders and learned of the difficulties of Egede’s mission; he also met an awakened Negro from St. Thomas who spoke of the plight of Negro slaves in the West Indies. These reports came as an apostolic challenge to the Brethren. After lengthy deliberation two lay brothers – a potter and a carpenter – were sent to St. Thomas in 1732. They had been led to believe that only by becoming as slaves themselves would they be able to witness to the slaves. Zinzendorf gave them no advice except to believe in the gospel as the power of God, to depend on the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and to make their mission an object of prayer. He insisted, however, that only persons whose hearts were united to Christ should go, and none should be sent against his wishes. Each candidate’s “Zeugentreib,” or compulsion to witness, was to be tested by the community. In 1733 three Brethren went to Greenland to help Egede, and others left for Lappland, Georgia, and Surinam. When political and ecclesiastical pressures brought about an edict of banishment from Herrnhut in 1736, Zinzendorf declared that the time had come for the “pilgrim congregation” to preach the Saviour to the whole world! Between 1732 and 1760 some 226 Moravians entered ten foreign fields from the Arctic Circle to the Cape of Good Hope. Many others scattered throughout Europe.

As time passed Zinzendorf grew in experience through correspondence and occasional visits with the Brethren overseas. He later summarized his missionary counsels in a series of brief instructions.<sup>23</sup> Basic to his method is the Christological emphasis in preaching, which is opposed to all law, morality, or natural knowledge. The Brethren were to portray Christ as though crucified before the very eyes of men, and to make a living impression upon them. Such preaching would awaken a consciousness of sin and repentance. Confessional differences from the West were not to be introduced into pagan lands; Zinzendorf was utterly opposed to sectarianizing the witness of the gospel. For him all confessional differences fell away at the foot of the cross in the presence of the catholic Saviour of mankind. The count saw the denominations of his day as segments of an "interim-church" which was no more than the outward framework for God's continuous action of incorporating saints into His Kingdom. They had no ultimate institutional validity. The *Unitas Fratrum* consisted of an elite company of front-line fighters and witnesses from many confessions and churches whom God used to gather the first fruits into His Kingdom. Young congregations of Indian and Hottentot Christians were to be free to evolve their own forms of worship and community, and not subjected to European traditions. Simple apostolic arrangements were to be followed. The gospel was not to be equated with any fixed cultural norms. The Brethren should have confidence in the preaching of the Word and not be hasty in introducing external innovations. Mass conversions were neither realistic nor desirable. Zinzendorf opposed them on the ground that they had brought about the spiritual collapse of Christendom. The Brethren were to seek out those men already marked by the Spirit as first-fruits of the Kingdom, in the conviction that where vermin turn to Christ, the Holy Spirit has already been at work. The missionaries should enter only those doors already opened by the Holy Spirit. Christ crucified is the object of all preaching, but the Holy Spirit as subject is present in every act of faith and testimony.

Zinzendorf's grasp of the apostolate was so intense that it could not be made the basis of a permanent missionary program. The invitation to suffering and death for the Lamb's sake could never be a normative type of appeal, nor could the phenomenal toll in death by disease and martyrdom be long sustained. Purely spiritual methods eventually had to be compromised by secular ventures, e.g., the Moravian entry into the field of education, which Zinzendorf at first strenuously

23 Cf. Heinz Motel, "Grundstätzliche Äusserungen Zinzendorf's zu Missionsfragen," *E.M.Z.*, 13 (1956), 166-177; and Karl Müller, "Der Sinn der Heidenmission nach Zinzendorf," *N.A.M.Z.*, 1 (1924), 132-149.

opposed. Missionaries were requested to assist colonial officials in civilizing slaves. The fluid structure of *Unitas Fratrum* – in but not of the churches – could not be permanently maintained and gave way to a new denominational organization. The Moravian concept of the apostolate became professionalized and lost its primitive idyllic character. Every generation makes its accommodation to historical circumstances, and the Moravians were no exception. For a brief period, however, they came close to expressing the uniqueness of the New Testament apostolate under contemporary conditions. The Moravian ideal, even more than the reality, continued to inspire succeeding generations of missionaries to emulate their example. Direct influences upon Methodism, William Carey and the London Missionary Society have been traced to the Moravians.

### WILLIAM CAREY AND THE SERAMPORE TRIO

William Carey and the Serampore missionaries were heirs to the cumulative experience of the New England Company, the Tranquebar mission, and the Moravians. There is evidence that Carey, methodical worker that he was, had learned his lessons well and built his concept of the apostolate upon where the Moravians had left off. In his *Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792), Carey had found it necessary to explode the still widespread view that the apostolic commission was binding only upon the first generation apostles. Many of Carey's Calvinist contemporaries believed that Christ had died only for the elect and did not share his conviction that the gospel should be preached to all men. To these the shoemaker replied:

As our blessed Lord has required us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, it becomes us not only to express our desires of that event by words, but *to use every lawful method* to spread the knowledge of his name.<sup>24</sup>

Taking his departure from the Biblical concept of the Kingdom rather than from the Christendom of his time, Carey sets forth a comprehensive theology of the history of salvation from the fall of Adam to the present age. The promise of salvation is universal, Carey argues. Yet multitudes sit at ease, giving themselves no concern about “the far greater part of their fellow sinners lost in ignorance and idolatry,” and holding that the

24 William Carey, *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (New facsimile ed; London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961), p. 4. (Italics added.)

apostolate is not their responsibility. Carey then advances theological arguments to prove that the Great Commission is still binding; reviews missionary undertakings from the time of the apostles until Eliot, Ziegenbalg, the Moravians and “the late Mr. Wesley;” surveys the religious state of the world’s population and finds it overwhelmingly in heathen darkness; demonstrates the practicability of doing something from the success of current commercial enterprises in pagan lands; and closes with an appeal for Christian action. The Enquiry is significant not only for its carefully reasoned argument but also because it foreshadows some of Carey’s mature missionary concepts. Here is his view of the apostle as a “servant of God”, wholly devoted to him and in a peculiar sense not his own.

He engages to go where God pleases, and to do, or endure, what he sees fit to command, or call him to, in the exercise of his function.<sup>25</sup>

The discipline of an apostle demands hardness and suffering. Here we find also an emphasis on learning the language and becoming familiar with the customs of the people. The principle that missionaries should expect to support themselves by their own hands is also embryonically present. All of these insights find expression later at Calcutta and Serampore.

When Carey and Thomas left for India in 1793 expecting great things from God, and attempting great things for God, more than idle rhetoric was involved in the phrase. The meager allowance from the Baptist Missionary Society was insufficient to maintain two missionary families for long. To make matters worse, the East India Company officials had refused to grant the missionaries permission to reside at Calcutta, and were known to be hostile to missionary activity. From the beginning Carey found the forces of *corpus christianum* arrayed against him, albeit in the form of a chartered trading company. Answering objections that the conduct of the missionaries was illegal, Andrew Fuller struck an apostolic note:

The apostles and primitive ministers were commanded to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; nor were they to stop for the permission of any power on earth, but to do, and take the consequences.<sup>26</sup>

25 Carey, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

26 George Smith, *The Life of William Carey, Shoemaker and Missionary* (London: Dent, and New York: Dutton, 1909), pp. 44-45.

Whatever the earthly legality of the matter might be, Fuller added, the missionaries would be acquitted by a higher tribunal. Aboard ship Carey became convinced of the perils of too close an association with the colonial community. The vices of the natives were the chief topic of conversation.

All the discourse is about high life, and every circumstance will contribute to unfit the mind for the work and prejudice the soul against the people to whom he goes; and in a country like this, settled by Europeans, the grandeur, the customs and prejudices of the Europeans are exceedingly dangerous.<sup>27</sup>

The missionaries needed to be indefatigably employed in their work and single minded in their goals, if they were not to lose their way.

Soon after arriving in India, Carey began to clarify his cardinal principles. Identification with the people he came to serve was one of them. He made it his practice to spend some time each day in conversation with street merchants, Brahmins, and people in various walks of life. He later traversed the Hoogli River on two small boats, sleeping by night on the boat and itinerating from village to village by day. Alongside preaching and itineration, Carey devoted himself to the scientific mastery of Bengali and other tongues, and laid the basis for his work as a translator. In time he was to become the foremost language authority in the East India Company, receiving an appointment as Instructor of Bengali and Sanskrit in the company's foreign service institute. A further principle was that of financial independence from the missionary society at the earliest possible date through secular employment. Carey followed the example of St. Paul, the tentmaker, and of the Moravians, when he accepted employment as an indigo planter on the plantation of a Mr. Udny, thus securing a legal residence permit. Some of Carey's supporters feared that he had turned worldly, but he never allowed himself to forget that he was first and foremost a missionary. He considered the plantation workers his congregation. When the fortunes of Carey's employer failed, and new missionaries arrived from England who were barred from residence in Calcutta, Carey decided upon a change. In 1800 he shifted his base of operations to the Danish colony at Serampore, where the local officials were friendly and cooperative. Here the above principles were adapted to a new setting.

With the enlargement of the missionary community, Carey determined to set up "a communistic missionary settlement on the Moravian

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27 *Ibid.*, p. 60

plan.” The missionaries and their wives were organized as a brotherhood under a common discipline to preserve the Christian character of their relationships, but also to secure maximum efficiency without sacrificing personal freedom. All income was placed in a common fund and paid out in accordance with agreed principles. No missionary was to engage in private enterprises without the consent of the group. A covenant covered both the economic and spiritual aspects of the community’s life. Carey saw the precariousness of such an enterprise and the danger of its secularization. Three times each year the reading of the covenant reminded the missionaries:

Let us continually watch against a worldly spirit, and cultivate a Christian indifference against every indulgence. Rather let us bear hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ...If we persevere in these principles, multitudes of converted souls will have reason to bless God to all eternity.<sup>28</sup>

With more missionary workers available, an improved opinion of the usefulness of missionaries on the part of company officials, and growing cooperation from the evangelical chaplains, Carey began to make plans to take the gospel to other parts of India. Missionary brotherhoods were organized in Burma, Orissa, Bhutan, and Hindustan, alongside the one in Bengal, each station being self-supporting and semi-autonomous. Together they constituted the “United Missions in India,” a non-denominational missionary body. After 1806 the Serampore missionaries began forming native converts into indigenous churches, and entrusting to them the task of propagating the gospel by sending out their own itinerant evangelists. The instructions to Indian workers stated:

1) That the intention of the Saviour in calling them out of darkness into marvelous light was that they should labor to the uttermost in advancing his cause among their countrymen; 2) that it was therefore their indispensable duty, both collectively and individually, to strive by every means to bring their country men to the knowledge of the Saviour ... this was therefore the grand business of their lives.<sup>29</sup>

In 1818 there was founded at Serampore a Christian college for training native workers.

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28 *Ibid.*, p. 95. *First Fruits*  
 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123. EMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

It is a characteristic of Carey that he always managed to keep the universal and the local requirements of the apostolate in proper relationship. Intensively involved in Bengal, he nevertheless drew up grandiose schemes for the strategic occupation of Assam and Nepal, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Cochin China, Sumatra, Java, the Moluccas, the Philippines, Japan, and China. Even Africa, the Muslim world, and the South American continent did not escape his far-roving glance. Carey dreamed of a worldwide missionary conference to be held in Capetown in 1810. He personally translated or edited translations of thirty-six partial or complete versions of the Bible, among them Chinese, Burmese, Javanese, and Malay. He saw himself as a participant in an ecumenical task, which was not limited to particular churches or Christians in particular countries.

The Serampore mission made its own contribution to the definition of the apostolic task which it inherited from earlier generations of missionaries. As the “father of the modern missionary movement,” Carey’s example was widely publicized. He became the model missionary for the English-speaking world during the nineteenth century. Yet there was a uniqueness about the Serampore development that was not repeatable. Though not a theologian like Zinzendorf, Carey had a rare instinct for grasping the essential problems of the apostolate and translating them into practical solutions. His genius was that of a lay theologian who knew how to keep the Biblical mandate in proper correlation with its political, social and economic context, yet without surrendering the living character of the apostolate as an activity guided by the Divine Spirit. Though Carey’s theology is less profound than Zinzendorf’s, his grasp of the secular power structure is surer. But Carey’s kind of genius cannot be mass-produced or transferred. He himself was disappointed in the mediocre performance of his own sons, though he often counseled them and exhorted them to apostolic faithfulness. In later years the Serampore trio had a falling out with the younger missionaries and the newly appointed directors of the home society. The latter do not seem to have appreciated the method of property management and the principle of self-support adopted by the pioneer missionaries. After 1813, with the revision of the charter of the East India Company to include the “pious clause,” missions became eligible for grants-in-aid and were led into far-reaching entanglements with the colonial administration. In later years Carey himself seems to have yielded to the view that a “Christianized Indian civilization,” developed silently and slowly through Christian schools, might be the ultimate means of converting India. Today it may be doubted whether this policy, carried to its logical fulfillment by Alexander Duff, lived up to its promise. The “pious clause” also opened the door to an Anglican ecclesiastical establishment in

India, the very quintessence of the *corpus christianum* principle. When Carey died in 1834, never having returned to his homeland, the situation in India was far different from the one he found on his arrival in 1793.

## A NINETEENTH CENTURY EPILOGUE

In the half-century after 1792 many Protestant missionary societies made their appearance in quick succession. A few of the earlier societies were non-denominational (L.M.S., A.B.C.P.M.) or Intra-confessional in basis (Basel, Rhenish, Bremen), but mostly they were denominational missionary societies. Great international and interdenominational agencies such as the China Inland Mission represent still another type. Each of the new sending agencies adapted its concept of the apostolate and its missionary methods to the ecclesiology, doctrine, and practice of the denomination, or to some other basis that was normative for the society. Thus Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Lutherans, and others developed, though for the most part only implicitly, their own theologies of mission and their own missionary practices. In doing so they were usually conscious of remaining within the broad stream of the common missionary tradition of the eighteenth century, which we have designated the “classical period” for the theology of the world apostolate. We do not think it necessary, or even possible, to trace these denominational developments in detail. In many cases the worst features of Western denominationalism were softened on the mission field by comity practices and cooperative agencies.

We suggested earlier that a gradual falling off took place sometime in the nineteenth century in so far as the clear apprehension of the apostolic task was concerned. This was due to a variety of non-theological factors, mostly related to the inner dynamic of Western colonialism, but also to the diminution of the earlier ecumenical vision. That vision flourished most brilliantly when the world apostolate was the primary concern of small groups and rather isolated individuals struggling against the prevailingly anti-missionary climate of *corpus christianum*. When foreign missions began receiving the support of church (i.e., Protestant denominational) bodies, it was inevitable that the apostolic principle should suffer a partial – though never complete – eclipse. This was so because denominational missionary activity can never completely exclude the element of propaganda, viz., for a denomination. And when foreign missions began to receive the general approbation of society for various utilitarian (i.e., political, cultural, moralistic) reasons, it was also inevitable that the apostolic principle should be compromised. Missionary activity

based upon pragmatic considerations and having a popular appeal can scarcely avoid becoming propaganda for *corpus christianum* – a way of life, a culture, a civilization, or a social order. The ecumenical movement has the task of recovering the apostolate from all secular distortions, and purifying its expression under modern conditions. Such an effort can never be entirely successful, but it is the critical task of theology.

We shall give one example from the nineteenth century of an effort to purify the concept of the apostolate and to rescue it from the distortions of the age. Rufus Anderson, the foreign secretary for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.) in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, was a voice crying in the wilderness. He prophetically discerned the growth of the propagandistic element in missions and warned against it. Anderson is often given the credit for coining the definition of an indigenous church – “self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating” – but we are not concerned with that aspect of his thought here. Many of Anderson’s ideas reappear in the writings of Roland Allen in the twentieth century, but it required more of a prophet to say in the 1860’s what Allen said after 1912. Anderson’s penetrating insight was that the same Judaizing spirit, which delayed the development of a “church for the whole world” in apostolic times, is at work in the apostolate today. The first missionaries were slow to apprehend the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom and to adopt spiritual means of propagating it. They clung to such ideas as circumcision, soil, and blood descent. But St. Paul made use of the prescribed instrumentality for declaring the gospel to all nations – the preaching of Jesus Christ and him crucified. “Such was the eminently spiritual nature of the instrumentality,” Anderson declares. His grand means was the gathering and forming of local churches, self-supporting from the beginning. These churches were “spiritual agencies, deriving their nature and motive power from the spiritual world.”<sup>30</sup> In view of the tardy development of the New Testament *ecclesia* in apostolic times, and the very gradual emancipation from Jewish customs and ritual, Anderson was not surprised that modern missions have been slow to adopt spiritual means.

The modern parallel to the controversy with the Judaizes, Anderson believes, is our tendency to identify the gospel with a high Christian civilization.

Our idea of the Christian religion from our childhood has been identified with education, social order, and a certain

30 Rufus Anderson, *Foreign Missions: Their Relations and Claims* (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1869), pp. 42-43, 47-49.

correctness of morals and manners; in other words, with civilization ... This composite idea of the gospel (if I may so describe it), this foreign intermixture, has placed the missionaries of our day under a disadvantage, as compared with missionaries in the apostolic age. It has weakened their faith in that perfectly simple form of the gospel as a converting agency, in which it was apprehended by the apostles; and also their reliance on the divine power, upon which the apostles depended for success.<sup>31</sup>

The apostles of today are no more allowed to trust in chariots and horsemen (Ps. 46) than were the Hebrews of old. The experience of the A.B.C.F.M. had taught Anderson the irrelevance of the often mooted question “whether savages must be civilized before they can be Christianized.” In beginning missionary work among the American Indians (1816) the board had declared it to be its object

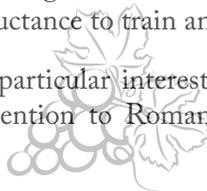
to make them English in their language, civilized in their habits, and Christian in their religion.

In 1819 the pioneer missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands were instructed

to aim at nothing short of covering those islands with fruitful fields and pleasant dwellings, and schools and churches, and of raising the whole people to an elevated state of Christian civilization.<sup>32</sup>

This early policy may have been due to the heritage of the New England Company, which similarly confused the gospel with the Puritan way of life. During his secretaryship Anderson terminated such policies and sought to introduce “spiritual means.” In Anderson’s experience, Indians who knew the most English were furthest from the gospel. Students at the A.B.C.P.M.’s boarding school in Beirut became foreign in their manners, habits and sympathies, and were slowly denationalized. Christians should not be unduly enamored of the influence of civilization as an auxiliary to the gospel in sustaining a higher Christian life among the heathen. This attitude also fosters a reluctance to train and ordain native pastors.

Anderson is of particular interest to this discussion because he devotes considerable attention to Roman Catholic missions, which he




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31 *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

sees operating according to totally different principles.<sup>33</sup> He outspokenly declares that all of the older Roman missions from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries had ended in failure, and that none had brought about a spiritual transformation in a nation. This he attributes to the non-spiritual methods used by Roman missionaries. Whatever true doctrine there may be in the creeds of the Roman church, Anderson declares; Catholicism is a religion of forms, rites and ceremonies, which are easily assimilated to the religious formalism of pagan nations.<sup>34</sup> He contrasts Roman methods with what he holds to be the fixed principles of Protestant missions: 1) never to call in the aid of civil government, except for personal protection, and never to rely on the secular arm; 2) use of the Holy Scriptures in vernacular translations in every Protestant mission; 3) every missionary expected to be able to proclaim the gospel in the language of the people; 4) use of a. theologically educated native ministry and a locally trained native pastorate; 5) local, self-governing churches; and 6) spiritual life and power contained in the doctrines of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, justification by faith, and sanctification through truth, as over against the doctrine of baptismal regeneration.<sup>35</sup> Anderson's advice is not to use the weapons of Rome, but to do just what the Roman missionaries do not do, viz., plain, direct gospel preaching, scripture translation, and the organization of independent churches. Protestants must learn to trust their churches to the grace of God, and to make faithful use of the apostolic instrumentalities of the gospel and the Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

## OVERCOMING LOST DIRECTNESS

Anderson believed that all evangelical missions were in agreement on the goal of missions: so to make known the gospel to perishing men as to induce them to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem for him was that missions could not agree on the proper means of bringing the gospel to the unevangelized. Today the situation is very much more complex. One of the most acute observers of our generation, the late Walter Freytag, has noted that while in the past missions had had problems, "they were not a problem themselves." Today missions themselves have become a problem. We are, with Willingen (1952), certain that there is no participation in Christ without participation in his

33 Cf. Anderson, *op. cit.*, Ch. XIV, "The Romish Missions as an Opposing Power," pp. 269-300, and Appendix X, "Francis Xavier and Romish Missions," pp. 351-363.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 290.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 283-289.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 293-296.

mission. But we are uncertain “whether our present patterns of carrying out that task and the conceptions behind such patterns are the right expression of the obedience God wants from us today.”<sup>37</sup> The fact of rising new nations with a deep national self-consciousness, the reality of younger churches with their own sense of missionary calling, and the growth of an ecumenical spirit all impose limitations upon our earlier freedom though at the same time providing us with new freedom and opportunities that we did not possess before. There are the limitations imposed by the political situation and the exclusion of Western missionaries from some areas; the voluntary limitation upon initiative and decision accepted by Western societies so that young churches may mature in selfhood and indigenous responsibility; and the limitation created by the fact that no single church or missionary agency is complete in itself, since each belongs to and acts in the name of the *una sancta*.<sup>38</sup>

The central task for the theology of the world apostolate in our day is to overcome “lost directness,” as Freytag put it.<sup>39</sup> Inter-church aid has meant increasing material and financial help but less personal help. Specialized institutional services tend to become more and more autonomous. Mission society leaders feel as if they are moving in a fog, while missionaries suffer from vocational frustration. The result is an “endangered image” of missions. The simple proclamation of Christ crucified has been submerged in a welter of activities only indirectly connected with it. The older categorical uniqueness of foreign missionary activity as it was still understood at the time of the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh (1910) has now been abandoned, at least in ecumenical circles, for a more general and comprehensive understanding of the apostolate. But the new understanding has not yet received final definition. Yet for Freytag the solution is neither to redouble our efforts so as to escape having to deal with the real problems, nor is it to retreat to some idyllic situation (if such can be found) where the problems do not yet exist. The Church must work out its forms of obedience within the imperfect, existing, empirical structures of the missionary enterprise.

Mission means taking part in the action of God, in fulfilling His place for the coming of His Kingdom by bringing about obedience of the faith in Jesus Christ our Lord among the nations. In that context missions

37 Walter Freytag, “Changes in the Patterns of Western Missions”, *The Ghana Assembly of the I.M.C.*, ed. R. K. Orchard (London: Edinburgh House, and New York: Friendship Press, 1958), pp. 138-139.

38 Freytag, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-141.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 141. THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

as empirical organizations or institutions are one indispensable member in the varieties of services of the churches. Their task consists in being sent to proclaim the gospel outside the Church, to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.<sup>40</sup>

In beginning this address I promised to deal with the theology of the world apostolate strictly within the limited framework of the theology of mission and the theology of the missionary enterprise. I have not attempted to go beyond this modest task to deal with some of the wider problems of the world apostolate referred to in my opening remarks. My purpose has been to raise, rather empirically, some of the central theological problems latent in the practice of missions, and in the obedient response to the apostolic commission. Is there a thread running through the foregoing discussion? I believe that there is. I ventured to suggest that the eighteenth century might be designated the “classic period” for apostolic obedience in the modern missionary movement. Here we find the closest correspondence to the New Testament apostolate. Here we see also the most faithful adaptation of that apostolate to modern circumstances. The period was not without its faults, but it seems to have had a clearer grasp of the central issues of the apostolate than did the generations, which followed. In the nineteenth century Rufus Anderson noted a trend away from purely spiritual instrumentalities. He was troubled by the confusion of “culture propaganda” with mission work. We noted in passing that the problem of “denominational propaganda” also led to distortions of the apostolic witness in the nineteenth century. For Anderson missions were an eminently spiritual work, carried on by spiritual means, and designed to foster the growth of purely spiritual agencies – self-propagating local churches. In our own era Walter Freytag suggested that we must overcome “lost directness” and restore to the world apostolate the clear consciousness that we are “taking part in the action of God.” The crisis in missions sets us free to concentrate on the more difficult but essential task, viz., the message of Christ crucified. Here we return full circle to Count Zinzendorf who pleaded with the Moravian missionaries to “tell them nothing but of the Lamb.” The clarification of the apostolic goal and means for our own day remains the task of theology.



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40 *Ibid.*, p. 146.

## APPENDIX

### Some Questions for Protestant-Roman Catholic Dialogue.

#### A. Questions Growing Out of the Foregoing Lecture.

1. What is the valid *concept* of apostolic authority for our own day? How is it expressed in the missionary calling of the Church? Does the effort to express the New Testament apostolate under modern conditions represent an impossible ideal? What is the value of the New Testament apostolate as a norm for missionary work today?
2. What is the *locus* of apostolic authority? Is it entrusted as a corporate gift to the Church, given as a personal privilege to the successors of the apostles, or both? What implications can be drawn for a lay apostolate as over against the missionary vocation or professional missionaries?
3. What is the relationship between *divine initiative* and *human obedience* in fulfilling the apostolic commission? How can apostolic activity be protected against the threat of purely humanistic motivation? Can we describe the agency of the Holy Spirit in missionary work today? What is the meaning of *Missio Dei* in contemporary terms?
4. Do *asceticism* and *discipline* have an intrinsic relationship to apostolic vocation? Can missionary work be done apart from some form of spiritual discipline? If not, what forms best meet the needs and conditions of the contemporary apostolate?
5. Assuming that *Christendom* is a false presupposition for missionary activity, how does the New Testament apostolate enable us to re-assess the relationship between the Church as a witnessing community and the secular realm? What changes in our prevailing assumptions are implied, and how are such changes reflected in policy and strategy? Can missionary work avoid becoming propaganda?

6. What lessons does the New Testament apostolate hold for the *nature, methods, and goals* of modern missions? Does the use of purely “spiritual instrumentalities” (Rufus Anderson) and the overcoming of “lost directness” (Walter Freytag) necessarily imply an abandonment of diaconal work, education, and community integration as important missionary activities? What is the purpose, place and relationship of each in apostolic activity?

B. Questions Raised for Discussion by the Commission on the Theology of Mission, Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, July 1961. (Cf. W.C.C. Division of Studies Bulletin, Vol. VII, No. 2.)

1. What is the relation between the course of the Gospel and what is going on in the world? What is God’s redemptive purpose in and for world history? What do we expect as a result of missions?
2. What is the meaning of the Christian claim that there is salvation in “no other name”? What is the uniqueness of the Christian message and the necessity of preaching it? Does missionary work aim always at conversion?
3. Are missions, which cross national and cultural boundaries, a permanent or a temporary part of the Church’s obedience to God? What is the meaning of the term “nation” in the Bible, and what are its implications for the Christian mission? Is the crossing of sociological boundaries of the same theological significance as the crossing of geographical borders? Does the existence of a Church in a nation eliminate the necessity to send missionaries there?
4. What is the meaning and validity of the concept of a specific “missionary calling” of certain individuals? What does this mean in practice for the individual?
5. In what ways does the missionary proclamation of the Church involve a social witness?

6. In the missionary task of the Church, how can the preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of patterns of behavior be so related that salvation is not made to appear the result of conformity to such patterns?
7. What are the organizational consequences for missions of our understanding of the unity and mission of the Church? In the practical life of the churches what should be the relation of church structures and missionary agencies?



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