Packaging or Partnership? a model for true church growth

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In many parts of the world church, people are moving 'out from under' inherited or imposed institutions to discover new ways of worship and of life together. You find them in informal gatherings, house-meetings and cells; in settings somewhat removed from the ordinary activities of the church. They may be in groups like the communal farm I visited in Japan, where rural workers from many countries developed their skills—above all in relationships—as they worked together under Dr Takami's inspiration. You will find them in renewal meetings: whether among Aboriginal Australian villagers meeting in the open air to sing and pray, in a youth camp in Calcutta, or in an afternoon gathering in a large church in Kigali, Rwanda.

Springs of revival

At once you realize that the movements which have stirred and spread the church, exploding and expanding from within, have seldom, if ever, come from the top, or worked their way through the formal structure downwards and outwards. From the beginning, they have been spontaneous uprushings of the life of the Spirit, moving at will among particular people in particular places. In the New Testament, the impetus came from the missionary apostles and inspired prophets; in the early church from the martyrs and then from the desert fathers; in the Middle Ages from the monastic movements and their millenarian counterparts. Then came the lay mystical fellowships, the Anabaptist radical reformation, the mystics and orders of the Counter-Reformation. Finally there are the evangelical and catholic revivals of modern times, with liturgical and charismatic renewal, down to the new cells, teams and communities of Charles de Foucald, of Taizé, of the Focolare. Alongside them also are the Jesus movements and the forceful transatlantic style of Operation Mobilization or Youth with a Mission.

For all its occasional tragic divisions and distortions, the 'Balokole' (brotherhood) movement in East Africa has provided much of the energy for the astounding expansion of the church in the whole area.

Even in the ancient churches of the East, episcopacy has had, from early days, its strange bond with monasticism—so much so that only a deep monastic revival can bring about a subsequent revitalization of the church, especially in the face of sharp persecution. This has been happening in Russia for some time, where the sources of renewed life have long lain deep in the *poustinia*, the hidden retreat of hermits and *staretsi* (holy men) in the forests. It is happening in Egypt, where the present Coptic renewal has its springs in that most ancient of all hidden areas of encounter with God, the desert.

'Structure' and 'communitas'

In *The Ritual Process*, Vincent Turner[1] reflected on the contrast between the formal, institutional aspects of human social life, and its spontaneously free and formless moments and movements. He used the word 'structure' to describe the normal institutions; the constant patterns and rules by which human relationships are organized and ordered. By these means power is distributed, authority assigned, and the varying functions of different members of society fixed. Above all, there is some clear sense of differentiation and hierarchy. Such institutions may be manipulated by those who want to hold on to power, but at least those who live within such a framework are protected from chaos or disintegration. These institutions are required to protect us from our own frailty and fallibility (as Paul suggests in Romans 12). They provide continuity in time and in space. They permit society to function after a fashion. Cast them out as we may, they will, like ritual itself, return in one form or another.

But over against this 'structure', there come moments and places in the life of a society where there is a suspension of such patterns. All differences are deliberately expunged. There is a sudden feeling for an entirely *un*differentiated, egalitarian unity. This characteristic Turner called 'communitas'. Indeed, it arouses a sense of underlying communion and community, for which in any society there may be a profound yearning. Even for highly structured societies, there may be certain moments when the exact converse of their normal experience comes into play; when all categories and labels are lifted, all rules reversed. There is something of this in such traditions as the ancient 'Feast of Fools', in which the jester is viewed as king. There may even be movements, within the wider framework of an hierarchical society, in which some of the more marginal people deliberately seek to find an alternative utopian equality of mutual sharing and caring. An attempt is made to bypass structures and to break through to an ideal state of pure undivided oneness where there are no separations. This ideal world can be imagined as coming out of the mythical past or lying in the future.

But the key point of the argument is that the two cannot really be

alternatives. Structure and community in fact need each other. Ideally, moments of community can serve to cleanse and renew structure, and it should be the goal of structure itself to serve and help to realize community effectively. The forward thrust here comes from guerrilla movements which have a crucial relationship with the main army, loosening and decentralizing its chains of command. Innovation or expansion are the work of free-ranging project groups, as in industry, where ideally they complement the modes of operation of central 'line' management.

Biblical faith reveals the place where structure and community truly meet. It was F. W. Dillistone[2] who explored the way in which two aspects of Israel (and, later, of the Christian church)—the 'covenantal' or chosen committed community, and the 'organic' or apparently natural social order—complement each other. As the pilgrim desert people begin to settle in Canaan, kingship, temple and city can become valuable symbolic institutions. But then, as the decades pass, there is a danger of the pilgrim experience being lost. The 'schools of the prophets' emerge as corporate reminders of the desert model. The 'organic' hierarchical structure has by now become distorted and corrupted in the hands of the powerful and wealthy.

It seems, therefore, as if covenanting bands, a faithful remnant, are needed before, during and after the Exile to recall Israel to its true vocation to be a vehicle of God's special choice and grace. Later, such remnant communities become the only potential means of embodying the true Israel during the times of Hellenistic and Roman occupation. It is this true Israel that Jesus comes to call into being. In Jesus, ideal and reality meet; the spiritual and the material, 'heaven' and 'earth', are held together in his cross and risen life. So his people, those who share that life, can be enabled in the Spirit to transcend the gulf between structure and community.

This kingdom-community of Jesus, for which the church was to become at least a pointer and a sign, was not to destroy the institutions of Israel—law, sabbath, temple, kingship—but to reorientate and fulfil them; to give them a new content and meaning. They were to be neither simply 'structure', nor 'communitas' in place of structure; neither the Sadducee or Pharisee compliance with the *status quo* on the one hand, nor the Zealot revolutionary society or closed purified community of the Essenes on the other.

The emerging structures of the New Testament church, the apostles and sub-apostolic leaders like Timothy or Titus, and the first forms of proclamation and teaching, of liturgy, creed and canon—all these came into being to sustain the community of love and shared forgiveness, and to keep it open to all comers. Paul's missionary ventures in particular belong to both structure and community. Neither can wholly claim him to be his own. His calling came, as he firmly asserted, through no man; and there seems little doubt that the

Spirit spoke to the church at Antioch through Paul's own strong clear voice. Yet he was at pains to be sent out by that church and to report back to it. Even when he felt driven to a new mission to the West, he would seem to have written to the most eminent church there, that of Rome, in order partly to secure their support for the new move. Later, when structure—institution for its own sake—threatened to stifle the church's growth, renewal movements, revivals, and varying types of covenanting community have arisen in that strangest of all proofs of the reality of grace, the *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the Church always being reformed)—its structure constantly stretched and strengthened by community to make room for the perennial freshness of the Spirit.

Structure needs community

Recently, Ralph Winter, one of the Pasadena 'church growth' school, has echoed something of Dillistone's argument when he claims: 'Every Christian tradition, whether Protestant, Mennonite or Roman, in so far as it depends upon a family inheritance or... a biological mechanism for its perpetuation over a period of time, will gradually lose the spiritual vitality with which it may have begun.'[3] He sees that, whereas the Roman Catholic tradition could make up for this loss by creating new 'orders', the Protestants could resort only to throwing up new groupings, fragmenting into a myriad denominations, or to accepting new 'para-church' informal agencies, like missionary societies. When these denominations or missionary societies become established and harden into new structure, fresh communities have to arise. Thus he points to the recent emergence in the USA of large-scale groups of this kind, such as Youth with a Mission or Campus Crusade, with their tremendously demanding and challenging appeal to the enthusiastic young whom they mobilize in their thousands.

Unfortunately, these bodies often lack a positive relationship to the institutional church. They become powerful, virtually independent, bodies which fail in accountability to the church as a whole. What is needed is that such bodies should be linked firmly to particular churches, as the Roman orders have always been to some extent at least. Even in the Middle Ages, the Pope was approached by Francis of Assisi so that this new venture could be given papal blessing and, later, direction. Rome itself, for all the tension between order and diocese, knew how to use the orders in the service of the whole ramshackle structure of the church.

Winter seems here to underestimate the tensions that have existed between orders and bishops. But he rightly affirms that non-Roman churches need similar forms of community-societies that will have the same complementary relationship to their churches. Only thus will

the problem of the autonomous interdenominational agencies on the one hand, and the over-restricted and inward-looking local churches on the other, be resolved.

Now there is much that is powerfully attractive in this argument, which seems to marry with what I have been saying about structure and community. Lesslie Newbigin, in his CMS sermon of 1978, rightly criticized Winter for talking of these denominational societies as a special élite on whom the rest of the church must depend for growth.[4] Bishop Newbigin felt strongly that such a notion of a 'mission', distinct from the local church and superior to it, detracts dangerously from the life of the ordinary congregation.[5] It is the local church which is the locus of the true evangelism of those who are attracted by the ordinary life, worship and witness of the body. This is how the church genuinely grows.

Newbigin is properly hostile to the idea of an élite. It is true that Roman Catholic orders and Protestant missionary societies have alike been responsible for propagating a notion of a first-class spiritual citizenry of some kind. The monks and nuns, the 'religious' (a give-away title), tended also to be seen by the faithful in the Roman Church as *the* missionaries. Similarly, their Protestant counterparts have been put on a pedestal in a church whose main function, as its whole structure and system of clergy-training makes clear, has become pastoral rather than missionary, moulded by a static maintenance model.

But once we take a more post-Vatican II theology of the church and of monastic orders seriously, the objection somewhat fades. In the new picture of the church, mission is seen clearly as the task of the whole body. The bishops are to be the chief missionaries. The emphasis is on the church as a whole. The missionary order or society is simply one manifestation of that church alongside others. It becomes one expression and instrument of a missionary spirit which exists in the local churches and in the church universal. The society becomes a kind of sign or sacrament of the church as a whole, just as the church is a sign or sacrament of the coming kingdom-community. The society, by the particular commitment and dedication of its members, should point the local church itself to its own essential character as a committed community.

The voluntary society, like the order, becomes the servant of the local church, standing for and embodying the openness of that church to the kingdom. And international fellowships and teams of dedicated people must seek to witness to the true nature both of the gospel and of the church which they go out to bring to life, and, in unevangelized areas, to bring into being. Indeed, for a recent Benedictine study of monastic life, 'the meaning of monasticism is to be sought in the centre rather than on the periphery of the church's life.'[6] The church needs such communities, not to live its life for it, but to show how it

should be living that life and to encourage it so to live. Orders, missionary fellowships, or whatever they may be, can foster the renewal of local congregations and encourage cross-cultural mission. They will provide one means among many others. Sometimes, reciprocally, they may themselves receive powerful stimulus and reinvigoration from the local church.

Now is the time, across the whole Anglican Communion, for this emphasis on 'covenant communities' to be reinforced. The present centralization of mission in the diocese and in the province is no guarantee that mission itself remains central: quite the reverse. In Partners in Mission discussions, the maintenance or development of the existing structure have tended to bulk larger than outreach. Yet never was there a moment when the church needed more to get out from under its institutional encumbrances, a fact which a younger generation all over the world would seem to recognize all too impatiently.

The present evangelistic opportunity, the needs of the surrounding world, the pressures of world-wide poverty and injustice, the universal hunger for direction and meaning, all demand a total transformation of the church. They demand vigorous lay participation, a new quality of compassion and of evangelistic witness, a readiness on the part of every one of us to attempt to move across cultural frontiers. All our church structures must now be judged, in Ross Kinsler's words, 'by their effectiveness in allowing and enabling people themselves to discover and express their faith.'[7]

For such a purpose, special 'ginger' groups are needed as much now as ever they have been: groups which, like the early evangelicals of the eighteenth century, like the Clapham Sect, like Charles Simeon's young men, like the Tractarian priests in London's dockland in the late nineteenth century, will discover special bonds and special spiritual resources for special tasks. Alongside the movement of Partners in Mission and provincial centralization, we need in the church—as in secular organizations—a deliberate 'un-coupling' of the system so that the centre serves not to direct but to co-ordinate a multitude of varied initiatives. We need to see the church, like society itself, becoming something more of a 'community of communities' in which congregations, cells, teams, societies, orders of all shapes and sizes, share in a world-wide movement of prayer, witness and service.

The summons to a genuine mission among the poor of the world, which was voiced at the World Council of Churches' conference at Melbourne, may well be served best by such a development. Raymond Fung in Hong Kong, Joao Libanio in Brazil, and others working in inner-city Britain, have exemplified the role that missionary incomers can fulfil by sharing in a team with local Christians and helping to stimulate and bring into being the basic

communities, the cell groups, by which alone the vast urban wastelands of new Third-World towns and decaying western inner cities can be won for Christ.

In East Africa, even in the rapidly expanding churches of Kenya and Tanzania, in West Africa, in the churches of Nigeria and Sierra Leone, in North and South India, as much as in Britain and other parts of the West, a younger generation is impatient and restive with the heavy inherited forms of worship and organization. There is a real danger of much of that generation's enthusiasm and energy being lost to the church and diverted to 'para-church' gatherings or breakaway groups in growing numbers.

While it might not be right to impose a western pattern on other areas, there is no doubt that encouragement and scope could be given in many a diocese and province to harness the enthusiasm and organizing ability of laity and younger clergy who might come together to create their own voluntary movements. In some churches the leaders have shown the way. Bishop Wickremesinghe of Kurunagalà, Sri Lanka, has lent special support to the Christian Workers' Fellowship among the tea-workers, and to Arnold Mendis's inspiring Ceylon Inland Mission, both autonomous missionary ventures. In Bangladesh a tiny Bengali sisterhood, a potential successor to the Oxford Mission, is flowering if not yet spreading. Partnership in Mission, formerly a North American missionary body, has now reconstituted itself as a kind of international missionary order led from a base in Mexico.

Recently Theodore Williams[8] has drawn attention to the rise of a mass of indigenous missionary movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In India, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church's evangelistic association (1888) and the Indian Missionary Society (1903), followed by the National Missionary Society (1905), were pioneers. But in the 1960s and 1970s the movement took off in earnest, with a whole cluster of societies in Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Korea, Indonesia, and twenty or more in India—and with larger associations of such missions forming. In Kenya, diocesan missionary associations, admittedly closely tied to the diocesan structure, are supporting missionaries in their own area, while a newly formed overseas 'mission board' (again a model that suggests almost too much central direction) intends to send Kenyan missionaries overseas. Similarly, in West Africa, the Evangelical Missionary Society, the missionary arm of its parent church, has sent 200 missionary couples to the Maguzawa and Fulani people in the north of Nigeria, as well as to Ghana.

In Latin America, Pentecostal and other Protestant groups have sent out missionaries from their own to other areas: notably the Brazilian Baptists and Assemblies of God. Williams points out the advantages enjoyed by missionaries sent out by a relatively poorer

church in 'a mission out of poverty', as he calls it, rather than out of affluence. Juan Carlos Ortiz's church sent three missionary couples to another part of Latin America with three months' support and a one-way ticket. They were to support themselves thereafter, until the church that sprang from their labours was able to take them on. It would be easier for such relatively 'powerless' missionaries to identify with the poor and oppressed, like the early Christian missionary movement. How desperately western missionary agencies need the stimulus, the corrective, and the restoring of their own integrity which a genuinely interdependent partnership with such Third-World groups could give them!

Equally, however, Williams points to problems faced by such enterprises: lacking often not only the organizational resources, the training and the experience of western agencies, but also the preception of what such missionary enterprise might entail. One Korean missionary, Chung Chae Ok, has written feelingly of the need for more understanding support than she received.[9] Both she and Williams indicate clearly the need for co-operation with the existing western movement, for a sharing of staff, finance and information, a real partnership in trust.

Many of these ventures are still interdenominational: none is Anglican. Surely the moment has come for the engendering of such bodies within the Anglican Communion itself. Indeed, might it not be possible before too long to contemplate forming a federation of such agencies world-wide, at the very least within a certain group of churches with common links? Could we not arrive internationally at something akin to the denominational society to which Ralph Winter gives such particular emphasis?

Community needs structure

Surely this stress on a proper relationship with an existing church is also wise. A community movement that breaks away entirely from the structures and becomes a detached organization on its own, can often grow into a formidable structure itself. The whole theology of the Church of England's Partnership for World Mission was an attempt to develop a healthier relationship between autonomous groups and a synodical church. But many an 'undenominational' movement, from house-churches to major international bodies, has become a newly dominant structure in its own right. In the house-church this can mean the reign of one particularly powerful personality. In the international body it implies a dangerous lack of accountability to any one church centre or of responsibility to the local church. The statement of the recent Conference on World Evangelization in Thailand drew specific attention to these dangers.[10]

In a striking paper on the perils of such western missionary bodies, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden compare them to multinational

business corporations.[11] They point to some disturbing analogies. Western-based global organizations can trample into sensitive areas in the Third World promoting a detached verbal message, intended to be as widely distributed by methods as ruthlessly efficient as the inappropriate products of some powerful commercial multinationals. Their product, a 'gospel message', so-called, which is as unrelated to local needs or situations as baby milk or special beverages, creates its own agencies and artificial response. Such bodies tend to work, the paper suggests, through their own subsidiaries, which are judged entirely by their capacity to distribute an identical product. 'If the national church is not an effective distribution centre for the product ... then it is bypassed. The agency creates its own church, its own distribution centre and will continue to do so.' Thus they classify the rallies, conventions and conferences by means of which such agencies create their own new patterns of dependence and 'build their own structures of fellowship and witness to meet the needs their non-incarnate gospel defines.'

The paper analyses the mechanisms, high salaries, new seminaries and new detached leadership with no accountability to the church in the country, by which these 'evangelistic pirates' gradually move in on the local 'markets', throwing them into confusion. It adds a shrewd critique of their way of evaluating their 'profits and sales'. But its central point is that such agencies have no incarnational witness, even in their countries of origin, let alone in the localities in which they operate elsewhere. Their very 'market research' is carried out in places where they have no involvement in the struggles of their own society. Their gospel is wholly spiritualized, individualistic, disembodied. And 'a non-incarnational gospel necessarily will bypass the expression of an incarnate gospel, the national church.' Samuel, Sugden and others are setting up a local fellowship with the avowed aim of combating such a diversion of energy and of being committed to the strengthening and renewing of the local church.

Donald McGavran, the distinguished doyen of the church growth school, emphasizes the 'communitas', over against the structure of the church, in a genuine and challenging concern for the unreached people of the world. Not long ago, in a letter to me, he made an onslaught on the Church Missionary Society (CMS). He writes out of his affection for that Society and because of his past close links with Max Warren, its great former leader, and his letter comes as part of a general criticism, not just of CMS but of the theology and theory of world mission which it might perhaps be held to exemplify. He comments on a news-letter of mine about interchange and partnership.[12] He sees these as part of a new orthodoxy, a bending over backwards for fear of offending or intruding upon Third-World partner churches. There is a complex debate as to what today's missionary should do, he says, and in my news-letter three options are implicit.

The first is the great commission proclaiming Jesus as God and Saviour. The second is what he describes as 'a ministry of kindly aid' to people in need, and the third is a submissive participation in the work of given churches in certain localities, working entirely at their direction. These are the three choices. Which of them are we going to opt for?

Meanwhile, he continues, three billion[13] people have yet to believe. Asian, African and Latin American Churches are doing little towards cultural evangelism, although three hundred million of these unbelievers are neighbours who could be reached by them. Even so, there are still over two and a half billion who cannot be reached in this way by any existing church. Christ commands the missionary to go, and the missionary will depend upon 'the power at his disposal'—to quote a significant phrase of his—and it is simplistic to look at mission overseas as a painfully maturing interchange, as I described it, between ourselves and Christian equals. It must be far more than that, since that it not a way of working which could reach the three billion not yet evangelized. All the three roads that I have described, he says, are legitimate. But it is the first, the great commission, that gets the least attention and needs the most. What are we doing about it? he asks.

It is a fair challenge. He suggests that our Society's failure to embark on fresh ventures of cross-cultural evangelism arises from post-imperial guilt. I am glad that he also implies that missionaries can be brown, black, yellow and red, as well as white, and that he says that this is a challenge facing all churches. But the plain fact to me is that the tone and quality of this whole letter, and of much of Donald McGavran's writing in this strain, is still so much in terms of an implicit initiative from the West. We in Britain may suffer from guilt, and our ways of speaking about mission may be overcharged by it, but the evangelical theorist of church growth is not without his own cultural presuppositions too. In many ways, the kind of attitude that Donald McGavran propounds might be called the Victorianism of the twentieth century. There is something of the adventurism and activism which could ride roughshod over local Christian sensitivities. Obviously it is right to criticize inertia, but the essential point is this: partnership is not an alternative to obedience to the great commission. It is the only way of responding to it. The primary task is a call for the renewal of the whole church and for its return to the gospel. Westerners cannot seek to bypass other churches by setting up new agencies; rather, westerners must draw other churches into their fellowship, and those other churches must draw westerners into their own. We must provoke each other by letters like that of Donald McGavran. Human society is no longer set in static cultural blocks. The whole world is circulating and interpenetrating more and more. What is needed is a renewed, revived, international Christian com-

munity with a shared sense of urgency and an acknowledgement of gifts to bring and of gifts to receive. Such a movement would be likely to commend itself internationally by this very quality of interdependence.

A seemingly give-away hint in Donald McGavran's is a reference to the power at the disposal of missionaries. I want to ask what he really means by that. Is it a power of the Spirit or a power of numbers? An isolated missionary in Khartoum, for example, sees new forms of church and gospel emerging around him; sees a movement that is being led by others; sees initiatives being taken by those to whom he is introducing the gospel; sees leadership spontaneously growing. It is not through an army of evangelists coming from outside and dominating the enterprise. The mystery of interdependence and of true sharing may indeed be the heart of the new evangelism that is to emerge in our time. Bodies of evangelists from the West, operating separately from the Third-World church, have come under considerable Third-World criticism of late. We can hear a Third-World voice if we listen to the letter of an Asian friend, Secretary of the Christian Council in his area, commenting on a particular development in which some western agencies are involved.

> I see in this a massive participation and control by westerners which must be rectified. *X* Mission is following missionary policy and strategy which should have been obsolete years ago. It should be a local mission. If that is not possible at the moment it should at least be an Asian mission, or maybe a balanced international mission to *X*. The existing boards and societies involved must recognize a move in that direction. *X* should not be regarded as one of the few Asian areas where western missionaries can exercise their personal missionary vocation and western boards and agencies can find an object for their mission. Would a missionary society like yours be prepared to support Asian missionaries in their work in *X*? If so, then we would like to try to help and be involved.

The sense of wrong relationships which comes through these frank but brotherly words is echoed in the reactions at a recent conference in Ecuador, when strong criticisms were made of some North American mission boards' policy: 'Where your missions misuse their financial resources, they manipulate us. They demand servility in exchange for assistance. You are not respecting us.'

Leaders of all churches must be enabled to hear the genuine challenge which Donald McGavran and others in the Pasadena church growth school are putting to us. We must all be challenged, but it must be a challenge in partnership, a challenge in the context of an international community. The problems will be overcome only by a real mutuality: a mutual provocation to evangelism and witness, and a mutual support. In the Anglican Communion we are beginning to find that in the context of Partnership in Mission. We really are

getting the opportunity, not just to dominate others, nor to bend over backwards to them, but in a mutual exchange to submit to each other, to speak frankly to each other, to listen carefully and humbly to each other. The Church of England has been very slow in responding to this, but at last the process has begun, and this is the context within which genuine initiatives will be possible. Donald McGavran wrote to us in CMS about Sierra Leone, challenging us again as to why we are not doing something in the hinterland of Sierra Leone. Why are we bogged down in the existing church nearer to the coast? He speaks of the 'poisonous doctrine', as he calls it, that we should be restricted to what churches existing in any given area may be doing. Now I agree that there could be a danger of complying with the *status quo*, and no doubt that explains much of what we have failed to do. But I think that at present the call is to discover a relationship in which we can speak to each other truthfully and openly. I know that within the next two or three years the opportunity might come of responding in partnership with the Church of Sierra Leone to the challenge which Donald McGavran has put to us—but he should have perhaps rather have put it to them. If Donald McGavran had not written in this strain, it could have been that the opportunity would not have been presented so vividly and so clearly. We must be immensely grateful to him for this, as for much else. But our response must be a shared response. It must be a response which draws in Christians in Sierra Leone and revives, renews and opens up both us and them. It must be a venture within which those in Sierra Leone and those in CMS discover each other afresh.

In justification of much that he says, Donald McGavran points to St Paul's missionary strategy and activity, seeming to see St Paul as the individual entrepreneur (his word) in mission. Perhaps the very entrepreneurial metaphor is in itself significant, with its overtones of western capitalist individualism. In his fascinating commentary on Romans, F. J. Leenhardt[14] showed Paul not as an isolated individual acting on his own authority (although he had certainly a deep sense of his own calling which he received from no man), but as an apostle working out his finished work within the Jerusalem area, taking the opinion, the blessing and the backing of the Jerusalem church with profound seriousness, and, when later he was about to take to Jerusalem the fruit of the generosity of the Christian communities founded among the Gentiles, being conscious that he had fulfilled a task upon which he could now report back in Jerusalem. The original leaping-off point of St Paul's works, the church in Antioch, was itself a marvellous mix, a fellowship of the unlike. It was only with the blessing of that community, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, that Paul and Barnabas originally set off together. Although they had considerable independence—the independence of a missionary society, or perhaps today the freedom of a certain kind of missionary

'sodality'—yet they always acted in the closest unity and inter-dependence with the church in Antioch and reported back to that church in due course. There was, I believe, something of the inter-dependent character that the Church Missionary Society now has in its relation to the Partnership for World Mission[15] in the Church of England. Moreover, Leenhardt notes that, when Paul was planning his new project of going to Spain (and it certainly was his own project, his own sense of calling that moved him in that direction), he did so because he felt that he had finished in Illyria and that the time was coming for him to set out for a new area.

Leenhardt suggests that he now wrote (to the church in Rome) as one who was moving out from the whole area over which Jerusalem had a kind of provincial authority, as it were. He wrote seeking a sense of spiritual and material solidarity with a church not founded by him, a church without which his mission to Spain would be false and impossible, because it would then be a purely individual thing.[16] The epistle to the Romans becomes in this commentary a meditation on the expansion of the church, threatened by a loss of unity; and St Paul is at pains to bring out how the gospel of the grace of God is the ground from which the church really grows. One consequence, incidentally, of this picture of the whole of Romans and of the meditation on the mission of the church, is that those chapters (9, 10 and 11) which seemed to other commentators to be secondary, supplementary and separate, now spring into what appears a central place and become part of a whole meditation on the *ecclesia* and its history, on the development of the people of the house of God, which illuminates the thrust of the whole epistle. So there is no Christian individualism here. It is an historical movement of the church about which Paul is conscious, and can be undertaken only together with others. We must look to a new richness, a breaking away from this fragmentary, arbitrary individualism; from this false separatism which we have exported. We must realize, more and more, how we need each other in the church across the whole world, and how much community needs structure.

Towards an international movement

No voluntary group today should seek to exercise power without responsibility. Those who seek genuine community must also relate to existing structure. Both Ralph Winter and Donald McGavran have tended to see 'frontier mission', as they call it, as an alternative to 'inter-church aid'. Winter still talks of what he calls 'first stage activity' in mission—that is, primary evangelism and the crossing of major geographical or cultural frontiers—as preliminary to what he describes as the second stage: 'interchurch partnership in mission'. Now this seems to be putting the whole process precisely the wrong way round. The first stage is manifestly where we are beginning to be

now; that in which the western church seeks sensitively and penitently a new self-critical relationship of genuine partnership and trust with its Third-World counterparts. This inter-church relationship is primary, in a way with which Pasadena, it sometimes seems, has not yet wholly come to terms. Indeed, all western churches, societies, orders, movements, still have some way to go in working this through. The Edinburgh 1980 World Consultation in Frontier Missions suffered from the absence of church-related delegates in its consideration of providing 'a church for every people by the year 2000'. It did not provide the very necessary opportunity for powerful western mission agencies to hear and to respond to a possibly painful Third-World critique of much of present structures and modes of operation. Sooner or later that critique must be heeded.

But the second stage, about to begin, will surely see a new type of international frontier mission emerging, in which the western societies and churches, no longer dominant, still provide something of the finance, the infra-structure, the organization, and some of the participants. The Third-World churches will provide much of the leadership. Teams, part international, part local, shared initiatives, joint training and evaluation, will be launched from bases not necessarily in the West. The participants will be ready, above all, at whatever cost, to incarnate the gospel they seek to convey; a gospel which necessarily carries with it profound social and political implications.

Here is no divide between institutional church and voluntary community. The instrument may well be a new international partnership of voluntary groupings sprouting from within many varied churches. The institutional churches from which such groups rise, and in the areas to which they go, will be ready to authenticate and to 'earth' them by their encouragement and support. Similarly, the churches which such groups help to bring into being will in turn free their own members to form such special communities. Between orders or societies and churches there can then be internationally a reciprocal sense of responsibility and of mutual communication. The structures facilitate the spread of new community ventures. The communities stimulate and inspire the structures. In Christ they both need and serve each other.

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NOTES

1 V. W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (RKP, London 1969).

2 F. W. Dillistone, *The Structure of the Divine Society* (Lutterworth, London 1951).

3 Ralph D. Winter, 'Protestant Mission Societies: The American Experience', *Missiology*, 7, 1979, p.140.
4 Lesslie Newbigin, *Context and Conversion* (CMS, London 1978), pp.12-13.
5 ibid., p.11.
6 David Rees *et al.*, *Consider Your Call: A Theology of Monastic Life To-day* (SPCK, London 1978), p.6.
7 Quoted from an unpublished paper.
8 Waldron Scott, ed., *Serving Our Generation: Evangelical Strategy for the Eighties* (World Evangelical Fellowship, Colorado Springs 1980), ch.8.
9 ibid., ch.9.
10 *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 5, 1981, pp.29-31.
11 Quoted from an unpublished paper.
12 'The Beginning of an Era?' *CMS News Letter*, 424, 1979.
13 American usage, i.e., 3,000,000,000.
14 F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Lutterworth, London 1961).
15 This body comprises representatives of the Anglican agencies for mission at home and overseas, and of the Church of England's General Synod, in a unique combination of the voluntary and official.
16 Leenhardt, op. cit., pp.13-14.