



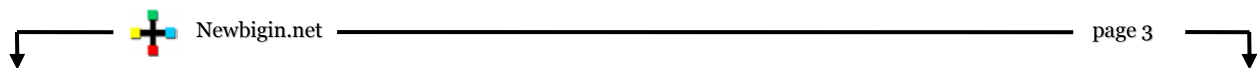
## Developments During 1962: An Editorial Survey

1963

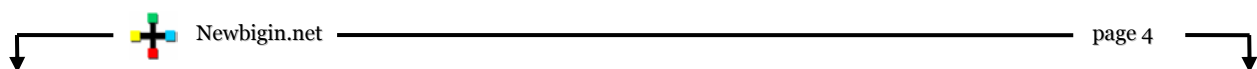
J.E. Lesslie Newbigin

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It has been the custom, ever since the inception of the *International Review of Missions*, for the Editor to devote the first issue of each year mainly to a survey of the events of the preceding year. There is evidence that this has been of great value, and it is our intention to continue the custom, though with some modifications in the method of compilation. In the present issue, however, we propose to follow another custom, equally ancient, and to use the Review to share with our readers news of recent developments in missionary cooperation and some reflections upon them. The January, 1962, issue of the Review included as its most notable features the addresses given during the final Assembly of the International Missionary Council by Bishop Bengt Sundkler and Mr Korula Jacob. The former surveyed the road which the IMC had travelled since the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, and the latter outlined the tasks ahead. Since these addresses were given the IMC and the WCC have become one, the process of integration has begun to take effect in ordinary daily work, and the Committee of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism has met for the first time, and has reported to the Central Committee of the World Council. Readers of the Review will wish to have some assessment of the way in which Bishop Sundkler's story is being continued and Mr Jacob's sketch filled in.



### *Joint Action For Mission*

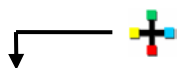
From the beginning this Review has been inspired by the vision of the world missionary task as one task. In the Editorial Notes which opened the first issue, Dr Oldham remarked that, while the Review would not advocate any one particular method of unity, it would 'hold fast to the assumption that our Lord meant His followers to be one in visible fellowship'.

To read these words after half a century is to realize with shame how slow progress has been. Consultation and cooperation have certainly increased, and the fact that the relationships of mutual help and counsel which lately were focused in the International Missionary Council are now rapidly being brought into a common pattern with the relationships between churches

focused in the World Council of Churches marks a significant new stage in the story of cooperation. It is a stage which has its own problems and perplexities, and one of the main tasks of the WCC staff in these months following integration is to discover in practice ways in which the traditional relationships between mission boards and younger churches on the one hand, and the newer inter-church relationships fostered by the manifold work of the World Council on the other, may most helpfully be related to each other. But all this must be sustained and directed by the same vision as launched this movement, the vision of one visible fellowship commending one Gospel to the whole world. Consultation and cooperation are necessary steps on the way, but they must not become ends in themselves.

During the months before New Delhi, the staff of the IMC gave much time to reflection on the question: What are the next steps along the path of missionary co-operation? We were led to certain clear convictions which were expressed in a paper called *Joint Action for Mission*. Subsequent discussion at New Delhi showed that both the Assembly and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism were ready to approve its proposals. The Commission commended them to its member councils, and instructed the staff to be available to assist in implementing them. Later, at its meeting in Paris in August, 1962, the Central Committee of the WCC asked that the member churches should 'consider seriously the proposals outlined in the paper on *Joint Action for Mission*, so that they may respond more fully to the opportunities which God is creating in our time'.

What are these proposals? They are directed towards the practical



application *locally* of the general convictions which are embodied in ecumenical statements about the missionary task. In the words of the paper, they are that 'churches and their related missionary agencies *in a given geographical area* should come together to face together as God's people in that place their total missionary task, and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling it'. The emphasis is on the place where God has put us. It is relatively easy to participate in global or regional discussions in which abstract principles are stated and approved. It is harder to submit one's work to the scrutiny of one's immediate neighbours, knowing that one will have to face the question, 'Is this work more important than some of the things which we have not yet attempted?' and that practical conclusions will be drawn from the answer. It is relatively easy for a conference to draw up a list of things which should be done; it is harder to answer the question, 'Which of our present activities shall we drop in order to do them?' Not that we are unfamiliar with the latter question; the defect is that normally we ask it in a restricted context – in the finance committee of a single church or mission, and without reference to the whole people of God in that place. Thus it happens that decisions are made on the wrong grounds. Matters are decided, for example, not by the intrinsic importance of the task but by the accident that one church has access to foreign resources and another has not. New evangelistic opportunities – for instance, in newly developing cities, or colleges, or professional associations – do not have priority because they are not obviously the concern of any one church. Some decisions influenced by the needs of the developing relationship between a single mission board and the church to which it is related would have been different if the issue could have been faced by the whole Christian people in the area, looking at the whole missionary task which confronts them. The proposals described in *Joint Action for Mission* are an attempt to describe in detail what will be required in order to bring the insights of our wider fellowship to bear on the decisions which we make in our church synods and committees 'in each place'.

By far the most ambitious plan in this respect is a series of 'situation conferences' which the East Asia Christian Conference has called, to be held at Madras, Tokyo and Singapore in the early months of 1963. These may, if God wills, provide the common convictions and insights which will enable those present to return to their countries and seek in each place the kind of joint action which can come from a common waiting upon God for grace and guidance. That will be the

of their effectiveness. Perhaps the announcement of three more conferences does not at this stage evoke much enthusiasm. One sympathizes with the sentiments of a missionary who wrote, concerning a series of conferences planned in India, 'Men were tired of conferences and felt that the duty of the hour was steady work and not talk'. But those words of J. N. Farquar referred to the meetings convened by John R. Mott in 1912, meetings which were to mark a new epoch in the life of the Church in India. Conferences can be mere talk. But talk and work are not mutually exclusive. 'The business of the world is carried on by words'; that is the opening sentence of Hoskyn's *Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*.<sup>1</sup> Words are the necessary currency for any spiritual traffic. The urgent responsibility of those who are concerned with the ecumenical movement is to see that the currency does not depreciate through inflation. The proposals for 'Joint Action for Mission' are an attempt to bring the coinage of our ecumenical talk to the touchstone of local action.

#### *Missions And Inter-Church Aid*

Several matters have called for a new pattern of relationships between the work of missions and the work of the World Council of Churches. Among these, none has been more prominent than the question of missions and Inter-Church aid. Since 1954, the work of the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service has been extended into lands which are traditionally of concern to mission boards, and as a result the powerful service agencies of the western churches have rapidly become involved in enterprises of the younger churches. No other issue loomed as large as this in the discussions leading to the integration of the two councils. It was always apparent that one test of the effectiveness of the integration would be at this point.

During the months following New Delhi there was much informal discussion on this subject among and between the staffs of the two Divisions. At the summer meetings in Paris a joint session was arranged for the members of the two divisional committees at which there was a helpful exchange of experiences and concerns. Following this, the Committee of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism had a further opportunity to reflect on the discussion, and as a result it adopted a statement which was afterwards received by the Central

<sup>1</sup> Edwyn Clement Hoskyns: *The Fourth Gospel*. Edited by Francis Noel Davey. 2nd edition. London: Faber and Faber. 1956.

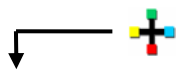
Committee. This statement has been sent to member councils of the Commission. It expresses the conviction that this is a time of new opportunities for missionary advance, but that the present forms of our church life and of our missionary agencies appear to be too inflexible to seize these opportunities. It continues:

In our discussions here we have seen that we have much to learn from the work of Inter-Church Aid. We welcome the growing volume of help – both financial and personal – which is now coming in to strengthen and supplement the work which has been done by missionary agencies. And we realize that we have much to learn from the pattern of ecumenical sharing of resources which the DICARWS has developed. We believe that we have to find comparable ways of mobilizing the full resources of the churches for swift and effective response to the new openings for missionary advance which God is giving us.

The statement speaks of the differences which have to be taken into account between the characteristic operations of Inter-Church Aid and those of missions, and after calling attention to

the importance of the plans for 'Joint Action for Mission', it goes on to ask the staff for 'the careful development of one or two projects of ecumenical aid to missionary advance in situations of particular promise and significance', and to express the hope that 'the churches will be willing to find resources – above all in dedicated men and women – to follow where these pilot projects show the way'.

There can be no doubt that the work of the two Divisions is becoming increasingly inter-related. It is to be hoped that as a result the great and growing work of the agencies of Inter-Church aid will be a source of strength and vitality to undertakings in which missions have long been involved but which in some instances have outgrown the strength of their supporting agencies. But it is equally important – and this is the main thrust of the statement – that all the missionary agencies of the churches should learn to use the resources of ecumenical cooperation to achieve a greater mobility and a greater vigour in seizing new opportunities for missionary advance. To feed the hungry and clothe the naked, to give help to the victims of disaster and technical assistance to those who need it – all this is an essential part of our discipleship, and it is of God's goodness that the churches are learning to do it together. But there is need to beware lest the churches give the impression that they are not equally concerned to share the supreme riches of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Some words written by Dr Oldham in the Editorial Notes to the first issue of the Review are as relevant now as then. After speaking of the widespread uncertainty



in the western world about the Christian faith, and of the doubts which this engenders about the work of evangelization, he continues:

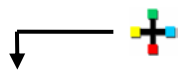
In such a situation the most daring course is the wisest. In boldly claiming the allegiance of every race and nation to Christ, in confronting all thought and all life with the Gospel, Christian faith will become aware of the depth and strength of its inner resources, and will receive fresh confirmation of its truth.

The Paris statement is a summons to all the churches to be as enterprising in mobilizing ecumenical resources for the task of world evangelization as they have been for the tasks of meeting human need. It will be the privilege of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism during the coming months to invite the churches in various ways to accept this invitation.

### *Forms Of The Ministry And The Congregation*

But missionary mobility calls for more than the mobilizing of resources on an ecumenical scale. It requires also that the inner life and structure of the churches should be such that they are capable of responding to the opportunity for missionary advance whenever it occurs. This raises two groups of questions which were prominent on the agenda of the discussions in Paris.

The first group concerns the ministry. The question has to be asked – and is being repeatedly asked – whether the traditional forms of the ministry which have been inherited from the 'Christendom' period are fully compatible with the faith that the Church is called to be a missionary community. The identification of the Holy Ministry with a particular salaried professional class, and the concentration of ministerial training and discipline upon an almost exclusively pastoral function in relation to those who are already Christians, are among the elements of the tradition which are being questioned. These questions have been engaging the attention of the Division and were prominent during the Paris meetings at two points. The first was the presentation of a report entitled *A Tent-Making Ministry*, which arose out of consultations in Asia, Africa and Europe, and which is being sent to member councils for their study. As the report is reproduced in this issue of the Review, it is sufficient here to note that its central concern is the recovery of the primacy of the missionary obligation as determinative of the forms of the Church's life. The other point at which questions concerning the ministry were raised at the Paris



of the Theological Education Fund. In seeking to discern ways in which, after the expiry of the present mandate of the TEFC, the younger churches might receive the most effective assistance to seek true excellence in the training of their ministry, the Group was inevitably led to attempt to define what constitutes 'true excellence' in this field. As a brief answer, they said

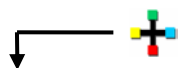
The excellence which we seek to foster should be defined in terms of that kind of theological training which leads to a real encounter between the student and the Gospel in terms of his own forms of thought and culture, and to a living dialogue between the church and its environment. The aim should be to use resources so as to help students and teachers to a deeper understanding of the Gospel in the context of the particular cultural and religious setting of the church, so that the church may come to a deeper understanding of itself as a missionary community sent into the world, and to a more effectual encounter with the life of society.

The Report then goes on to describe in greater detail the tasks which the pursuit of this ideal would entail for the theological colleges. The entire Report has been sent to the member councils and will doubtless be the subject of discussion. When the Commission meets in Mexico City in 1963, it will have to be in a position to decide whether the churches are willing to provide further resources on an ecumenical basis to make this effort possible.

The second group of questions raised by this concern for the missionary character of the Church refers to the structure of the congregation. Does the very structure of our congregations contradict the missionary calling of the Church? This question is the subject of a long-range study undertaken by the Department of Studies in Evangelism. Much work has already been done in defining the terms and methods of the study, and groups are at work in various parts of the world under the guidance of Dr Hans Margull. We hope that papers arising from this study on 'The Missionary Structure of the Congregation' will appear from time to time in the pages of the Review.

### *The Nature Of The Church's Mission*

The questions so far discussed concern structure and relationships – whether at the ecumenical or at the local level. It was inevitable that, during the years immediately preceding the integration of the two councils, these matters should be in the foreground. But behind them there are deeper questions which cannot be evaded, and which concern the nature and purpose of the missionary task itself. While in one sense it may be said that these questions are always with us, because every



generation has to formulate afresh the missionary task for its time, yet in another sense one may say that the year 1962 marks an important stage in the discussion of them. It is a little over ten years since the International Missionary Council undertook an important study of the theme 'The Missionary Obligation of the Church'. At the Willingen Conference, where this was the central theme, such profound theological differences were revealed that it proved impossible for the conference as a whole to adopt the report of the group which had worked on the theme, and it was agreed that much further theological study was needed. This study received a fresh direction at the Ghana Assembly when it was agreed to re-formulate the main question thus: What does it mean, in theological terms and in practice, in this ecumenical era, for the Church to discharge its mission to the world? It was agreed that 'conversations' in various parts of the world between theologians on the one hand and those engaged in the practical work of missions on the other should be an integral part of the study. As these proposals were developed they led to a new and significant experiment in ecumenical study, which involved both a combination of individual



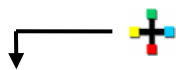
writing with group discussion, and an interchange of thinking between theologians and groups engaged in practical missionary responsibilities. The fruit of this process, which has drawn in participants in many parts of the world, was the appearance in 1962 of two books: *The Missionary Nature of the Church*, by Johannes Blauw,<sup>1</sup> and *Upon the Earth*, by D. T. Niles.<sup>2</sup> The publication of these two books, together with the report written by a group of theologians and entitled *The Missionary Task of the Church*,<sup>3</sup> marks the conclusion of this programme. Certainly the discussion will continue, but it is to be hoped that these two books will be studied seriously as the fruit of a sustained effort of common study, and that they will give a helpful lead to further thinking.

The staff of the Division has been working also on another subject which appears to us to be of great importance. Missionary thinking in the years since the Tambaram Conference has been to a great extent centred in the doctrine of the Church. This 'Church-centric' period in missionary thinking has indeed been a most fruitful one, and we are indebted to it for the consensus which has led to the integration of

<sup>1</sup> London: Lutterworth Press. 16s. New York: McGraw-Hill. In German: *Gottes Werk in dieser Welt*. Munchen: Christian Kaiser Verlag.

<sup>2</sup> London: Lutterworth Press. 25s. New York: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>3</sup> *The Missionary Task of the Church: Theological Reflections*. Geneva: Bulletin of the Division of Studies, World Council of Churches. Vol. VII (2).



the IMC and the WCC, as well as for other important developments. But there is also much evidence to show that this way of formulating the questions which missions have to answer is inadequate. From many sides, notably, for example, in the thinking of outstanding Asian Christians, questions are being insistently asked about God's action in the world outside the Church. After the Willingen Conference it was clear that one of the central issues which remained unresolved was (in the words of the report presented by Dr Goodall at that time): 'What is the relation between history and "salvation history"? Between God's sovereignty in creation and his grace in redemption?' This question has become still more insistent in the decade that has passed since then. It is one which perplexes many who see the influence of the Church and the freedom of missions being more and more severely limited, and who contemplate the fact that Christians are a steadily diminishing percentage of the world's people. It presses also upon those who sense the dynamic quality of revolutionary movements outside the Church and recognize in them elements which a Christian can only accept with gratitude. It is our hope that as a result of these discussions something may be published in due course, which will help to stimulate further thought on this question.

### *The Missionary Image*

When commending the plan 'Joint Action for Mission', the New Delhi Assembly said that such developments would 'call for profound changes in the thinking of the churches and their people about their missionary responsibilities', and therefore stressed the need for the Division to help the churches in educating their members for this task. It is noteworthy that the 'home base' figured very largely in the concerns of the International Missionary Council in its earliest days. It was the subject of the largest of the volumes arising out of the Edinburgh Conference, and of many papers in early issues of this Review. In later years this concern almost disappears from the records. It is understandable that during these years the emphasis shifted so much to the concerns of the younger churches and to the relations between missions and churches, that little attention could be given to the problems of the 'home base'. Manifestly, anything said on this subject to-day must be founded upon the conviction that the 'home base' is everywhere where the Church is, and must be as applicable to the missionary outreach of the Asian churches as to that of the western



churches. But there can be nothing more vital for the missionary task than to foster in all the churches a true understanding of what missions are, what they are doing, and what kind of service they need.

After discussing the Assembly's instruction, the divisional committee decided in Paris on two small initial steps: first, the production of a volume on the missionary dimension of the theological curriculum; and secondly, a study in certain selected countries of the 'image' of missions which is being projected in the missionary literature of the churches, and of the 'image' which is in fact being received by those for whom this material is prepared. The results of this study can hardly fail to be interesting, and may provide useful material for further ecumenical thinking and experiment in the field of missionary education.

### *A New Situation*

In a statement on 'Principal Tasks for the Next Few Years', which was prepared for the Assembly at New Delhi and accepted by it, first, place was given to the following:

To assist churches, missions and other Christian bodies to recognize and draw the practical conclusions from the fact that:

- i. The Christian mission is one throughout the world, for the Gospel is the same and the need of salvation is the same for all men.
- ii. This world mission has a base which is world-wide and is not confined to the, areas once regarded as constituting 'western Christendom'.
- iii. The mission implies a reaching out both to one's own neighbourhood and to the ends of the earth.

The Assembly itself put the matter succinctly by saying, 'We face not three continents but six'.

It is easy to say this, but *difficult* to draw all the practical conclusions. In spite of everything that has been said, there is still much to be done before, for example, Christians in Africa feel a real sense of responsibility for the pagan masses of the great cities of the West and are ready to make a sustained effort to bring the Gospel to them. For the work of the Division, too, it will take time to realize the implications of this statement. Our staff has never been deeply involved in the problems of evangelism in Europe and America. We have to learn slowly and with much experiment how the Division can play useful part in such work. Even in such a relatively small matter as the character and content of the *International Review of Missions* it will take time for the new situation to have its full effect. But it must certainly bring big changes. In the selection of topics for articles and



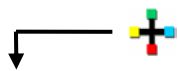
of books for inclusion in the bibliography it will become apparent that the focus has changed. It is when one comes to such small but concrete issues that one really becomes aware of the significance of the new definition of the differentia of missions in the total Christian task.

Another very important consequence of the new situation is that the Orthodox Churches are now involved in the work of the Division. The growth of a new missionary spirit in the Church of Greece, which is the subject of an article in this number of the Review, is a matter for thanksgiving. But it is also evident that for the work of the Division we shall have much to learn from the unparalleled experiences of the Russian Church during the past three decades. The issues which Communism presents to the Church are everywhere acknowledged to be among the most serious that we confront. In the men from the churches of Russia, both Orthodox and Baptist, who are now coming to share in our counsels, we have men who are learning what it means to bear a missionary witness in the midst of an extreme form of secularism. What they have to teach the

rest of us may be one of the most important subjects for our study in the coming years.

### *The Year Ahead*

The outstanding event of the coming year for the work of the Division will be the first full meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism which is to take place, by invitation of the Evangelical Council of Mexico, at the Evangelical Seminary, Mexico City, December 8th to 20th, 1963. It will bring together approximately eighty delegates of member councils, thirty-five delegates of the WCC Central Committee, between twelve and twenty youth delegates, and a number of advisers, observers and guests. The main work of the meeting will be done in four sections, on the following subjects: 1. The Witness of the Christian to Men of other Faiths. 2. The Witness of the Christian to Men in the Secular World. 3. The Witness of the Christian Congregation in its Neighbourhood. 4. The Witness of the Church across National and Confessional Boundaries. The basic work of the sections will be Bible study followed by discussion of the subject assigned in the light of insights arising from the corporate Bible study. In addition to this study in the sections of selected Bible passages, the whole conference will be led in the study of key biblical words relevant to the missionary task of the Church. These key words will also be the basis of printed Bible studies which will form part of a preparatory study



booklet. It is hoped that this booklet, which will be published about July, will be widely used in the churches as a preparation for the meeting.

Also in preparation for this meeting, papers have been written on the four sectional themes by Dr Daud Rahbar, Pastor Horst Symanovsky, Dr Richard Shaull and Principal C. H. Hwang. The writers are being asked to revise their papers in the light of comments made, and it is hoped that the revised papers will play an important part in guiding the thinking of the sections.

There will be other important elements in the meeting. Decisions will have to be made about the programme of the Division for the ensuing five years, and especially about the future of the Theological Education Fund. There will be opportunities for contact with the life of the Mexican churches, and for hearing news of God's work among different peoples and in varying situations. But above all the meeting will be an opportunity for waiting upon God. It is hoped that the main lines of its thinking will arise from the corporate study of the Bible. Times will be set apart for intercession for the missionary work of the Church, in addition to the regular times of morning and evening prayer. If God grants it, it will be an occasion when we can break free from the traditional categories of missionary thinking inherited from the era of 'Christendom', and confront the total task of world evangelism as members of a world council of churches committed both to mission and to unity. It is not too early to ask the readers of the Review to begin to pray for God's blessing upon this meeting.

As one reviews these developments and tries to convey to a wider circle of readers an impression of what is happening in this work of ecumenical missionary co-operation and study, one is ever conscious of the fact that all these plans and ideas can become empty noise and meaningless motion. But if they are humbly offered to God, He can use them in His own gracious way. All true vitality in the work of missions depends in the last analysis upon the secret springs of supernatural life which they know who give time to communion with God. All true witness to Christ is the overflowing of a reality too great to be contained. It has its source in a life of adoration and intercession which is, of its very nature, hidden. Perhaps too much of our work is done 'to be seen of men', and if so, it has its reward. But one cannot write about these things without the reminder that any real power that God may give them will come through those secret channels which are in this age, as in every age, the true means of blessing for the world.

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