



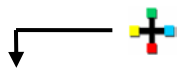
One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today

1958

J.E. Lesslie Newbigin

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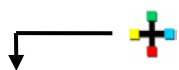
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I. Occasion, Purpose, And Context Of The Paper

The occasion of this paper is the discussion which is going on in the International Missionary Council and its member councils about the proposal to integrate the I.M.C. and the World Council of Churches in one body. The purpose, however, is to raise much larger questions concerning the situation and task of the Christian world mission in our day, for it is only by doing so that we can see the question of integration in its true perspective. There is a real danger that the discussion of the proposal for integration should become entirely absorbed in the details of organization, and that the larger questions concerning the Church's faithfulness to its missionary calling should be forgotten. If this were allowed to happen the achievement of integration would remain sterile. And this would be to lose the great opportunity with which the present discussion presents us. Like every living movement, the world missionary movement can only remain living and healthy if it is willing to take difficult decisions. There is a very natural human desire that things should always remain unchanged, but to succumb to this is death. The fact that the present discussion puts all concerned with the missionary movement in the position of having to take difficult and perhaps costly decisions is one which should be accepted not with resignation or resentment, but with gratitude and faith. The right response to such a situation is surely a fresh attempt to discern what are the next steps that God has prepared for us in the Church's mission as the bearer of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

The context of the discussion is the membership of the councils and churches connected with the two world councils concerned. If one were talking with the great bodies of Christians –

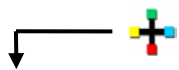


to the right and to the left – who do not at present co-operate with the two councils, there is much that would have to be said. No attempt is made to say it here. I wish to make this point plainly so that what is written here may be judged in the light of its real intention.

The paper originated in some words spoken to an informal meeting of I.M.C. officers in Montreal in June 1958. These were expanded into a longer paper which formed the basis of a three-day discussion by I.M.C. staff and consultants in September. In the light of this it has been re-written and is now published as a stimulus to further thought and study. It should be made clear that while the paper has benefited from this process of discussion, it is not to be regarded as having any official status and it does not constitute a statement of the views of the International Missionary Council. The writer is alone responsible for the views expressed.

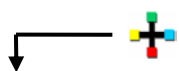
II. The Present Situation Of Christian Missions

The missionary movement to-day stands in a critical situation. If we compare the mood of the present with that of earlier decades, it is difficult to escape the impression that there is to-day a certain hesitancy, a certain loss of momentum. It is true that there are certain areas of real growth. It is also true that there are some Christian bodies which claim large advances as shown by their statistics; one would need to make a careful analysis of these to find out how far they refer to genuine missionary advance and how far to proselytism from among existing churches. It is true also that some societies in some areas are able to secure large numbers of missionary recruits; one would have to ask how far the sending of these missionaries is really resulting in the penetration of non-Christian cultures by the Gospel and the building up of vital and stable indigenous churches. In spite of the evidence of vigorous growth in certain areas, the



facts remain that the churches in Asia are almost entirely from the loosely attached fringes of Asian society and have not penetrated into the ancient religious cultures to any significant extent; that Islam is – again with some exceptions – as completely resistant to the Gospel as ever, and is in some areas advancing relative to Christianity; that world-wide Communism faces the Christian mission with an aggressive opposition undreamed of fifty years ago; and that it is extremely probable – in view of the rapid rise in the world's population – that the number of Christians relative to the whole is decreasing rather than increasing.

But we are concerned in the present discussion not only with facts such as these, but with the convictions and attitudes of Christians. There have been very widespread changes in theological conviction which have undermined older forms of missionary motivation. I do not speak here of the complete loss of belief in the sufficiency and finality of the Gospel which has taken many right out of the sphere of missionary concern and therefore out of the context of the present discussion. Even for those who unhesitatingly acknowledge that being a Christian means being committed to a mission to the whole world, many older ways of stating the missionary obligation have become untenable. But I do not think that it is in this area of the theology of mission that the main grounds for our present hesitancy lie. There have been changes in the world situation – partly the fruit of the missionary labours of earlier decades – which have made some former expressions of the missionary imperative impossible for many sincere and devoted Christians to-day. The profound change in the balance of cultural and political power as between the nations of Europe and America and those of the rest of the world, and the development of much more effective means of contact between the different parts of the world, have made it impossible to use many of the arguments for missions which were common in a former day. It is simply impossible to suggest to the intelligent western Christian



of to-day that in going from Europe to Asia he is going from light to darkness. The rise of the 'younger churches' and their increasingly vigorous and effective participation in the ecumenical movement invalidates many older attitudes, and raises for thoughtful Christians the question "Are missions still needed?" The circumstances in which China became closed to western missions

have raised very searching questions in the minds of thoughtful people regarding the relation between 'foreign missions' and the development of truly indigenous churches. As a result of such changes as these, one often finds that the able and devoted Christian young man or woman who in a former day would unhesitatingly have offered for service as a foreign missionary, is to-day doubtful whether it would not be more in accordance with real Christian obedience to offer his service abroad in some other capacity. The very name 'missionary' is being abandoned in some quarters in favour of the phrase 'fraternal worker'. The sense of direction, the feeling of urgency, and the depth of conviction which underlay the slogan "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation" are not present to-day in anything like the same measure in most of the bodies represented in the I.M.C. and the W.C.C. Everyone who is concerned in the present discussion would agree that the fundamental religious grounds for mission remain unchanged; and yet the facts stated above are true. We are in a period of hesitancy. No good purpose is served by denying this.

In such a period, two wrong courses are open. One is to allow oneself to be ruled by the spirit of the time, instead of being driven back to the Bible itself, and to the fundamentals of the Gospel, in order to lay hold afresh upon the real sources of the Christian mission. It is to say, with something like a shrug of the shoulders, that the age of missions is over and the age of ecumenism has come. This is, of course, a hopelessly debased conception of ecumenism. A movement which is not missionary has no right to the use of the word 'ecumenical'. As the Central

Committee of the W.C.C. said at Rolle in 1951: "It is important to insist that this word, which comes from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth, is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole world." A conception of ecumenism which had lost concern for the evangelization of the whole world would be quite contrary to everything which the W.C.C. itself stands for.

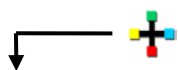
The other wrong course is to try to escape from our hesitancy by going back instead of going forward, by trying to recapture both the methods and the mood of the 19th century. It means looking round the world for areas which are still so backward that the 19th century pattern can still be applied. Or it means developing a sort of missionary work which acts over the heads of the young churches of Asia and Africa as though they were not churches in the true sense at all and could be ignored.

Examples of both these false solutions could be adduced. Perhaps the most serious danger that faces us is that in fact both of these broad and blind alleys should draw off a large part of the body of faithful Christians who support the missionary enterprise of the Church. I mean that, on the one hand, an enfeebled missionary element should go into the W.C.C., without the clear convictions necessary to ensure that the missionary concern is planted in the heart of the life of the churches; and that, on the other hand, a considerable body of support should be syphoned off into some sort of 'I.M.C. Continuing' which would endeavour to capture the goodwill of the missionary-minded churches for policies conceived in terms of the 19th century pattern.

But there is a third possibility, another way which may not be broad and easy, but which leads forward. It is that we should undertake the costly but exciting task of Ending out what is the pattern for the Church's mission in the new day in which God has been pleased to put us. This is not, first, a matter of organization – though questions of organization necessarily

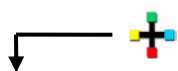
arise in their proper place. It is a matter of fundamental theological thinking, of Bible study, and of discerning the signs of the times. Perhaps what we need above all – and only God can give it to us – is a vision, a symbol, a myth – if you like – which will evoke from the ordinary Christian the response which God wants of us in our generation. Livingstone's picture of the smoke of a

thousand villages which had never heard the Gospel, provided that symbol in an age when the world was being opened up by the white man. (The white man tends to forget that the other people lived there already!) It does not now correspond to the realities of the world we live in; Fuchs and his party have made 'the last great journey' and there are no more unknown areas of the world's surface. There are certainly large areas of the world which are still practically unevangelized, and they ought to be far more on our consciences than they usually are. But this picture of the 'regions beyond' cannot provide the centre of missionary vision for our day. Nor can Mott's vision of "the evangelization of the world in this generation". That call is as valid today as it was when it was first formulated. But it cannot have the power that it had then, because it does not take account of the reality which dominates our thinking and which was absent from the world of sixty years ago – the reality of a world divided into colossal antagonistic power-blocks and always trembling on the brink of an all-annihilating war. In the world of to-day, only a Church which effectively united Christians on both sides of the dividing walls could effectively use that slogan. May God speed the day when we can effectively use it again! That indeed is the prime concern of this paper. But, for the immediate present I do not think we have very far to seek for the essential outline of a symbol for the coming days. It is already present in the thinking and speaking of missionaries and churchmen during the last decade or so. It could be briefly stated as "The whole Church, with one Gospel of reconciliation for the whole world". I am not offering that as a slogan. But I think there is no doubt that an appeal



along these lines evokes a response to-day from a generation which is left unmoved by the older appeals. The unsolved problems of human togetherness hang over our generation with appalling menace. The Christian world mission holds the secret that can make mankind one family; this is its appeal to the youth of to-day. It has been objected that the idea of unity is static and has no explosive power. Certainly there are times and places at which unity has degenerated into uniformity and has to be challenged in the name of truth and life. But perhaps it is a significant symbol that – in our day at least – the most tremendous explosions are produced by fusion, not by fission

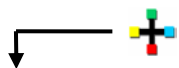
May we hope that God will give us here a focus for our work, a symbol, and a vision which will call forth in our new situation a response of obedience comparable to what happened in earlier days? The answer to that question is that we may indeed hope to find along this line the true way forward *if* – and it is a very important 'if' – we recognize that this symbol will only evoke a response when it is seen that it corresponds with the facts. At present it does *not* correspond with the facts. The form and structure both of our churches and of our missionary operations are emphatically *not* conformed to the pattern "one fellowship, one Gospel, one world". Until we face that fact, we shall use the slogan in vain. Indeed, one must put the matter more strongly. Fruit ripens slowly, but when the moment comes that it is ripe, it must be plucked at once or it will rot. So ideas form slowly in men's minds, but if – at the proper time – they are not translated into action, they become not merely sterile but noxious. I am convinced that we stand at such a moment in the development of missionary thinking. Our talk for many years has been along the line which I have indicated; but our structures, our operations, do not correspond. Inevitably an impression is created that our talk is vain. The way forward is therefore, as always, first of all a turning round, a repentance – and that is true both for churches and for missions.



III. Repentance – On Both Sides

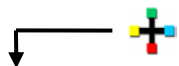
There is need for penitence on the side of 'missions'. The whole modern missionary movement is full of the marks of man's greatness and misery. When one thinks of the vast outreach of the whole movement, its penetration into the deepest recesses of human culture all over the world, the

part it has played in the rebirth of scores of nations, the intrepid pioneers who cheerfully gave their lives, the men and women who endured danger, loneliness, hardship for the body and more exacting hardship for the spirit, the outpouring of prayer and generosity and devotion that sustained it all, and the great family of churches which is its enduring memorial, one must surely say that this is one of the great acts of God in history. But we who are involved as missionaries know that there is another side to the picture, one that is not often shown to the supporting churches. When we contemplate some of the heart-breaking problems that confront us in our work, how is it that we have been able to brush off so easily Christ's word to the churchmen of his time: "You traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves"? When we grieve over some of the problems of the younger churches, must we not be honest enough to recognize that we are looking into the reflections of our own faces—that it is *our* love of power, *our* conception of 'success', *our* reliance on the flesh rather than the Spirit, which we see facing us. The district missionary has often possessed a combination of spiritual and economic power over his converts, such as to engender, even in saintly and God-fearing men, the evils to which absolute power always leads. And who can deny that the whole witness which we have (collectively) borne to the world by the missionary movement of the past two centuries, has been profoundly infected by cultural and economic domination, by paternalism, by all the elements which have brought colonialism into disrepute in so many parts of the world, and caused its con-



structive achievements to be forgotten. The fact that these words will be felt to be shocking in the context of a missionary meeting in one of the sending churches is a measure of the unreality which infects much missionary thinking. We have allowed a dangerous dichotomy to develop between the sending and the receiving end of 'missions'. In the sending churches, the missionary enterprise stands for all that is noblest and most self-sacrificing in the Church's work. It stands for the ideal of complete commitment to Christ and His service. If you cut foreign missions out of the life of the great churches of Europe and America you would cut out something absolutely vital to their spiritual health. And yet, at the other end of the operation, the word 'mission' has quite different overtones. Over great areas of Asia and Africa the word 'mission', in contrast to the word 'church', stands for the place where the power is, where the money is, where the old colonial pattern still hangs on after it has been banished from the political sphere. It stands, sometimes, as an object of envy and hatred, not by non-Christians but precisely by Christians. But this side of the picture does not appear on the screen at the missionary meeting 'at home'. How many missionaries have been heard to remark about some quite common incident of their work "That won't do for a home letter"? How many missionaries face with trepidation the prospect of deputation work in the home church, just because they fear that they are expected to present a picture which is far from being the whole truth? Until this deep dichotomy between the sending and the receiving end of 'missions' is healed, there cannot be full reality in the phrase "The whole Church with one Gospel for the whole world". The way forward for 'missions' must begin with repentance.

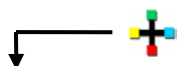
Equally certainly there is need for penitence on the side of the churches. It may be doubted whether the real implications of integration have yet been faced by the churches at the level of ordinary congregational life. It is not here a question of the structure of the W.C.C., or even of the internal structure of



each denomination – the question, for instance, whether foreign missions are carried on by the denomination as such or by separate missionary societies. These are important questions, but not fundamental. The fundamental question is whether the church as such *is* a mission. It is the

question of what is meant by being a churchman. The conception of the church which is still operative in (one may guess) the majority of congregations is that it is the receptacle into which the results of missionary activity are placed. It is not regarded as itself the missionary agency. Missionary work, whether at home or abroad, is regarded as primarily the business of full-time specialists. Of course it is the duty of all churchmen to support their work by giving and prayer, but the work itself is in the hands of full-time paid agents. It is not the *raison d'être* of the whole body. If it were accepted as such, there would be a profound transformation in the accepted patterns of congregational life, of ministry, of Christian action in the world.

One must, of course, immediately add with thankfulness that there are many people within the churches who are acutely aware of this situation. One of the most significant strands in the work of the W.C.C. has been the work of the Department on the Laity, which has been tirelessly exploring and explaining the implications of the fact that to be a layman means to be part of God's mission to the world. (It is one of the fruits of our present dis-integration that the immense importance of this 'laymen's work' for what are called 'foreign missions' is still largely unnoticed.) It is true that many good Christians still think of laymen's work as being a matter of enlisting more and more laymen and women as 'auxiliary church workers' – an excellent and necessary thing to do, but not the centre of the matter. It is still hard to bring even keen and instructed churchmen to the point of seeing that the Church's life and witness, her encounter with the world and therefore her place of obedience, is precisely in the work of her lay members from Monday to Saturday; that so far from 'church work' being something



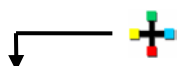
which primarily happens on Sunday, it is something which primarily happens from Monday to Saturday, Sunday being the day on which the Church makes a necessary withdrawal from its engagement with the world in order to renew the inner springs of the divine life within her through word and sacraments. This deep and disastrous distortion of the Church's life has its roots so far back in history that it is very hard for the churches to recognize it for what it is. But one may safely say that the phrase "The whole Church with one Gospel for the whole world" will not be filled with meaning for our day until the churches undergo a very deep repentance at this point, and learn again what it means that the Church *is* a mission.

IV. The Unchanging Basis

I have said that there is need to begin with Bible study. In every age we have to go back to God's revelation of Himself to learn afresh, by the guiding of the Spirit, what is our duty for to-day. In this paper I do not propose to go deep into the question of the theological basis of mission, for this is to be the subject of a very serious enquiry initiated by the two world councils this year. I must begin, however, by drawing very brief attention to some of the elements in the New Testament record which must form the basis of any thinking about our task to-day.

(a) The Mission of Christ and of His Church.

We have to begin from the New Testament. The Church's mission is none other than the carrying on of the mission of Christ Himself. "As the Father has sent me even so send I you." How shall we define that mission? It would be a mistake to attempt to sum it up in a simple formula, when the New Testament itself contains such a wide variety of language on the subject. We might begin with our Lord's own account of it: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim

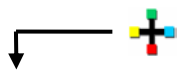


release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." The record in the four gospels shows us

how the programme was carried out. The various apostolic writers give us their summaries and interpretations of it. He was sent to do God's will. He came to make the Father's Name known. He came to manifest and establish the righteousness of God. He came that men might believe, and be justified. He came that they might have peace with God. He came to reconcile the world to God. He came that men might have life. He came to seek and save the lost. He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. All these phrases represent only a small selection of the relevant language of the New Testament. They may serve to remind us of the dimensions of the mission with which He entrusted the Church.

(b) The Work of the Holy Spirit

But this mission is not simply entrusted to the Church as a human corporation. It is the continuing work of Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit. Because the Father has exalted Him to His right hand and given Him all authority over all powers in heaven and earth, therefore He has poured forth among men the gift of the Holy Spirit – the same Spirit by whose anointing the works of the incarnate Christ Himself were done. It is the Holy Spirit Himself who is the agent of the mission. When the risen Lord says to the disciples "As the Father has sent me, so send I you", He immediately adds "Receive the Holy Spirit". When He speaks beforehand of the mission it is in these terms: "When the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses . . ." And later He tells them that they will be enabled to bear witness to the ends of the earth only when they have been empowered by the Spirit (Acts 1: 8). The Church participates in the mission only by virtue of its



participation in the Holy Spirit. The mission therefore does not advance after the manner of a humanly organized campaign. There is no 'G.H.Q.' at Jerusalem or elsewhere responsible for overall strategy. There is only one general directive: the Gospel must be preached to the farthest corner of the earth at once and without waiting. This does not mean, however, that there is no visible unity about the mission. On the contrary, there is a deep sense of mutual responsibility and brotherhood, of the obligation resting upon the Church in one place to bear the burdens of others, and of the need to proceed in brotherly concord on vital questions. Hence when division appears about the circumcision question, the matter is settled by the coming together of "the apostles and elders" at Jerusalem to learn together what the Holy Spirit would say.

(c) Church and Mission – a Three-Fold Relation.

As the community of the Holy Spirit, the Church is related to the mission in these three ways

a. It is the place where the fruit of Christ's mission is already present in foretaste and as an earnest of that which is to come. It is the place where the forgiveness of sins, peace with God through Jesus Christ, and eternal life in Him, are already enjoyed in foretaste. It is the place where God's people on earth are already permitted to have a share in the worship of the Church in heaven. It is, as St. Paul says, a colony of heaven, a place where the divine life is actually available to men in foretaste, in a life of fellowship with God and His redeemed children through common participation in the Holy Spirit.

b. It is the place where the powers of the Holy Spirit are available to serve men in all their needs, as they were available in Christ. The exercise of these powers of healing, helping, and releasing is part of the continuing mission to the world.

c. It is the place where witness is borne to that which is above and beyond the Church, namely to the mercy and judgement

of God Himself in Jesus Christ. The characteristic fruit of the Holy Spirit is always a foretaste, something that points beyond itself to the fullness of redemption in Christ. At no point may the Church point to itself as the place of redemption. It authenticates itself as truly the fellowship of the Holy Spirit when it points beyond itself and all its works, and invites men's attention to Christ, to the one Mercy Seat, to the one Name given under heaven by which men can be saved.

One must hasten to add that the Church is related to the mission in yet another way. The Church, and every Christian man in the Church, is a place where the Spirit wars against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit. The Church belongs both to this age and to the new age which has dawned in Christ. "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" said the Lord Himself. From the very beginning the Church has been within its own life involved in the warfare between the kingdom of God and the power of Satan.

It has become customary to speak of fellowship, service, and witness as the three dimensions of the Church's mission. I believe that careful reflection will show that this is a mistake. The basic reality is the creation of a new being through the presence of the Holy Spirit. This new being is the common life (*koinonia*) in the Church. It is out of this new creation that both service and evangelism spring, and from it they receive their value. As St. Paul insists (I Cor. 13) even the most spectacular deeds of service are valueless if they do not spring out of that new reality – the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And even the most impressive preaching is sterile if it does not spring from and lead back into that new reality. This new reality – namely the active presence of the Holy Spirit among men – is the primary witness, anterior to all specific acts whether of service or of preaching. These different acts have their relation to one another not in any logical scheme, but in the fact that they spring out of the one new reality. This is the city set on a hill which cannot be hid. It is the new Zion

to which God (not men) will draw all the nations. All our missionary acts (whether of service or of preaching) are subordinate to and logically posterior to this reality of God's mission.

(d) A Diversity of Gifts – One Body.

The whole life of the Church, rightly understood, is thus the visible means through which the Holy Spirit carries on His mission to the world, and the whole of it thus partakes of the character of witness. The whole life of the Church thus has a missionary *dimension*, though not all of it has mission as its primary *intention*. Thus the Church's worship, the perpetual liturgy in which she is joined to the worship of the heavenly hosts, is directed wholly to God for His glory; and yet it has a missionary dimension, and may in certain circumstances (as for instance in the Church of Russia to-day) be in fact the most powerful possible form of witness.

Within this totality of His mission to the world, the Holy Spirit equips the Church with the various gifts needed for the maintenance of its life and the discharge of its ministry to the world. These gifts are of great variety, and include those required for preaching, prophecy, pastoral care, healing, evangelism, service to the needy, administration, the glorifying of God in music and the visual arts, personal help and counselling, and many others. None of these can function alone, none of them can claim exclusive pre-eminence, and no Christian is equipped with all of them. The Holy Spirit wills to carry on His mission through the co-operation of all in one harmonious unity. When attempts are made to exalt one of these functions above the others, or to suggest that one alone is the essential task of the Church, corruption ensues. There is only one pre-eminent gift, and that is the love which seeks no pre-eminence, but binds all together in one. The attempt of one part to exalt itself above the others differs from holiness as cancer differs from health. When all are working together, the effect is that witness is to Christ as Lord. That is the proper work of the Holy Spirit.



Within this context the proper relation can be established between service and evangelism. Evangelism is an activity of the mouth or pen by which the good news of God's redeeming acts is communicated. It confuses important issues to extend this word beyond its proper meaning. Evangelism is part of, but not the whole of, the Church's mission. Our Lord was sent both to preach and to be the servant of all. Each of these two activities has its proper dignity within the wholeness of the mission, and neither should be subordinated to the other. If service is made merely ancillary to evangelism, then deeds which should be pure acts of love and compassion become suspect as having an ulterior motive. When our Lord stretched forth His hand to heal a leper, there was no evangelistic strategy attached to the act. It was a pure outflow of the divine love into the world, and needed no further justification. Such should be the Church's deeds of service. But on the other hand if evangelism is subordinated to programmes of service, if there is no faith in the supernatural power of the living word to bring forth fruit a hundred-fold, then the Church is guilty of the folly of turning from the Spirit to the flesh. That has often happened, and a loose use of the word 'evangelism' has been used to cover a real betrayal. There is not and there cannot be any substitute for telling the story of Jesus. But if these two things cannot be subordinated the one to the other, neither can they be separated. Preaching unaccompanied by deeds of love that authenticate it, becomes in the end an empty sound; and service which does not explicitly point men to Christ Himself, ultimately mocks men with false securities. The true connection between these two things, as has been already said, is not logical but ontological; it lies in the fact that both are seen to come out of the one reality, the new being, the community of the Holy Spirit. When they are so seen, they both take their place within the total mission, and they both have the character of witness. So it was in the mission of the first apostles and so it was in the mission of the Lord Himself. When the Baptist sent to ask "Art thou he that



is to come?", He answered by pointing both to the works of healing and to the preaching of good news. All these together are the signs of the presence of the Kingdom.

(e) One Family – Local and Universal

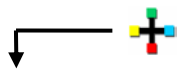
The fellowship created by the Holy Spirit is both local and universal. The place where the Christian is directed to meet his Lord is in his neighbour. Our neighbour is the attorney whom Christ has appointed to receive discharge of the debt we owe to Him. We are not free to suggest other ways of discharging the debt. 'Neighbour' means, first of all, the man next-door, the man we meet in our street, in our work, in our community. The development of a complex society which brings men into intimate relationship with people in all parts of the world involves a great enlargement of the concept of neighbourhood, but it does not invalidate the primary meaning. Any conception of Christian fellowship and service which by-passes the neighbourhood in this primary sense is bogus.

But God's love embraces the whole world, and that fact must find expression in the form of the Christian fellowship. Nothing will be consistent with the Gospel except a form of corporate Christian life which enables Christian love and concern to overleap every barrier of place, race, creed and party, and to express itself in relevant ways everywhere. The law that those who are strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak must be shown to be operative without limit in the Christian fellowship, and in its relation to the world as a whole.

(f) The Ends of the Earth and the End of the World

The mission concerns the ends of the earth and the end of the world. It is not concerned only with one aspect of human nature and history. It is not simply one strand in the whole human story. It

concerns the nature and end of man as such. It concerns the whole meaning and end of creation. Rightly understood, the end of the mission is the end of history. "This

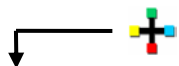


gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come." According to the New Testament, the completion of God's purpose for the world waits upon the completion of the mission. The Christian mission is not rightly prosecuted except with the ends of the earth and the end of the world in view. In St. Paul this expresses itself in his eagerness to reach Spain, the farthest limit of the known world, as soon as possible and in his reluctance to tarry longer than strictly necessary in the eastern Mediterranean. When the Church ceases to live – so to speak – at the intersection of these two lines, something vital is lost to its missionary thinking and acting.

These theological convictions seem to lead on to certain principles in the sphere of missionary policy, and it will be the aim of the next section to suggest some of these principles.

V. Some Principles For Action Today

If we now go on to try to draw practical conclusions for our present tasks from the theological principles just stated, we must be careful to understand what we are doing. In every generation we have to go afresh to the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit so to illuminate for us the written word that, in fellowship with the whole of His people, we may receive from Him the living word about our present tasks. If we do so we may well find that we have to demand – in the name of obedience to God – changes in the patterns of work which have been handed down to us by our immediate predecessors. When we do this, it may seem as though we were sitting in judgement upon our fathers. If we come to our task without a proper sense of history we shall fall into this error, but it is not necessary to do so. There is no one eternal pattern given to us to govern all our activities for all time. We have to seek God's will simply for our own historical situation, as our fathers did in theirs. Their solutions may be no longer adequate for us, as ours may be no longer adequate



for our children. If we have now to criticise what has been handed down to us this is not to imply that we pass judgement on the obedience which our fathers rendered in their day, but only that we have our own responsibility for obedience in the different circumstances of ours.

(a) The Church is the Mission

The great missionary movement of the non-Roman churches grew up at a time when those churches were largely blind to the missionary implications of churchmanship. There was no way in which those who were obedient to the Great Commission could express their obedience except by forming separate organizations for the purpose. It was thus that 'Missions' came to mean something different from 'Church'. Much has changed during the succeeding decades. The obedience of the missionary pioneers has awakened many of the churches. Few Christians will now dare to deny that it is the duty of the Church to carry the Gospel to all nations. Many churches have now taken fully upon their own shoulders the responsibility for foreign missions. Others have an exceedingly close relation with particular missionary societies. 'Foreign Missions' are no longer regarded as the enthusiasm of a few. And yet the dichotomy remains, a dichotomy for which there is no foundation in the New Testament and in the basic facts of the Christian faith. Obedience to the New Testament surely requires that this situation should be under constant scrutiny, and that the question should be constantly asked afresh whether the advantages of maintaining a complete separation between the organs of mission and the whole life of the Church really outweigh the damage which is done to both by its continuance.

There was clear justification, in the historical circumstances, for the creation of missionary organizations separate from the Church. There was much less justification for the perpetuation of this dichotomy among the converts of the missions. There is no evidence that St. Paul established in the areas of his work

two separate organizations, one called ‘Antioch Mission’ and the other called ‘Church’. Such a dichotomy would surely have been unthinkable for him. He and his fellow-workers were certainly sent out by the Church in Antioch, but they went as the agents of the Holy Spirit, and when the same Spirit called others into the fellowship of Jesus through their preaching, they became simply fellow-members with them in the one body. That body was both the Church and the Mission – the place where men were being saved, and the agent of God’s saving purpose for all around. The separation of these two things which God has joined together must be judged one of the great calamities of missionary history, and the healing of this division one of the great tasks of our time. It is a matter for thankfulness that in so many places healing is taking place.

There is plenty of actual evidence to show how important this principle is. On the one hand, when the separation between ‘Church’ and ‘Mission’ is maintained, the Church becomes an introverted body, concerned with its own welfare rather than with the Kingdom of God, and – even if successful missionary work is carried on by others – the Church will be no fit home for those who are gathered in. On the other hand experience shows that where new converts – however primitive and uneducated – are taught from the very beginning that being a Christian means being involved in a continuing mission to the world, they take their place quite naturally from the beginning in the van of the Church’s evangelistic work.

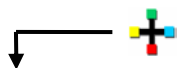
Church and mission belong indissolubly together. On the one hand, the Church is a part of the Gospel. The offer of reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ involves as one of its essential elements the offer of welcome into the fellowship of those who have received the reconciliation and who are already enjoying in foretaste the life of the New Age. On the other hand, mission belongs to the essence of the Church. If churchmanship does not mean fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit, then it means nothing; and you cannot have

fellowship with Him without being committed to partnership in His mission to the world.

The disastrous effects of making this separation are writ large all over the present world situation. We have grown accustomed to thinking that the Church’s mission is to be discharged by what are called ‘Missions’, and when political or other circumstances inhibit the work of ‘Missions’ we become despondent about the whole future of the Church’s mission. It may well be that what has happened before, and what is still happening now, may be the normal pattern for the decades ahead—that is to say that the Church’s mission should be discharged not primarily by the labours of large bodies of paid professionals working through highly developed organizations, but by a multitude of anonymous non-professional Christians – merchants, travellers, soldiers, coolies, even beggars. There are many churches in India which have come into existence in this way. It appears to be the way in which Islam is spreading in some areas. It is probably the way in which Christianity has come to many places. It must certainly be the normal way by which God’s total purpose is to be fulfilled. That can only be when the whole membership of the Church, not a few professionals only, knows that by membership in the Church it is committed to a mission to the world. It may be one of the main tasks of the churches in the period immediately ahead of us to find ways by which the increasing movement of Christian men and women from one part of the world to another can be harnessed for the fulfilment of the Church’s world mission.

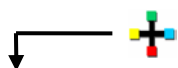
(b) *The Home Base is Everywhere*

The Church's mission is concerned with the ends of the earth. When that dimension is forgotten, the heart goes out of the business. There will never be a great response to the call for missionary service, unless it is recognisably related to that ultimate horizon. We have noted that in an earlier day this 'ends of the earth' dimension was present simply in the fact



that the missionary went from Europe or America to parts of the earth which were – from the point of view of the sending churches – 'regions beyond'. We have to face the fact that we have left that era completely behind. We are now required by the facts to look at the missionary enterprise from a completely new point of view—from the point of view of the world-wide Church. The 'home base' is everywhere – wherever the Church is. We are bound to accept this, if we believe that the Church is the mission. But it would be foolish to suggest that it is easy to make the transition to the new point of view. The thinking of the older churches about foreign missions has always been shaped by the fact that the ends of the earth were always 'there', not 'here'. But from the moment that the Church becomes a world-wide fellowship, that point of view is invalidated. There are now – from the point of view of the new home base – no 'regions beyond'. From the point of view of a congregation in Boston, what happens in Tokyo is still 'the ends of the earth'; but from the point of view of the Christians in Tokyo it is not. We have entered into an era when we must simply abandon the idea that our terminology is determined by the point of view of Boston rather than that of Tokyo. From the point of view of the new home base, Boston is as much 'ends of the earth' as Tokyo. From this point of view, therefore, we can no longer speak as though what happens in Tokyo is foreign missions, and what happens in Boston is not. This adjustment is necessarily difficult. We are all inclined, probably more than we realize, to identify our way of life with God's will for the world, and it will always be relatively easy to arouse enthusiasm for a kind of foreign mission which is based on that fact. But as we soberly face our problems together in a world fellowship, we cannot be content with such a motivation. We have to learn to make real to the ordinary churchman the fact that the mission is not ours but Christ's; Christ's mission to the whole world, of which the whole Church is the proper agent.

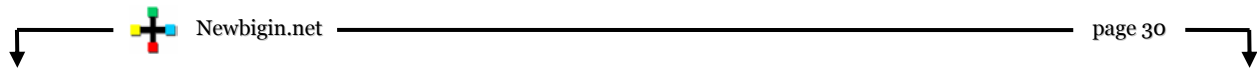
There can be no doubt that this means a very profound change



in the way we look at 'Foreign Missions'. The difficulty of making this mental adjustment is perhaps the heart of our present uncertainty. It is important to be as clear as possible about what the change does mean, and what it does not – lest in trying to meet the new situation we should lose something which is vital to the whole missionary task. In some quarters the new situation has been taken to mean that the very word 'missionary' should be dropped, that missionaries should become 'fraternal workers' and missions become 'inter-church aid'. There is – as I shall try to show in the following section – a sense in which these changes are justified by the facts. But plainly the words 'mission' and 'missionary' cannot be dropped from the vocabulary of the Church. They stand for something absolutely vital and indispensable. We should part company decisively with the New Testament if we abandoned them. But what, exactly, do they connote? What is the precise *differentium* which entitled an activity to be called 'missionary' in the context of the world-wide Church? We have seen that 'missionary' is not synonymous with 'evangelistic'. The mission is wider than evangelism if the word is used in its proper sense, though evangelism is an indispensable part of it. Nor does the *differentium* lie in the crossing of a geographical frontier. That conception is a survival from the era when there was a geographically identifiable 'Christendom'. *The differentium lies in the crossing of the frontier between faith in Christ as Lord and unbelief.* To make clear and to keep clear this, the distinctive meaning of the word 'missionary' is one of the most important requirements of the present discussion. He who is

sent to make Christ known and obeyed as Lord among those who do not so know and obey Him is a missionary, whether his journey be long or short. The missionary frontier runs through every land where there are communities living without the knowledge of Christ as Lord.

But – and here it is necessary to make a very important further statement – this does not mean that the geographical dimension

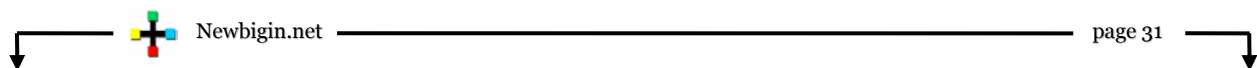


of the missionary task is eliminated. There is – or there may be – a missionary task on every man's doorstep. But we do not discharge our duty as Christians simply by attending to this task, and this for the following three reasons

(i) Because, as we have said, it belongs to the very essence of the Gospel that it concerns the ends of the earth, that it leads men to look for the end of all things and for the redemption of the whole world. It is impossible for a Christian to confine his concern to his immediate neighbourhood, even though his concern must begin there.

(ii) Because it belongs to the very nature of the Gospel that we always have to hear it from someone else. Unlike the religions whose central core is in the mystical experience, Christianity involves in its very nature communication from one to another. It involves speaking, hearing, and believing. (Cf. Luther's apt remark that "faith is an acoustical affair"). It is of such a nature that in the act in which we are bound to God we are bound to one another. According to St. Paul, even the Jews, the chosen people who were originally entrusted with the oracles of God, can finally be saved only by hearing the word afresh from the Gentiles. This is a permanent part of the Christian life. We have to be hearing the Gospel ever afresh from one another. And it is a matter of experience that the Word spoken afresh to us out of another clime and culture often comes with new power even to those who have been long accustomed to the Christian message. Billy Graham could do more in Glasgow than in New York; D. T. Niles could be a more effective evangelist to Edinburgh students than a Scot; in many contexts a foreigner can be a more effective evangelist in India than an Indian.

(iii) Because it belongs to the nature of the Gospel that Christians are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Properly speaking the Church is always in a colonial situation – as St. Paul told the Philippians. The fact that it has often appeared



rather as a colony of some white race than as a colony of heaven is part of our present problem. But in finding ways of escape from the wrong kind of colonialism we must not lose the true foreign-ness of the Church. The Church can never be wholly at home in the world, and the fact that in its life and mission it deliberately and systematically transgresses the boundaries of nation and culture is an indispensable symbol and instrument of its supernatural calling.

From this the important conclusion follows that it is the duty and privilege of every part of the church everywhere to be involved not only in the missionary task at its own door, but also in some other part of the total world-wide task. This involvement must naturally be in proportion to the church's resources. Not every church is in a position to carry on extensive missionary operations in every country. But every church is in duty bound – and has the precious privilege – to take some share in this task; and every Christian has the duty and privilege to take his proportionate share, whether in intercession, in dissemination of knowledge, in giving, or in actual life-service. To say that the home base is everywhere is not the abolition of 'foreign missions' but the universalising of them.

(c) Mission in Partnership

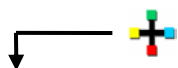
When we turn to consider the practical implications of this conception of a universal foreign mission whose home-base is everywhere, we run into some of our major problems. How do we

conduct a foreign mission in a country where there is already a church? The classical answer, recently repeated in a valuable editorial on the subject, is "Established work should be turned over as rapidly as possible to the indigenous church while the missions move on to the 'regions beyond'". (*Christianity To-day*, 18th August 1958.) Two questions arise (1) Where are the 'regions beyond'? If they are really different countries which are totally unevangelized, the method is sound and scriptural; but the supply of such 'regions beyond' is almost



exhausted. If, in fact, the phrase is a mere metaphor (as one suspects) to describe the unfinished evangelistic task *in the same area*, then the second question arises, namely (2) What is the relation of the indigenous church to this unfinished task in its own area? If it is merely to carry on 'established work' while the 'Mission' does the evangelism, then the proposal violates both the method of St. Paul and the fundamental New Testament teaching about the nature of the Church. To condemn the indigenous churches to be mere receptacles for converts while the tasks of mission belong to another body is to do the gravest possible spiritual injury to the young church. Here the ordinary experience of an evangelistic missionary is relevant. When I have baptized a group of converts in an Indian village and they have been received into full communion and established as a congregation, what is their relation, and what is my relation, to the unfinished evangelistic task in that village? It is of course possible for me to go on preaching there as if the responsibility was still primarily mine. In that case the congregation is likely to draw the obvious conclusion, cease to concern itself with the rest of the village, and become a body concerned only with its own welfare. In fact what I say, on the day that they are confirmed and receive their first communion, is: "Now you are the Body of Christ in this village. You are God's apostles here. Through you they are to be saved. I will be in touch with you. I will pray for you. I will visit you. If you want my help I will try to help you. But *you* are now the Mission." When that is the approach, the effect is that the new congregation takes it for granted from the first day that being a Christian is being part of a mission – and the Gospel spreads. To deny that responsibility to the young church is to do it an irreparable injury.

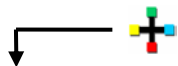
It is as a result of the pressure of such convictions as these that the missionary movement has learned to speak of its task as being a partnership between older and younger churches. This marks an immense advance on the period when we could speak only of missionaries and native converts but – as the



Ghana Assembly has recognized – it does not represent a state of affairs with which we can rest content. It obscures a vital truth. The striking thing about St. Paul's "letters to young churches" is precisely that he does not treat them as anything other than adult. He may have occasion to speak very sharp words to them, but he treats them as adult churches. It is true that he addresses the Corinthians as 'babes in Christ' but the context makes it clear that he did not regard this as a natural stage of development, but precisely as a perversion. He uses the phrase as a synonym for carnality. The whole point of the passage is that they had no right to behave like babies. When a group of adult men and women turn from idols to serve the living God, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, they do not thereby forfeit their right to be treated as adult. Surely we are here bound by Christ's own word "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them". If we accept that word, then we are bound to treat the new congregation from the very beginning as, simply, the Body of Christ. In certain respects they will have much to learn from older churches; in others, much to give. They will need fellowship, and they may need for a considerable time the help of experienced pastors and teachers and helpers from the older churches. They may need pastoral guidance and warning such as we find St. Paul giving to the churches which had been brought into being

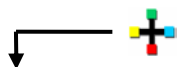
through his work. But they are not in a state of permanent dependence upon the older church. They have their own empowering by the Holy Spirit, their own share in Christ, their own standing, and responsibility before God. They and we are brethren.

And yet the recognition of this fundamental spiritual equality must not blind us to the fact that there are certain profound differences between the situations of the older churches and those of the churches which have come into being through the missionary expansion of the past two centuries. A few of these



latter are in the position where they effectively influence the entire cultural and political life of their area, but the vast majority are not. Most of these 'younger churches' are drawn from only one or two groups, communities or tribes in the society to which they belong. Most of them are in the midst of dominant and pervasive cultural forces which have never been shaped by Christianity. Their situation is therefore profoundly different from that of a church which (however small and weak it may be) forms part of a culture which has been moulded for centuries by Christianity. As long as this is so, there is a contribution which the older churches can make and which the younger churches will – normally at least – need; which does not mean that there are not also other respects in which the older churches need spiritual riches which are the special possession of the younger churches. The acknowledgement of the fundamental equality of standing between older and younger churches should not be used to blur or obscure the real differences between them. Indeed it belongs to the very nature of our unity in the Body of Christ that it should be a unity in diversity, requiring therefore the constant interchange of help from the one to the other.

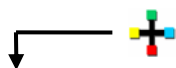
But how, in practice, is that help to be given? When we look at the present situation we cannot feel that it provides adequate expression for the unity-in-diversity of the whole Body. At the present time, and as a general rule, each of the younger churches is in a relation of dependence upon a single older church or – more often – a mission board or society. Even though the processes of 'devolution' or 'integration' may have reached the point at which the younger church is technically completely independent and in control of the work in its area, it remains – in most cases – tied in a relation of financial dependence to one single board in the West. This is a situation in which – with the very best intentions on both sides – a genuine sense of freedom and responsibility cannot develop. Each of the younger churches is placed in the position of an only child



because it is normally impossible to have any real contact with the other churches in other parts of the world which may be dependent on the same board. It was a moving experience to be present at the first East Asian conference at Bangkok, when the young churches of East Asia had their first opportunity really to meet one another. The eagerness with which such opportunities are sought is a very natural result of the situation in which each of these churches has been brought up-linked in an extremely close dependence upon a mission board in the West, but almost unrelated to the sister churches in the adjacent parts of the world. It is for the same reason that the younger churches prize so highly the opportunity of membership in the World Council of Churches. At its meetings they find themselves free and equal partners with a large number of other churches – both older and younger – and therefore able to breathe more freely than in the one-track relationships to which they have been confined in the past.

When we ask how it is possible to put the relations between the older and younger churches on a more satisfactory basis, we face a number of very difficult problems and no simple solution is in sight. There are, unfortunately, in the younger churches some who are content to remain in a state of dependence, who have not really awakened to the sense of what it means to be fully

responsible as God's embassy to their peoples. Many, on the other hand, conscious of the spiritual dangers attendant upon such a situation, desire rather that help from abroad should be cut down so that a greater sense of responsibility may develop. But yet again those who advocate this course have to meet another series of questions: when – as in most of the lands of Asia and Africa – the Christian population is a very small percentage of the total; when there is a huge unfinished evangelistic task; and when there are churches in the West with the will and the resources to tackle this task, by what right can you stand in their way and tell them that their help is not needed? And if one considers not financial aid, but the service of living men and



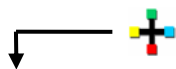
women as missionaries in the lands of the 'younger churches' the problem becomes even more acute. A missionary may fully acknowledge that his work must be in complete fellowship with the church in the area and yet his vocation is to preach the Gospel to the non-Christian. Does the church – which may be but a tiny fraction of the total population – have the right to say that it needs no more missionaries, and that it is not prepared to make it possible for missionaries from abroad to work as evangelists in its area?

There are certainly no ready-made solutions to these problems; they need continued co-operative thought. But certain convictions may be recorded and certain suggestions for further action made. If we accept what has been said about the missionary responsibility of the whole Church for the whole world, certain principles will follow

1. No part of the Church ought to be denied the right to take such share in the total missionary task as it is capable of. It ought never to have to be said to any church which is eager to engage in foreign missionary work: "We do not need your help."

2. Such help can only be rightly given if it is so given as completely to respect the integrity of the church in the area as truly the Body of Christ in that place.

These principles seem to be absolute. It is not, I think, an *absolute* principle that a mission should never go unless it is invited by the church in the area. It should certainly be a *normal* principle. To engage in missionary work in the area of another church in such wise as simply to by-pass that church is surely to take upon oneself an exceedingly grave responsibility. It must mean either that the church in the area is judged to be no true church, in which case the warnings of our Lord concerning judgement will have to be fully faced: or else that there is no understanding of what the Church is – in which case missionary work is likely to degenerate into mere proselytism.



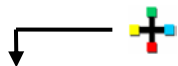
But, on the other hand, while the responsibility for evangelising any area rests *primarily* upon the church in that area, it does not rest *exclusively* upon it. The whole world-wide family has a rightful concern in the task, but this concern should be expressed in the first instance by a humble and brotherly approach with the offer of help and fellowship to the church, and not by mounting a missionary operation over the head of the church.

It is impossible to pretend that we can hold fast to both these principles without being involved in tensions between them. These tensions are an inescapable part of our life together under the conditions of human sin. Nevertheless one can add to these *principles* certain practical *suggestions* which may be helpful in finding a way forward.

1. In the first place it would be helpful in breaking through the psychological difficulties which beset the relations of older and younger churches if there were more opportunities for the reversal of roles. It would be helpful if more of the younger churches had the experience of undertaking foreign missionary work – as some are already doing. This would give them a sympathetic insight into the problems with which mission boards in the older churches have been wrestling for many decades. It would also be helpful – and this is equally important – if the older

churches could welcome in their midst missionary activity from other churches. This would likewise give them an insight (difficult to obtain otherwise) into the spiritual and psychological problems with which the younger churches have to wrestle in their relations with the older. It would not be necessary for either of these types of activity to be on a very large scale in order to have a real value in promoting mutual understanding, sympathy, and co-operation.

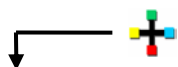
2. In the second place, I wonder whether we have not something to learn from the secular organs of mutual aid, such as those established under the auspices of the United Nations



Organization. In these bodies the wealthier nations of the West contribute much the largest share of the resources. But the whole programme is conducted on the basis of a sharing of resources among equals – not equals in strength but equals in status. It may happen that a nation weak in material resources has special skills to offer for particular purposes. All is planned together with a common sense of responsibility for a common task. The judgement reached on any particular project is not simply that of donor or recipient; it is reached by the corporate judgement of equals, many of whom may themselves be candidates for help. Such a method of working would seem to avoid many of the very deep psychological difficulties which attend our present method of working in a series of isolated one-track relationships between a single donor and a single petitioner. These psychological difficulties are tending to become greater as the gap between the wealthier and the poorer countries of the world widens. In the last analysis the problem is of course a spiritual one and there is no way of evading that. But on the other hand it is hard to see how it is possible to develop within the present system of one-track relationships either a greater sense of independence and responsibility among the receiving churches, or greater opportunities for using the immense untapped resources of the Church in men and money for the unfinished missionary task. I submit that the development of such a multilateral pattern of operations as I have described might well provide the right conditions for the solution of these problems, and that one of the next tasks to be attempted should be a series of limited experiments in selected areas along these lines.

(d) Mission and Inter-Church Aid

We have seen in the foregoing section that the foreign missionary enterprise, as the result of God's blessing on its work, and in faithfulness to the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Church, has been necessarily led into a pattern of working which increasingly involves co-operation between younger and

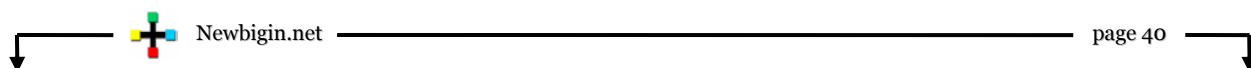


older churches. Faithfulness to the missionary calling has led the churches into a situation where they can no longer think of foreign missions as an activity which each body of Christians can carry on as and where it wishes, without relation to the rest of the Christian fellowship; a situation in which they can only think of missions as the task of the whole Church in relation to the whole world. And this is indeed natural; for it is when we take seriously Christ's promise to draw all men to Himself that we are bound also to take seriously His prayer that they whom He has drawn to Himself should be one fellowship. Foreign missions have necessarily become an inter-church affair.

But meanwhile in our own time other forms of inter-church relations have been developing under the constraint of the same spiritual pressures. In particular, and arising out of the disasters of the second world war, there has been built up within the structure of the World Council of Churches a Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees which is responsible for channelling vast quantities of aid from church to church, both in the form of money and goods and also in the even more important form of personal help and service of all kinds. This has

become one of the most impressive parts of the whole ministry of the Church in our time. Beginning with relief to the victims of war in Europe, it was inevitably led to extend its labours both geographically and functionally to cover (potentially) almost all the concerns of the churches in all parts of the world, and these concerns were not mainly, or even primarily, the concerns of the churches for their own internal needs, but also, and indeed chiefly, their concerns to meet the needs of others-refugees, prisoners, victims of flood, fire, earthquake and famine, irrespective of nation, race or creed, and their need for help in their missionary task.

The proposal that the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council should become integrated in one council raises, as one of its most pressing practical issues, the question of the relation between these two forms of

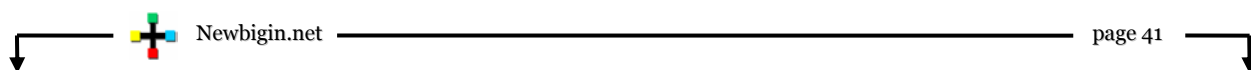


Christian action. Starting from quite separate beginnings, they have been led by faithfulness to their calling to a point where they cover potentially the same ground. Missions beginning with the simple obligation to make Christ known to the non-Christian nations, have been led to a point where they can conceive of their task only as the task of the whole Church to make the Gospel known to the whole world by a witness which includes both word and deed. Inter-church aid, beginning with the needs of stricken churches in Europe, has been led to a point where it defines its task as nothing less than the strengthening and renewal of all church life in all continents and a ministry to human need throughout the world. How are these two activities, so different in their origins, traditions, and methods, and yet so largely overlapping in their aims and spheres of operation, to be related to one another within the total life of the Church, and of an integrated council of churches?

One can approach this difficult question first by way of a series of negatives.

1. It will quite certainly not do to try to divide the field geographically, to confine 'inter-church aid' to Europe and let Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the under-developed countries generally be the sphere of 'mission'. Even if this were possible, which it is not, enough has been said to show that it would violate the very principles upon which both missions and churches are bound to work.

2. Nor will it do to make the dividing line between 'Evangelism' and 'Service'. It is enough to recall what has already been said about the integral relation between these two within the total witnessing life of the community of the Holy Spirit. To put them apart would be to divide what our Lord in His own ministry united. Missions have never been able to conceive of their task without including in it acts of service relevant to the needs of those among whom they

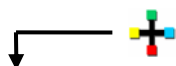


worked, and they cannot be asked to make this separation now.

3. It will not do, however, to say that we must simply maintain the present structure of missionary operations as it is. Missions have something immensely important to learn from the experience of the Division of Inter-Church Aid. Missions are only slowly and with difficulty extricating themselves from the relation of paternalism on the one hand and dependence on the other which they have inherited from their past; Inter-Church Aid has been able to enter into the fruits of the labour of missions without having to take over the liabilities of the past. The pattern of mutual sharing on a basis of equality which has characterised Inter-Church Aid from the beginning is one from which missions must learn.

4. But, finally, it will not do to drop the terminology of mission and let everything be included under the heading 'inter-church aid'. It is true, as has been said, that world mission today can only be carried on rightly as an inter-church operation. But it is not simply inter-church aid. It is mission in fellowship, and the accent must fall heavily on the word 'mission'. Our supreme concern at this hour must be for a fresh missionary advance. The most serious criticism

that has to be made of our present missionary operations is that they are so largely bogged down in a sort of trench warfare; that the resources of the older churches are so largely exhausted in helping the younger churches to remain where they are; and that we are so little able to tap the great reserves of spiritual and material strength which the Church undoubtedly has for a great new advance. It has been argued above that one of the conditions of such advance is a more serious acceptance of the fact that we are one fellowship with one Gospel of reconciliation for the whole world. But it is also true that we shall not find that fellowship except as our thoughts are filled by the need of

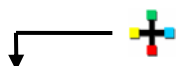


the world for which Christ died and into which He has sent us as His ambassadors.

Having sought, as it were, to fence off the blind alleys by these negative statements, what can we say positively? Discussion so far shows that there is as yet no clear common conviction as to the precise relation which should exist between these two types of activity. To wrestle with this problem, to achieve as wide a consensus as possible, and to build that consensus into the structure of our organizations—these are among the most important tasks for the next few years. But without pretending that they are more than hints, I venture to add the following three positive statements.

1. It may well be that the deepest root of our perplexity at this point is simply the fact that we have corrupted the word 'Church' (and distorted the life of the churches) by constantly using it in a non-missionary sense. If it was always clear, both in our speech and in our ecclesiastical life, that the Church *is* the mission, that it is essentially something dynamic and not static, that (as Emil Brunner has said) the Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning, then inter-church aid would always be aid-for-mission and nothing else. Perhaps real clarity will only come when there has been a sufficiently deep process of self-examination in the life of the ordinary congregation so that the ordinary churchman understands that to be a member of the Church means to be part of a mission to the world.

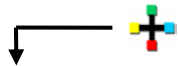
2. Granted that we must beware of separating things which properly belong together, it remains true that there is needed also in the life of the Church, and in the life of a world council of churches, a point of concentration, a place where the specifically missionary concern can be a matter of constant attention and study. This concern is, as we have seen, that Christ shall be made known as Lord of all to every nation and people. It is the concern that the Church shall be constantly reaching out across its own frontiers to touch the life of the



world with the power of Christ, and that this outreach shall not be confined to the tasks lying nearest to the attention of each church, but shall include such forms of mission as testify to the universal and cosmic Lordship of Christ—to the ends of the earth and to the end of the world. That there should be such a new and effective outreach on the part of the whole Church must be the major concern in all planning for the integrated world council.

3. It is helpful to recall the distinction made earlier between mission as *a dimension* of the Church's whole life, and mission as the primary *intention* of certain activities. Because the Church *is* the mission there is a missionary dimension of everything that the Church does. But not everything the Church does has a missionary intention. And unless there is in the life of the Church a point of concentration for the missionary intention, the missionary dimension which is proper to the whole life of the Church will be lost. (One may compare, for instance, the familiar fact that one learns to regard all days as holy not by treating all days as equal, but by treating one day as holy — 'the Lord's day'.) In some languages this distinction between the wider and the narrower sense of mission is expressed by using two different words — as *Sendung* and *Mission* in German. But whether we have two words or one, there is need to have a clear understanding of the basis of differentiation. We have seen that 'mission' in the narrower sense cannot be

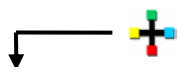
differentiated in geographical terms, or in terms of a contrast with 'service.' Missionary work, from the time of the first apostles, has always included deeds of service. But not all forms of service can be rightly regarded as 'mission' in this narrower sense, though they are part of the total mission of the Church. They are rightly regarded as 'mission' in the narrower sense when they are part of an action of the Church in going out beyond the frontiers of its own life to bear witness to Christ as Lord among those who do not know Him, and when the overall *intention* of that action



is that they should be brought from unbelief to faith. We are here trying to draw a very fine distinction, but I do not think we can avoid doing so if we are to define rightly the proper *differentium* of the missionary task. We have seen that service cannot be merely subordinated to evangelism; that acts of loving service to men in themselves have a proper place in the total witness to the presence of the Kingdom. We have also seen that the proper relation between the two is not a logical one but an ontological one – that they are properly related when they are rooted in the same reality of the new being in Christ. All the Church's deeds of love thus have – potentially at least – a part in the Church's mission (in the wider sense). But such deeds will be properly regarded as missionary (in the narrower sense) when they are explicitly and fully part of an action of the Church in going out to those who do not know Christ as Lord with the intention of bringing them to faith in Him.

(e) The Role of the Missionary

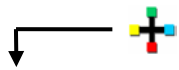
In all that has been written so far, the attempt has been made to stress the fact that mission is the task of the whole Church for which every member of the Church bears a measure of responsibility. Little has been said about the men and women set apart to be the particular agents of the Church's mission, namely those who are usually called 'foreign missionaries'. I make no apology for having approached the subject this way, for it is the responsibility of the whole Church which at this time requires to be emphasized. Nevertheless it is obvious that a central role is played in the world mission of the Church by those who are set apart as full-time foreign missionaries. However important may be the sharing of material resources from church to church in the discharge of the missionary task, the living missionary must always be of central and decisive importance. And when we consider the present situation of missions, the need for a fresh advance into the unfinished task, and the need for getting out of the present relationships of paternalism



and dependence as between older and younger churches, it is around the place and function of the foreign missionary that some of our most persistent difficulties cluster.

For, in the first place, it is apt to be the foreign missionary who provides one of the strongest elements of inflexibility in the present situation. The modern missionary movement has not been successful in following the example of St. Paul who could leave behind a living church at the end of a few months or years of work, and move on to new regions. The profound theological reasons for this failure have been brilliantly analysed by Roland Allen in his well-known books. These have been much studied in recent years; but we have been slow to learn their lessons. By far the greater number of foreign missionaries in the past two centuries have been those who spent their lives in one area, perhaps in one station, building up one institution or one group of churches. The very fact that the phrase 'mission station' has ceased to make us smile is a handy symbol of this strange weakness of the modern missionary enterprise. 'Mission' means sending, and 'Station' means standing still; the phrase 'mission station' would seem to epitomize neatly the man in our Lord's parable who said "Sir, I go", and went not. Those who remember the

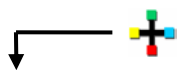
early pages of Livingstone's life will not need to be reminded that this is an old problem. Those who are accustomed to deal with the administration of missions to-day will also know that we have accomplished little towards its solution. To have an institution or a 'station' manned by generation after generation of missionaries, and to be told after a century or two that it is still urgently necessary to send a new missionary to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of the last one, may be traditional in modern missions, but it is something very remote from the missionary methods of St. Paul. Moreover there can be no doubt that the presence of missionaries in such circumstances may, and sometimes does, impede the spiritual growth of the young church. Where missionaries continue to hold final responsibility the growth of the capacity for respon-



sibility in the indigenous church is positively prevented, and the ablest indigenous workers will look elsewhere to find worthwhile avenues of service.

But, in the second place, the problem is not solved simply by the replacement of foreign missionaries by indigenous leaders – vitally necessary as this is. This must be done, but if this alone is done, we are left with a new problem on our hands. There are churches in India which are still receiving foreign missionaries, but which are perfectly capable of doing their work as well, or perhaps better, without them. Is it, then, the first duty of the missionary to quit – for the sake of the church? This is a question which has become real and urgent for many young missionaries who take their vocation seriously. If one looks simply at the life of the church in itself, one is inclined to answer "Yes, it would be better for you to quit". But if one looks at the life of the whole nation, of which the church is but a tiny fraction, it becomes utterly impossible to say "The missionary task is done; you can leave". And if the missionary knows that his vocation is precisely a missionary vocation, knows that he is called to cross the frontiers of faith and make Christ known as Lord among those who are utterly strangers to that knowledge, then how can he leave?

The solution to this dilemma can only be found at the point to which we have returned again and again in this discussion – the point where it is recognized that the Church is the mission. To seek a solution by by-passing the local church and embarking upon a 'mission' independent of it, is both to do grave spiritual injury to that part of the Body of Christ, and also to condemn the mission itself to spiritual sterility. Granted that the foreign missionary will be a person upon whom the concern for the un-evangelized presses with special insistence, it will be his task both to seek to awaken a like concern in the church, and to offer himself to the church as an agent of that concern. There is here needed a difficult balance between loyalty to the church which he must ever regard and reverence as God's



people, and loyalty to the particular vocation which God has given him; and he must try to convince the church of his vocation, and at the same time be ready humbly to listen to what the church has to say. Even though this is a difficult balance to achieve, and though it involves spiritual tensions, it should be the constant aim to achieve it. It ought not to be necessary for a missionary either to treat the church as though it were unworthy of his service, or to abandon his own vocation to mission. I have in my mind the experience of several young missionaries who have been able to convince the church of their vocation to pioneer service over the frontiers of the church's life, and who are now engaged in fresh missionary advance along lines for which no Indian worker was ready, and yet in perfect loyalty to and fellowship with the Indian Church.

If one holds the view which is here set forth, that the mission is the mission of the whole Church to the whole world; that the foreign missionary is (in the new conditions of the 19th century when there is a church in almost every part of the world) normally the agent of the help which one part of the Church sends to another for the discharge of the common missionary task;

and that the great need of our time is for a new mobility, a new freedom to use the entire resources of the Church for fresh advance into the unevangelized areas of mankind; then inevitably the question will be raised whether the normal pattern of missionary work should continue to be life service, or whether it should be the short-term service which is more characteristic of the 'fraternal worker' pattern of Inter-Church Aid. It should be emphasized that this question is raised by many who have a deep commitment to the total missionary task of the Church. They question whether the traditional pattern of life-long service, generally in one station or area, is most likely in the conditions of to-day to help the younger churches forward in their mission to their peoples. They ask whether the development of short-term service as a normal pattern of missionary work might not contribute to a greater mobility, a greater

capacity to use the full resources of the whole Church for seizing every opportunity of advance.

Two things will immediately occur to the mind in criticism of this idea. In the first place there are certain parts of the world and certain types of work where a foreign missionary can do very little until he has learned a difficult language and mastered a strange culture. The time taken to do this is in many cases so great, that it seems hardly worth doing it unless it is going to lead to – if not life service – at least the service of the greater part of a man's life. One may reply that, while this is certainly true, there are also many other places and posts to which it does not apply, and in which a man or woman can make a big contribution to the life and mission of the Church during a relatively short spell of service. In the second place, and this is perhaps even more important, there is something spiritually precious in the traditional conception of life-long missionary service, which ought not to be lightly cast away. In holding out before each generation of young people the call to a life-long and total commitment, missions have been doing something which was not merely practically important for the work of 'foreign missions', but also of the deepest value to the whole life of the churches. Reinhold Niebuhr has said somewhere that foreign missions have played the same role in Protestantism that the religious orders have played in Catholicism—they have stood in the midst of the Church for the concept of total commitment. The fact that a missionary is, in principle, someone who is prepared to be sent anywhere and to do whatever the Church asks him to do, has been not only enormously important for the actual task of world mission; it has also been deeply significant for the whole life of the Church, including those who – having faced the challenge of the missionary calling – decided that their vocation was elsewhere. Whatever be the future pattern of the world missionary enterprise, there is something here which ought not to be lost.

I am led by these reflections to ask whether we may not have

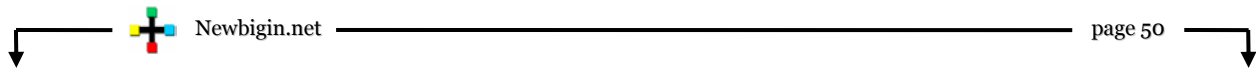
to consider the possibility of some kind of ecumenical missionary *order* of men and women committed to life service as missionaries and available for service (for longer or shorter periods) wherever they may be most needed. Such a development would be both a natural implication of the conception of the world mission as the mission of the whole Church, and would also be a most powerful means of making it a reality. I recognize that it leads out into difficult questions concerning churchmanship, about which I have yet to speak. But I submit that it is not too early to begin thinking along these lines. There are areas and types of work within which even the present state of inter-church relations would warrant considerable advance in this direction.

Such thinking about the future pattern of missionary service should also take into account the place in the Church's missionary advance of the witness of Christians abroad in government, industry, and the development services. Reference has already been made to this (p. 27), and a beginning has been made in some countries towards equipping such men and women to take their part in the witness of the Church in the area to which they are sent. There are questions to be

faced concerning the relation of such voluntary and informal witness to the organized missionary activity of the Church. But one could surely envisage some sort of loosely knit 'third order' which would give to such 'non-professional missionaries' a real spiritual unity with those who were committed to life-long service at the disposal of the Church.

(f) Co-operation in Mission-Local, Regional, Global

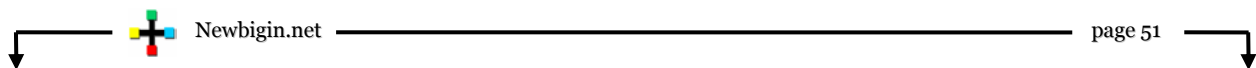
The Church is at the same time universal and local. It is universal because Christ is exalted as King and Head of the whole creation. It is local because where two or three are gathered in His Name, there He is. A local congregation of Christ's people is not, therefore, a 'branch' of the Church, deriving its authority from the larger body; it is the local manifestation of Christ's



presence and the instrument of His mission. We have to be on our guard against thinking of the organization of Christian life and work on lines analagous to that of a human cultural or political or military operation. In the Church we are dealing with a reality of a different order. We are concerned with the personal presence of the Lord of all in the midst of His people wherever they are gathered together. We must avoid ways of thinking which begin from any thought (however carefully muffled) of some sort of global headquarters for the world mission. What we are (or ought to be) concerned with in the integration of the I.M.C. is not a question of co-ordinating operations 'at the highest level'. *It is a question of the integrity of the Church's character and mission in every place.* What we are concerned about is that the Church should be – universally and locally – recognizable as one reconciled fellowship offering to all men everywhere the secret of reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ.

We must therefore not begin our thinking by imagining some sort of central structure of combined operations, and then asking how we can 'get it down to the grass roots'. If we begin that way, we become involved in insoluble problems of structure and organization. We must begin our thinking with the local and regional manifestation of the Church's unity and mission. We must try to ensure that everything that can possibly be done locally and regionally is done. And from there we must go on to consider what are the things which must be done centrally.

As we approach the proposal for the integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches to form one body, we have to remember that their different origins have given them differing structures. The I.M.C., beginning from a concern for world mission, is based upon the national and regional councils which were formed during the years following the World Missionary Conference of 1910. The purpose of these councils, which consisted in the first place mostly of missions and related bodies, was to ensure

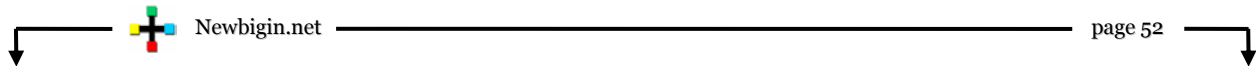


the greatest possible consultation and co-operation in the fulfilment of the missionary task in each area. They deliberately left questions of churchmanship on one side and dealt only with co-operation in missionary work. Some of them were already in existence before the I.M.C. was formally constituted and they had already a substantial life of their own. The I.M.C. provided a somewhat loose and flexible link between them, but did not itself build up a large staff or a structure of departmental committees. One might say that the substance of its life was in the national councils. This structure was an expression of the primary missionary concern from which it originated.

The World Council of Churches, on the other hand, has from the beginning recognized as its units of membership only individual churches. This was essential if the Council was to fulfil its declared purpose of carrying on the work of the Faith and Order movement. Questions of faith and order belong to the churches as such and to them alone, and they have never delegated them to any co-operative or consultative council. For this, if for no other reason, the W.C.C. is and

must remain a council of churches. Starting from this beginning it has had no existing conciliar basis upon which to build, and has itself found it necessary to develop a strong central staff and a structure of divisional and departmental committees meeting annually to transact the business of the Council. It has thus developed a very strong and articulate corporate life of its own, to a degree not paralleled in the I.M.C.

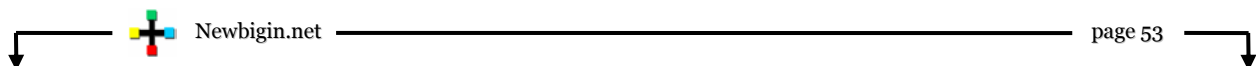
The proposed plan of integration looks to an integrated organization in which the Council retains its character as a Council of Churches, but in which the conciliar principle is the basis of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. A great deal of thinking has yet to be done about the relation between these two principles. For the sake of the concern for churchly unity, the Council must retain its basis as a Council of Churches; but for the sake of effective co-operation in the world mission, there must be proper recognition of the vital



role of the councils. The reconciliation of these two principles in practice will not be easy, but it may be confidently hoped that the tension between them will be a fruitful one and not one which impedes movement. Both principles are rooted in the realities of the total task and neither can be allowed to override the other. Perhaps the very fact that they are in tension with each other may provide an element of pluralism in the whole structure which will prevent over-centralizing of authority.

But there is also another element in the situation which has to be considered. During the years immediately after the 1910 Conference, attention was concentrated on the formation of national Christian councils in the lands where missions were at work, and of corresponding councils of missionary societies in the sending countries. These national councils were probably the largest workable unit of co-operation in the conditions of that decade. Later developments in the means of transport and communication, especially the coming of air travel, have altered the situation. There is developing a larger regional self-consciousness which would have been impossible thirty years ago. The peoples of East Asia are beginning to feel themselves in some sense a unity. Similar feelings can be sensed in Africa, Latin America, and – of course – the Islamic world. It is natural and right that Christians should also feel their way towards forms of association through which the Christian responsibility for the life of man in these newly articulated groupings may be expressed. The existing Near East Christian Council, and the East Asia Christian Conference (in process of formation) are the earliest expression of this new feeling, but it is possible that the recent All-Africa Church Conference at Ibadan may lead to something similar, and that Latin America may witness a similar development.

These developments are full of promise. They may provide a means by which fellowship in the one world mission may become more 'real' for Christians in these areas; a means by which common concerns and convictions proper to the missionary task



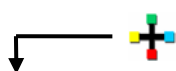
in those areas may be articulated in a way which is difficult in the context of a world meeting; a means therefore by which the churches in these regions can make a more fruitful contribution to the whole ecumenical fellowship than is possible at present. It is inevitable that ecumenical gatherings are dominated by the representatives of the churches of Europe and North America which have so vast a preponderance of size and strength. But from the point of view of the effective prosecution of the Christian mission to the *whole* world this preponderance may be a weakness. The development of regional organs of ecumenical consultation and action may provide the opportunity for a more effective awakening of the whole Church to its vast unfinished task in Asia and Africa.

There are also potential dangers. A too strongly developed regionalism might make it impossible to preserve unity in times of international tension. A proper sense of regional

responsibility might be corrupted into an improper forgetfulness of unity in the one Body of Christ. Again there is no infallible protection against these dangers. An element of tension is inescapable if there is to be the proper balance between centralism and regionalism in a world Christian council. This tension can be creative, and the acceptance of it is the necessary condition of any real Christian witness in our divided world. Neither centralism by itself, nor regionalism by itself, could provide the embodiment for such a witness. Certainly we must avoid absolute claims for either. But I would submit that at this juncture the chief need is to encourage a wise and responsible regionalism such as is in fact developing, to avoid the development of a too heavy centre of authority in one place, and to seek to ensure that the world organization of ecumenical fellowship is broad – based upon the experience of fellowship in every place in the tasks of world mission.

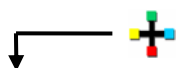
(g) Co-operation is Not Enough

If there is one thing which the history of the modern mission-



any movement has taught us, it is that you cannot engage in world mission without being compelled to face questions of unity. So long as the Church is content to live for itself, to turn its back on the world and face inwards, it will always find sufficient reasons for being disunited. We are not so attractive that we can go on looking at each other for ever. But the moment the Church turns out to the world, and begins to take seriously the responsibility to be Christ's embassy to the world, then disunity among the messengers becomes an intolerable anomaly. How can we, unreconciled to one another, proclaim one reconciliation for the world? How can we be heralds of the one Lord, calling all men to accept His Lordship, when we cannot ourselves live together under His one rule? The pressure of these questions led the representatives of modern missions almost from the beginning to practice some kind of co-operation, or at least comity, among themselves. Unable to deny their own confessional traditions, they yet for practical purposes agreed to put them on one side and work together for the conversion of the world. The argument of the present paper is that we need still more widespread and effective co-operation if we are to move forward in the evangelization of the world.

And yet it is not simply co-operation that we need. The unity that Christ wills for us is something more than co-operation. It is a unity of being-the new being of the new man in Christ. It is the unity which is described in St. John's Gospel as abiding in Him and He in us. It is the unity which comes from entering into the perfect at-one-ment which He has wrought for us in the Cross. Our divisions are a public contradiction of that atonement. Co-operation in common programmes of study and action is not a substitute for this unity. Co-operation in mission must eventually face the question "Mission for what?". Into what are we inviting the men of all nations – into a new complex of divisions in place of their own, or into the one family where at last they may know themselves one in the Father's house? We cannot stand together before men in the highways



of the world and ask them to give up everything in order to be reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, if we do not face the question of our own lack of reconciliation.

And we cannot face this question without going deep into the issues of faith and order that divide us. An attempt to get some sort of unity that by-passes them will be fruitless. For what we are concerned about is not the size or number of our ecclesiastical units; it is the question of the integrity of our witness to Christ; it is a matter of repentance for those things wherein we have divided the Church and of humble seeking together for a fresh understanding of the mind of Christ; it is a matter of seeking together penitently and patiently such a common understanding of

our common salvation, that men in every land may hear the authentic voice of the Good Shepherd, undistorted by our racial and national and denominational egotisms. Such seeking will involve the very best insight that our theologians can bring to bear upon the issue; but it will be no merely academic study, but a study conducted under a deep sense of the obligation to end the scandal of division.

In matters which concern the doing of God's will, we are not free to construct our own time-table, or to adopt positions of neutrality. To defer an answer when the answer is due, is to shut oneself up to the wrong answer. I am persuaded that the question of our churchly unity is a question of this character. Co-operation is the necessary starting point, but it cannot be accepted as the goal. There is a real danger that, by evading the question of churchly unity, we may find ourselves shut up to more and more elaborate forms of merely administrative and organizational unity; to a form of unity which will shift the centre of gravity away from the true unity of life in one fellowship centred in the Word and Sacraments of the Gospel. For myself, I do not believe that we can be content with anything less than a form of unity which enables all who confess Christ as Lord to be recognizably one family in each place and in all places, united in the visible bonds of word, sacrament, ministry



and congregational fellowship, and in the invisible bond which the Spirit Himself creates through these means, one family offering to all men everywhere the secret of reconciliation with God the Father. I believe that missionary obedience in our day requires of us that we should treat the issue of such visible churchly unity as an issue not for to-morrow but for to-day.

VI. In Conclusion

This small pamphlet is sent out with the prayer that it may stimulate not merely discussion, but also prayer, thought and action directed to the recovery of unity, vigour and clarity of aim in the prosecution of the missionary task. I have argued that this task requires of us to-day to recognize the new conditions of the mid-twentieth century, as well as to return to the eternal and unchanging source of the mission in the Gospel. I have not sought to dig deep into the question of the theology of mission, for we look for illumination in that matter from the group of theologians who have been asked to work upon it. But I have argued that it is necessary for us to recognize the new facts of our situation, that the world has become one neighbourhood, that Christendom can no longer be defined in regional terms, that the home base is everywhere. I have pleaded for the recovery of the Scriptural faith that the whole Church is committed to the task and privilege of mission. Above all, and with this I close for it is the essence of the whole matter, I have expressed the hope that our coming to terms with these new facts of our situation may lead not to a dilution of the missionary passion, but on the contrary to a new clarification of the missionary objective, and a new concentration of the resources of the whole Church upon the unfinished task of making Christ known to all nations as the Saviour of the World. The mission is not ours but His. May He hasten the day of its fulfilment.

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