

## The Christian Mission in the Last Decades of the Twentieth Century

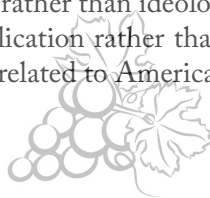
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*E. Luther Copeland*

What will be the shape of the Christian mission in the closing decades of this century? The topic of this paper is an ambitious one indeed and could be dealt with adequately only by a diviner - or somebody closer to the Divine in point of knowledge than I claim to be.

It is of passing interest, though perhaps of no major significance, that we stand this year at the mid-point between the end of World War Two, which occurred twenty seven years ago this summer, and the end of the Twentieth Century, which we trust will arrive twenty-seven years after the last day of this year. I have a feeling that this means that now is a good time to prophesy, though I really don't know why.

Actually, the intention of this paper is a modest one: the attempt to give some indication of (1) how the expressions of the Christian mission are in fact changing (2) what are some representative proposals for further or other change, and (3) what are the more likely prospects for changes in the next quarter of a century or so. For pragmatic purposes, i.e., in order to aim at something of manageable proportions in a brief paper, I am focusing upon structural rather than ideological changes, leaving the latter within the realm of implication rather than explication. Also the sources used are primarily those related to American expressions of world mission rather than European.



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## CHANGES ALREADY IN PROCESS

That changes in the shape of mission are inevitable and are in fact occurring no one can deny. Nor is it necessary to do more than mention the revolutionary developments of the environment of missions in the past few decades -- especially since World War Two -- which make these changes necessary (1) the end of Western political dominance of the non-Western world, attended by the rise of independent nations, national and cultural renaissance, the missionary revival of Eastern religions, the ground swell of anti-colonial, anti-imperialistic sentiment, and so on; (2) the development of an urban technological culture in the West and its universal expansion with revolutionary consequences; (3) the disintegration of Western Christendom and the recognition of the "Six Continent" dimension of the Christian mission, and (4) the emergence of the younger churches with their offer of new possibilities for missionary partnership as well as their delimiting of the missionary expressions of the older churches. All of these new developments and more have provided a new context for mission in the latter half of this century. Important changes in the shape of mission have occurred and further changes will occur before the century is over.

One of the drastic changes in the shape of mission is the transformation of what has been called 'mission(s)' into a system of inter-church aid. Mission throughout history has been primarily understood as sending expeditions and enterprises originating in Christian churches and directed toward the non-Christian (or not-yet-Christian) world. Mission in our time, in so far as most of the long-term sending agencies are concerned, is a matter of churches in the West sending aid in finance and personnel to the younger churches. In this process missionaries become "fraternal workers" or "ecumenical deacons" and "deaconesses." The "mission" as an organizational entity is absorbed into the young church or else divested of its authority and of all its functions except matters relating to salaries and perquisites of the missionaries. In Pierce Beaver's succinct phrase "a 'sending' enterprise has given way to a 'lending' operation."<sup>1</sup>

This transformation of mission into inter-church aid is by no means total. There is a tendency for denominational agencies, most of which are affiliated with the Division of Overseas Ministries of the National Council of Churches, to assure that what characterizes them is universal, when, as a matter of fact, they now represent only a minority of the Protestant missionary personnel sent from the United States. Even some of the older missionary agencies have only gone part way in the direction of inter-

1 R. Pierce Beaver, *The Missionary Between the Times* (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1968). p. 80.

church aid. Some missions, for example, still exert considerable authority over the developing churches. And many agencies, especially those which eschew ecumenical cooperation, are still in pioneering situations where a younger church hardly exists, at least a church with which they actively cooperate.

Some measure of integration of the overseas mission with the younger church accompanies this transformation of mission into inter-church aid. Interdenominational missionary agencies seem to have particular difficulty at this point even in situations where there is a relatively strong younger church. A 1960 statement of the Africa Inland Mission, for example, indicates that the integration of mission and church “would seem to be properly possibly only with denominational Missions.”<sup>2</sup> Among the spheres of responsibility reserved for the mission in this instance were the technical aspects of medical work, publication and building projects, schools for missionary children, missionary property, missionary finance for which the mission must give account, and the discipline of mission aries.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, three or four years ago, the Christian and Missionary Alliance saw serious problems in the proposed “coalescing of mission and church” involved in an ecumenical merger then in process of formation, namely the Church of Christ in Congo. The Alliance was willing to consider modification of the mission-church relationship but was not willing to go as far as the integration provided for in the plans of the merger.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, independent sending agencies that have mushroomed in the United States since 1945 are not involved in “inter-church aid” on a large scale. To be sure, the number of their missionaries is a minority of the total. Nevertheless, their existence reinforces the judgement that the transformation of mission to inter-church aid is far from universal.

A second major area of change in the patterns of mission in the post-war world is that of personnel. Many of these changes are rooted in the shift from mission to inter-church aid or the attendant shift from missionary to fraternal worker. Certainly the role of the missionary has changed in those situations where the younger church is developed and has authority to make personnel assignments. The preparation of missionaries has changed to include more thorough training and orientation not only to take into account the sensitive inter-cultural situation related to

2 *Inland Africa*, XLIV: 4 (July-August, 1960), p. 16.

3 Ibid.

4 Christian and Missionary Alliance, *Eighty-third Year Annual Report* (1969), pp. 97, 99. (Of course, it is questionable whether the Christian and Missionary Alliance is interdenominational).

nationalistic and anti-colonial sentiment in the larger environment but also the sensitivity of relationship between missionary and young church.

The difficulties in the way of pioneer evangelism in many places, the greater complexity and sophistication of the life of the young churches, and the emphasis upon "development" or "nation building" have meant increasing specialization of missionary personnel. It is reported that in a recent two-year period, for example, seventy-five percent of those attending the summer institutes through which all Lutheran missionaries pass before being sent abroad were 'laymen called to be teachers, doctors, nurses, administrators, all kinds of jobs, but only twenty-five percent ordained men going out to proclaim the Gospel.<sup>5</sup> This accent upon specialization and diversity with its corollary of the preeminence of laymen, is fairly typical, though not necessarily in the percentage just indicated. Of increasing prominence, also, is the attempt to involve in the work of the overseas churches laymen who travel and live abroad.

Heightened tensions of the missionary situation abroad have combined with changes in American culture to produce unusual stress upon missionaries and especially upon missionary families. As a result, furlough schedules have been adjusted for greater flexibility and in some cases specific provisions have been made for the pastoral care of missionaries and their families. Likewise, various factors inherent both in the overseas situation and American culture have resulted in a tendency to major on various types of short term missionary service and to reduce the emphasis upon career service. Quite striking, also, is the decrease in the proportion of single women participating in overseas missionary work. This last development is due to changes in the structure and status of women's missionary work in the American churches as well as more general changes in American culture.

As with the shift from mission to inter-church aid, not all of these new patterns of personnel are universal. For example, high standards for the academic preparation of missionaries and careful, well-planned programs of orientation are lacking in many of the newer missionary agencies. And these latter are proliferating, some seventy or so coming into existence in the decade of the 1960's.<sup>6</sup>

A third important change in the American missionary enterprise is the greatly increased prominence of "conservative evangelicals." We

5 Ivan Fagre, *What Is Happening to the Missionary . . . ?* *Mission in the 70's, What Direction?*, edited by Boberg and Scherer (Chicago: Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools, 1972), p. 59.

6 *North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, 9th edition, 1970, p. 5.

have been aware of this trend since the appearance of a special issue of the *Occasional Bulletin* of the Missionary Research Library analyzing “North American Protestant Missions” in 1960. This significant shift was further noted in an article by David M. Stowe published in January 1969.<sup>7</sup> The National Council’s Division of Overseas Ministries’ share in the total American missionary force has dipped from 43.5% in 1956 to 28% in 1969.<sup>8</sup> By now we know that not only is the percentage of Division of Overseas Ministries personnel decreasing but that the total number of missionaries of boards related to the Division of Overseas Ministries is also decreasing. There have been similar shifts in relative income of missionary agencies, though not as dramatic as the shifts in personnel strength.

One effect of the burgeoning growth of “conservative evangelical” agencies is the disruption of the unity of the missionary force and, to some degree, of the younger churches. The modern Protestant missionary movement, though pluralistic denominationally and theologically, has operated within a framework of basic unity. Comity, both on a formal and informal basis, has been broadly operative, and missionaries have developed fraternal relationships and ecumenical conferences, councils and so forth. The recognition that the modern ecumenical movement has been predominantly motivated by the missionary movement is commonplace.

Now, however, this broad unity is disturbed by those who denounce the main line denominational missionaries and leaders of the young churches to which they relate as being liberals. Organs of creedal ecumenism are established alongside the older ecumenical structures. Fears are expressed lest these sometimes strident expressions of disunity and conflict in the sensitive situations of nationalism and anti-colonialism imperil the continuation of the missionary presence. Particularly is this danger felt when conflict within the missionary force is accompanied by a negative or hostile attitude toward national cultures.

A fourth significant alteration in the pattern of world mission is the initial development of ecumenical structures of partnership. The maturation of the younger churches and “partnership in obedience” of older and younger churches was hailed at the Whitby Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1947. Since that time, not only have efforts been made to heal the church-mission dichotomy which

7 David M. Stowe, *Changing Patterns of Missionary Service in Today’s World*. *Occasional Bulletin* from the Missionary Research Library, XX : 1 (January 1969), p. 2.

8 Ibid., *North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, 9th edition, 1970, p. 4. The latter figure includes the missionary agencies related to the Canadian Council of Churches.

contradicted that partnership -- especially by the merger of the WCC and the IRC in 1961. We have witnessed also the development of regional structures of ecumenism of which the East Asia Christian Conference was the pioneer. And Joint Action in Mission, though in considerable degree more ideal than actual, has kept before the churches and missionary agencies the imperative of implementing practically the commitment to partnership in obedience.

At the same time the strengthening of world confessionalism has been viewed generally as more threat than promise to the larger ecumenical partnership. Even more threatening is the development of the counter-ecumenism of some of the so-called "conservative evangelicals," which was mentioned previously.

### SOME REPRESENTATIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTHER CHANGE

By now it is a commonplace for persons basically committed to the Christian mission -- as well as those not favorably inclined -- to tell us that the missionary structures developed in the nineteenth century must either be abandoned or drastically altered and reshaped.

Many have said bluntly that the old structures cannot be renewed or reformed. To be relevant to the new era, the nineteenth century structure of mission boards operating from a Western base simply must go. Keith Bridston, in *Mission Myth and Reality*, expressed the conviction that "a reformation of the missionary movement is not enough."<sup>9</sup> But he qualified this statement to speak of the "possibility" of the irreformability of the traditional forms.<sup>10</sup> Or, again, he suggested that "the magnitude of the changes in our time may require radical transformation, in short, the actual death of the old forms, in order that the church may fulfill its mission today and tomorrow."<sup>11</sup> Though Bridston had some suggestions to make for this "radical transformation" of the mission boards, his book primarily aimed to "right questions" rather than to suggest answers.<sup>12</sup>

Some others, likewise committed to the Christian mission, do not bother to qualify their calls for abandonment of the old structures. One of these is Fr. Paul Verghese, a theologian of an older church (the Syrian Orthodox) existing among "younger churches" in India. In a 1970 article,

9 Keith Bridston, *Mission Myth and Reality* (New York: Friendship Press, 1965), p. 16.

10 Ibid., p. 17.

11 Ibid., p. 18.

12 Ibid.



Fr . Verghese does not speak of contemporary mission as “ecumenical partnership” or “inter-church aid. His terms are “economic imperialism” and “neocolonialism”! Relief agencies and mission boards control the younger churches through the purse-strings,he declares. “Foreign finances, ideas and personnel still dominate the younger churches and stifle their spontaneous growth.” Verghese indicates his suspicion of the ecumenical movement and charges both Protestants and Catholics with collaborating in “this neocolonialist domination and Western cultural imperialism in the ecclesiastical sphere.” He concludes:

So now I say, “The mission of the church is the greatest enemy of the gospel!” I began to say it 15 years ago, rather softly. Very rarely did I find any creative response. Therefore I have decided to be rude and rough about this matter. I still do not have much hope that the Western church (or even the dependent non-Western churches) will see the point, because to see it is to be pushed to most drastic changes in church life both in the West and in the rest.<sup>13</sup>

So we are left to ponder what the “drastic changes” may be -- other than to cease our Western missionary activity.

Similarly unqualified in his call for abandonment of the old forms of mission, though more charitable in tone, is a younger churchman. Professor E. P. Nacpil, Dean of Union Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines. In an article published last year in the *International Review of Mission*, Professor Nacpil states his belief “that the present structure of modern missions is dead.” And the first thing we ought to do is to eulogize it and then bury it, no matter how painful and expensive it is to bury the dead. He praises the missionary structure for performing so magnificently as a midwife, “to bring to birth ‘the Christian community in the world, but he insists that now that the child is born, there is no longer any need for a midwife!” Nacpil asserts that “the most missionary service a missionary under the present system can do today in Asia is to go home! And the most free and vital and daring act the younger churches can do today is to stop asking for missionaries under the present system.” Nacpil insists, however, that “the death of the present missionary system does not mean the end of mission.” He expects rather that “mission, which is essential to the being of the Church, will rise to new life in a new form consistent

13 Paul Verghese, *A Sacramental Humanism* (“How My Mind Has Changed” Series), *Christian Century*, LXXXVII: 38 (September 23, 1970), pp. 1118-1119.

with the selfhood of the younger churches, the pressures of the ecumenical imperative, and the dynamism and pluralism of life in contemporary history.”<sup>14</sup> Again, Nacpil gives us little hope concerning what the “new form” of missionary structures will be.

George N. Patterson, a journalist and former missionary to China, joins his call for abandonment of the present structures of mission with concrete proposals for their replacement.<sup>15</sup> Patterson traces the modern missionary societies to the Industrial Revolution, and specifically to Wilberforce’s “Clapham Sect,” a voluntary society whose major purpose was to produce social reforms through action of the British Parliament. The development of capitalism, the increase of industrialization and the emergence of a social consciousness led to more and more philanthropic societies on the same voluntary pattern and with a “board of directors” structure. The relative success of these societies was assured in the favorable climate of Western imperialism.

Now, however, says Patterson, a new age has rendered the old societies obsolete. New strategy and structures will have to take into serious account the new forces of technology, nationalism, socialism, and communication. Particularly important is the “Communications Revolution” which will change the patterns of life as profoundly as did the Industrial Revolution. Patterson goes on to describe the world-wide system of communications satellites (INTELSAT - International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium) now being developed by a partnership of over sixty countries. These satellites can transmit various forms of communication simultaneously -- telephone, radio, television, data, and facsimile. They promise a great increase of television, especially closed circuit, and profound effects upon news coverage and teaching methods.

The new strategy, then, according to Patterson, will need to be based upon the communications revolution. It will depend upon high finance, the mass media and the humanities. The development of the new strategy will demand “a decision to reject the concept and support of nineteenth-century type missions, and consequent withdrawal of all finance and personnel from such activities.” It will involve the establishment of regional Christian Communication Centers staffed by Christian professionals from a variety of humanistic disciplines, anthropology, sociology, political science and

14 Emerito P. Nacpil, *Mission but Not Missionaries*, *International Review of Mission*, LX 239 (July, 1971), pp. 359-360.

15 George N. Patterson, *Christianity in Communist China* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1969), pp. 149-159.



others, as well as writers and technologists of the various communications media. The chief aim of these centers would be the development and expansion of the living churches in all forms of society from primitive tribal to sophisticated urban.

At first, there would be five such centers, in the United States, South America, Africa, Asia and Europe. Then other subsidiary centers would be formed. Within five years, Patterson believes, these centers would be producing a body of uniquely trained communications experts. Each center would contain a research unit, computers, a library, press, radio and television facilities, a school of journalism, an international news agency bureau and a publication unit. The centers would be financed by churches, individuals, institutions and foundations. Finance would be handled by a Christian Communications Fund administered by Christian businessmen who are also experts in high finance.

Obviously, critical questions can (and should) be raised concerning Patterson's proposal: for example, is not its financial structure geared precisely to Western capitalism rather than to the Third World? Where does it provide for theological understanding and a Christian critique of culture? Does it not limit mission to an elite of technical experts? Does it give adequate promise of personalized witness and ministry after the pattern of the Incarnation? I should think that the proposal as it stands is neither feasible nor desirable, but it is not my purpose to attempt critical analysis at this point but to present some representative proposals of which Patterson's is one.

Most Christian scholars who see the need for new patterns of mission propose not the obliteration of the present forms à la Verghese and Nacpil nor radical displacement à la Patterson. Rather, they envisage and propose evolution of the present forms into something more appropriate to the new era. Keith Bridston, in spite of his pessimism concerning reformation of the old structures, comes finally to suggest that mission boards, if they are to continue their existence, will have to serve new functions. And he admits that this has already happened to some extent: modern mission boards tend to be the liaison agencies for the churches' international ecclesiastical relations. He sees the possibility of their further transformation into centers for training laymen in missionary vocation in secular occupations, or as ecumenical clearing houses for channeling specialists from the mission boards' own constituencies to meet needs of other churches.<sup>16</sup>

16 Bridston, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

Similarly, Arend van Leeuwen, in his profound, provocative and difficult book, *Christianity in World History*, more than once suggests that the old forms of mission are done for.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, his view that Christianity, submerged in Western technological civilization, is being carried into the non-Western world incognito implies that missionary sending agencies are no longer necessary. Actually, however, he envisions a continuing missionary task to be done ecumenically: "The period of Western missionary activity overseas is drawing to a close; but that can only mean that now the 'whole church' throughout the world takes over full responsibility for the vision, the dynamic initiative and the historical vocation which up to now the Western missions have been implementing."<sup>18</sup> The reexamination which is necessary may mean a radical transformation "of the Western missionary enterprise in all its aspects," says van Leeuwen, but he does not sketch for us what shape the transformation may take.

Among those who envisage further evolution of missionary agencies. Dr. Pierce Beaver has made some concrete, well-considered suggestions. Beaver has proposed a coordinating agency for Protestant missions paralleling the function achieved by the Propaganda in Roman Catholic missions. Such an organization democratically constructed and motivated, "could provide planning clecirmce and joint action without destroying denominational freedom and responsibility and without still further removing sending from the local congregation. ..." Also, by its international character, this agency could "remove the national taint from some of the money used in the mission." It could foster interdenominational, international, interracial teams and community projects in ministry. The United Mission to Nepal could be a model for this type of mission which has long been advocated but scarcely tried.<sup>19</sup>

Beaver also suggested deliberate attempts at experimental pioneering missions for which the board would select a few persons "who combine creative imagination and initiative, a warm and contagious faith, and an apostolic urgency to communicate the Gospel in a new or seemingly unconventional manner." As an example, he cited the category of "missionary-at-large" established by the United Church Board for World Ministries.<sup>20</sup> As special fields for new missionary effort, Beaver

17 Arend Th. van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History* (London: Edinburgh House, 1964), pp. 16-19, 430.

18 Ibid., p. 430.

19 Beaver, *The Missionary between the Times*, pp. 95-96.

20 Ibid., p. 97.

suggested immigrant and other 'diaspora' populations, primitive peoples, students and intelligentsia, and the industrial metropolises.<sup>21</sup>

Still other proposals are aimed to complement the work of mission boards and societies or possibly to replace the latter as they are phased out. Herbert C. Jackson has suggested a Protestant monastery-based approach for which the Protestant Community at Taizé might be the model.<sup>22</sup> William J. Danker has given much research and emphasis to the promotion of self-supporting missionary enterprises, geared not to the agrarian type of self-sustenance of the medieval monastery, but to modern commercial and industrial society.<sup>23</sup> John H. Yoder has made the intriguing suggestion of what he calls "migration evangelism."<sup>24</sup> The idea is that groups of Christians would migrate into parts of the world where a Christian witness is urgently needed. There they would support themselves financially by providing professional and technical services needed by the country of their new residence. They would identify with the people among whom they chose to live to the point of taking out citizenship if possible, and raising their children as citizens of their adopted country. Of course, they would give their Christian witness and develop a Christian community. Strangely (to me) this suggestion has received little attention.

## MISSION FOR THE REST OF THE CENTURY

Now the time has come for a modest bit of prophecy. Let me be frank to say that at this point I find it difficult to distinguish what I want to happen from what I think may happen. I shall try to maintain this distinction but with freedom to indicate my preference for the future in a place or two.

Up to now, I have taken pains to indicate some trends and some suggestions for change in order to show that my projections for the future are not spun out of thin air. On the other hand, obviously nobody can predict the future with any certainty. Utterly unforeseen events may and probably will occur between now and A.D. 2000. Who knows what new

21 Ibid., pp. 99 ff.

22 Herbert C. Jackson, "Some Old Patterns for New in Missions," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, XVII: 29-30.

23 William J. Danker, *Two Worlds or None* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), passim., esp. Chapter 20; "A Piece of the Action . . .,"

*The Future of the Christian World Mission*, edited by Danker and Kang (Grand Rapids, Mich. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 155-161.

24 John H. Yoder, *As You Go* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1961), pp. 17-18.

and strange winds of the Spirit may blow upon church and world with quite unpredictable results? But, for all that, here goes.

In the first place, no doubt many of the present patterns and trends will continue, but with greater diversity. Uncertain, questing times may be expected to strike up new variations of old themes. In my judgment, diversity in missionary expression is good, so long as it is within the circle of commitment to Christ and love of the brethren. In my own experience as a missionary. I functioned with great satisfaction as a member of a younger church and under its direction. I had ample opportunity to communicate the Gospel to non-Christians. Nevertheless, I applaud those who dare to go to pioneer areas which younger churches sometimes seem not to recognize. If it were not for these frontiersmen, there would be fewer and weaker younger churches with which to cooperate. I am speaking in favor of diversity and inclusiveness. "He that is not against us is for us" is a good dominical word for application here.

The Frank Farrell article of two years ago, which first appeared in *World Vision* and then in the 1970 edition of *North American Protestant Ministries Overseas*, sought to project missionary trends for this present decade. It was a very helpful article. The projection was based on a questionnaire which for the most part inquired about trends already discernible. The missions authorities who responded expressed a very large measure of agreement in affirming the continuation or accentuation of present trends. Particularly in matters of organization, personnel and operation, the aspects of the missionary enterprise most attended to in this present paper, there was overwhelming agreement. The easiest, safest and most natural projection of the future is in terms of what is already happening, more of which can therefore be expected.

I am suggesting, then, that the changes already in process which were noted earlier in this paper will continue - with modifications. Mission will be more universally transformed into inter-church aid. Boards and missionaries which have been laggard in recognizing the real autonomy of young churches will move further in this direction. At the same time, other trends will affect this one. Financial subsidies - a large part of inter-church aid - will be decreased as "indigenous" methods continue to find acceptance and as financial resources of the West shrink. And attempts will be made for mission boards and societies to break out of what many view as their captivity and subservience to the younger churches - to find freedom for mission again rather than the mere continuance of inter-church aid.

No doubt specialization will continue and become more universal, and diversity of length of term and categories of service as well. The relative prominence of laymen in missionary service is likely to increase rather than decrease.

I expect that new missionary societies from the conservative segment of American Christianity will continue to be born and that personnel from this source will increase for some time. Nevertheless, there are indications that “conservative evangelical” agencies and their constituencies will repeat in broad outline some of the developments of the main line Protestants. Already, for example, some of them are having to reckon with the problems of relationship to mature young churches and are having to alter missionary roles accordingly. They are moving in the direction of an inter-church aid enterprise. Some of the leaders of “conservative evangelicals” are also taking note of the same developments in their constituencies which have resulted in a decrease in missionary volunteers and missionary giving in the ecumenical churches.<sup>25</sup>

It is indeed likely that, for good or ill, the same cultural influences that have made the ecumenical churches what they are will increasingly influence the conservative evangelicals. The latter certainly are moving toward acceptance of social action as a legitimate and necessary expression of Christian faith. Conversely, there are some signs of a renewed emphasis upon evangelism in the ecumenical churches. For example in 1971, the United Church Board of World Ministries added an Evangelism Consultant to its staff, and the directors issued a booklet entitled ‘Toward A Working Definition of Evangelism.’ A key sentence in the booklet stated that “evangelism is word and deed which testify to and participate in the acts of God in Jesus Christ and call forth the response of conversion; conversion being understood as the continuing reorientation of individuals and communities to the willing service of God.”<sup>26</sup>

If conservative evangelicals find themselves on a course already traversed by their ecumenical brethren -- buffeted or helped along by the same winds -- and if the more “liberal churches” experience a renewal of evangelism, then may we not hope for increasing rapport between the two?

I expect, also, that new structures of mission will emerge as the evolved forms or amplifications of present missionary and ecumenical agencies. Perhaps a coordinating agency for Protestant missions will appear,

25 See Harold Lindsell's chapter, 'The Evangelical Mission: The Home Base.' in *The Future of the Christian World Mission*, ed. Danker and Kang.

26 United Church Board for Christian Ministries, *161st Annual Report* (1971), p. 5.

along the lines of Beaver's proposal. I suspect, however, that the movement of Roman Catholics into the stream of the ecumenical movement may make possible a somewhat loosely structured coordinating agency, maybe a new and enlarged form of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, which will include Roman Catholic and Orthodox participation.

In addition, I envisage regional and national centers which may operate as networks for the coordination and pooling of finance and personnel. It may well be that they will serve the sophisticated research and communications functions of Patterson's proposed centers. One would hope, however, that these centers, if they come into being, will be theologically oriented, something seemingly not attended to by Patterson. They may draw into themselves, also, the functions of research and dialogue executed by such agencies as the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society at Bangalore and its sister agencies in other places.

Such a network of mission centers would be excellent launching pads for the international, interdenominational, interracial teams of missionaries about which we have dreamed for a long time. With the pooling of inspired imaginations, many kinds of experimental missions might be sent forth from these centers to penetrate the Six Continents, even some inter-cultural teams of migration missionaries as an elaboration of Yoder's model: Best of all, this network of centers would give opportunity for mission to become 'sending' once more. Let me add, also, that I would hope that these centers would encourage rather than stifle spontaneity. There would be no need for them to try to contain and control all expressions of mission. Far from it! Let them encourage and enable missionary enterprises that arise and continue outside their own circles. One regional center might be established on a "pilot project" basis. Very tentatively, and in broad outline, I would suggest the following functions for such a regional center

- (1) Coordination relating to finance and personnel: the pooling of finance on an international and ecumenical basis; a similar pooling of personnel, including personnel recruitment, orientation and language study the coordination of sending to prevent overlapping and overlooking; and the encouragement and planning of experimental missions.

- (2) Cooperative research: continuous research to relate missionary philosophy and methodology to regional



cultures and cultural change, research on religions, old and new, and on expressions of secular culture; dialogue with non-Christians to enrich and vitalize evangelism, research related to church growth and church planning research relating to communications -- its resources, its technics, its methods.

(3) Maintenance of data bank and corps of experts: storage of information from above research, integration of theological interpretation with expertise in communications, the religions, church growth, church planning, etc.

(4) A catalytic and enabling function: encouragement of innovative experiments under the ecumenical umbrella of the center and beyond availability of its resources on a wide basis without control being the price of contribution.

If this projection of a network of ecumenical missionary centers operative before the year 2000 is realistic at all, then perhaps a further projection is all the more so; any such network will be paralleled by similar structures of world confessionalism, no doubt at least by universal networks of Baptists and Lutherans! In fact, these latter may even precede the ecumenical network.

This kind of international and ecumenical structure of coordinating centers of mission will be ready made for another important happening which is likely to come before the end of the twentieth century. I speak of the probable shifting of the center of resources for the Christian mission from the United States and other Western nations to the so-called Third World -- to Africa, or to Asia and the Pacific Island World, or to Latin America, or to all of this vast area of the non-Western world together. In any case, only some such universal network of cooperative missionary agencies will take seriously enough the Six Continent dimension of the missionary task and free mission from its too-close association with Western churches.

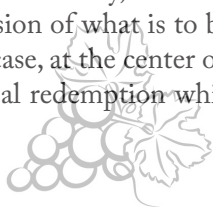
Now how will we get there from here? Gradually, no doubt, but I am speaking of a span of 27<sup>1/2</sup> years. The International Missionary Council and the network of National Christian Councils which comprised its younger church form of membership came into being in less time. Probably the process will be one of evolution with present missionary and ecumenical structures being developed into this universal network.

Involved perhaps would be the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC, the East Asia Christian Conference and its counterparts, the Division of Overseas Ministries of the NCC, some of the missionary service agencies, NCC's and, of course, some of the mission boards and societies. Possibly some of the missionary agencies of "evangelical" ecumenism will be included as well, especially if some time lag is involved. If the larger ecumenical structures, such as the Division of World Mission and Evangelism, fail to take seriously the world missionary task, if they are not really concerned with communicating the good news of Christ across all cultural and geographical frontiers, they will surely be by-passed and replaced.

I suggest that the process probably will be one of evolution of the present structures of mission because institutions are tenacious. They tend to die slowly and sometimes to await burial a long time after their death, which can become messy! But the great pressures upon mission boards of the ecumenical churches now, and the threats to their existence, are favorable to the prospect of significant change.

An alternative to waiting upon evolutionary change would be a new World Mission Conference in the lineage of Edinburgh 1910 and the International Missionary Council's Congresses. Such a world conference could be sponsored by the Division of World Mission and Evangelism and other appropriate agencies. The World Council of Churches appears to be the most logical agency to call this conference, since it has as one of its functions 'to call world conferences on specific subjects as occasion may require. . . .' This conference should be broadly representative of Christian missionary agencies of older and younger churches. And it should be carefully planned for ahead of time with the purpose of determining the new structures of mission to Six Continents in our new age. In fact, I should like to propose such a truly representative World Mission Conference, perhaps to meet in 1980.

These projections indicate the way one man sees the future of the shape of mission for the rest of this century, or at least a possible future. It may just be somewhere near a vision of what is to be. Or, again, it may be little more than a dream. In any case, at the center of whatever future God gives us is his mission of universal redemption which he calls his church to share.



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