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Partnership in Mission

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ANY SURVEY of the expansion of Christianity in the twentieth century will have to take into account three historical facts of particular importance. First, that the modern missionary movement had, as its base, Western Christendom at a time when, as a result of the industrial revolution growing out of scientific and technological development, the West had become a political. economic and cultural power. Second, that missionaries were the carriers not only of Christianity, but also of values and perspectives typical of Western man and associated with modernity, including a naturalistic worldview. Finally, that missionary work contributed to the disruption of order in the traditional non-Western societies and brought a new desire for development, thus creating a revolutionary situation.

These facts are basic to understanding the role that Christianity has played in the modern search for national liberation and the challenge that the modern revolutionary mood poses to the Church today. In the closing chapter of his monumental history of Christianity in a Revolutionary Age, Kenneth S. Latourette raises the question, whether by giving rise (or at least contributing) to forces that created a revolutionary situation, Christianity has not worked against itself. "*If the revolution stemmed in any degree from Christianity*," he contends, "*that religion could be said to be digging its own grave*." The call to the Church today is to rise to the demands of an age of liberation that its own missionary thrust has helped to usher in. And the basic claim I wish to substantiate in this paper is that this task must be faced as a global task. A task that can only be discharged as Christians everywhere around the world become concretely involved in a living partnership in mission. p. 226

In the first part I will attempt to show the contrast between this approach and other approaches; in the second part I will deal with its basis, and in the third part I will explore some ways in which it can be implemented today.

I. TOWARD A NEW APPROACH IN MISSION

The first World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910, heralded the position the Church was to attain in the twentieth century. The conference took place at a time when a combination of forces was beginning to threaten to destroy Christianity in Western Europe, the continent that had served as the base of its expansion. Throughout the nineteenth century, the development of science and technology, followed by industrialization, urbanization and the disruption of traditional patterns of society had been producing a revolution that was accompanied by a growing secularization of life, with the abandonment of faith by millions of European Christians. Edinburgh marked the end of an epoch, but it also pointed towards a new age in which the world-wide Christian movement that had taken shape through missionary work was to come into its own. It pointed to the displacement of Christianity from its traditional center, which was entering a so-called post-Christian era, to the world beyond Europe.

Out of more than 1,200 representatives at Edinburgh, only seventeen came from the "younger churches" (eight from India, one from Burma, three from China, one from Korea

and four from Japan). Although the Church had by then become a global fellowship, it bore the imprint of an ecclesiastical colonialism that paralleled the political colonialism of the time. In line with the recommendations of the organizing committees, each participating missionary society invited (since the delegates represented missionary societies rather than churches) sent some of its "leading missionaries" and "if practicable, one or two natives".

The Edinburgh Conference was a demonstration of the growing interest in missionary work among Christians of Western Europe and the United States and of the remarkable influence of the Student Volunteer Movement whose vision, summed up in the watch-word, "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation", p. 227 had helped an impressive number of students to see their responsibility regarding world missions. But it also threw into relief a problem that for many years ahead would remain unsolved at least for a large portion of the missionary movement, namely, the great resistance on the part of missionary societies to implementing the ideal of establishing truly indigenous churches ("self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating", according to Henry Venn's dictum).

Out of Edinburgh grew two movements that eventually resulted in the formation in 1948, of the World Council of Churches: Life and Work, and Faith and Order. At the initial meeting of Life and Work (Stockholm, 1925), despite its claim to be a "Universal Christian Conference", only six "nationals" representing the "young churches" were present. The "world conference" at which Faith and Work was launched (Lausanne, 1927) was equally a Western gathering, with very few representatives from outside the West. The Anglo-American predominance was to be a persistent characteristic of "ecumenical" gatherings until the middle of the century. The World Missonary Conference had indeed marked a beginning, but there was a very steep climb ahead before the "sending churches" recognized the supranational character of the Church.

The "parity" between older and younger churches was brought to the fore as never before at the Second World Missionary Conference held at Jerusalem in 1928. At the next World Missionary Conference (Madras, 1938) the emergence of a world-wide Christian community was reflected by the presence of delegates from nearly fifty countries, many of them from non-Western areas. Madras also insisted on the close connection between indigenization and mission. But it was at the enlarged meeting of the International Missionary Council held at Whitby (Canada) in 1947, that the Church was uniquely confronted with the need to break down the distinction between "older and younger churches" and to face its global responsibility. Whitby's emphasis on missionaries as "agents of the church universal", whose responsibility was to he regarded on a par with that of their national colleagues, was a hallmark in missionary thinking.

Today not many would openly disagree with A. J. Boyd's statement that p. 228

> *'... older churches and younger churches are no longer to be thought of as patrons and beneficiaries respectively, or even as senders and receivers, but as partners not in any merely contractual sense, but set by God in that relationship. They come together by God's will, for the doing of God's will; they are partners in obedience."*[1]

In actual fact, however, Whitby's call to "partnership in obedience" is still today as relevant as when it was first issued. Many of its recommendations have not yet been implemented by a number of missionary agencies which (thirty years later!) remain bound by tradition. Witness the growing numerical strength of American Protestant

[1] *Christian Encounter* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrews Press, 1961), p. 19.

missions (almost wholly dependent on American personnel, leadership and finances) after World War II, and the persistent separation of "foreign missions" and "local churches" around the world. In many cases missionary work continues to be done from a position of political and economic power and with the assumption of Western superiority with regard to cultures and race. Many Christian churches, institutions and movements in the Third World continue to live in a "colonial" situation, heavily dependent on foreign personnel and subjected to foreign control. Despite the progress made toward genuine independence, Christians in the "developing countries" are caught in a situation in which economic and cultural imperialism has hardly been broken, even though its outward appearance has changed. On the other hand, the mentality of colonial dependence lingers in the "younger churches" to such an extent that an observer feels entitled to say that "*the Church in Africa has been very missionary minded, but only in terms of receiving missionaries and depending on them*." (John Mbiti). The missionary movement has been extremely slow to recognize the importance of real partnership in obedience and has fostered among the "younger churches" an attitude that will prove very difficult to change. As a result, even after the "Retreat of the West" in the Third World, Christianity is still commonly regarded as a Western religion and the Christian mission is still generally identified with a white face. Emilio Castro's words written about Latin America are also true of Asia and Africa: *p. 229*

> *"The most acute problem of the Protestant churches will be the nationalization of the church with its inherent ecclesiastical conflicts with the mission boards especially in the United States.*

This great reluctance by missionary societies to heed the call to partnership, even in the post-colonial situation, is sufficient to explain the "Call for a Moratorium" issued by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC at its assembly held at Bangkok in January, 1973. The recommendation was that mission agencies consider stopping sending funds and personnel to particular churches for a period of time, as "a possible strategy of mission in certain situations". The debate that followed was characterized by more heat than light. The All-Africa Conference of Churches added heat by adopting the "Moratorium" at its meeting at Lusaka, in May, 1974, with the observation that,

> *"... should the moratorium cause missionary agencies to crumble, the African church could have performed a service in redeeming God's people in the Northern Hemisphere from a distorted view of the mission of the church in the world."*

On the other hand, the International Congress on World Evangelization, held at Lausanne in August, 1974, added light by recognizing in its Convertant that

> *"... a reduction of foreign missionaries may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas."*

After the Lausanne Congress, at which a number of critical issues had been brought up mainly by Third World speakers, it became increasingly clear that even the most traditional missionary agencies would no longer be able to avoid the issue of world partnership in mission. The conviction expressed in the Lausanne Convenant, that "a new missionary era has dawned" and that "a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's church will be more clearly exhibited", would slowly gain ground.

At the end of 1976 a group of executives of the North American Foreign Missions Association and the International Foreign Missions Association (who together control one

third of all Protesttant missionaries in Latin America) met in Quito, Ecuador, with representatives of the Church in Latin America in a church mission consultation. The frank discussion of such painful realities p. 230 as the "ecclesiological crisis, the phenomenon of dependence, and the too-frequent failure to reach true brotherly interdependence" that marked the meeting is an encouraging sign that change is slowly taking place in the relationship between the "younger churches" and missionary agencies. And the process is irreversible.

II. THE BASIS OF PARTNERSHIP

All the churches, whatever their location, should regard themselves as partners in mission. Why? In a nutshell, because there is only one world, one Church, and one Gospel. Let us examine this affirmation in detail.

One World

One of the most striking characteristics of today's world is its unification. All the nations of the earth have been or are being drawn into a common civilization in such a way that for the first time it is possible to speak of a single world history. Gone are the days when the world could be viewed as a mosaic of self-contained national units. As the 1974 oil crisis showed, no country can adopt a policy in relation to its national resources without setting into motion a whole process affecting many nations. Even relatively unimportant decisions taken by a national government may result in unexpected changes influencing the lives of millions of persons in other nations.

In the jet age, the contacts between people from a great diversity of cultures have multiplied to such an extent that no-one living at the end of the nineteenth century could have imagined. Thousands of university students, business men, technicians and government officials live abroad for several years and return to their home countries with a new capacity to understand people from other cultures. And the Telestar and the radio give people everywhere the sense of living together.

The unification of the world, however, is far deeper than these factors would suggest at first sight. It has to do with the worldwide extension of a type of mentality which has taken shape as a result of the technological revolution in the West—the "Consumer mentality". It is connected with the adoption of common values in the light of which industrial products (many of them trivial) become all-important in both developed and underdevelopd countries. p. 231 In a real sense, therefore, it is a direct consequence of Western science and technology. The World civilization into which all the nations of the earth are drawn is a consumer society heavily dependent upon Western affluence, and carried in the wings of international corporations, powerful controllers of the mass media. Having erected *homo consumens* as the model of the ideal life, it has spread everywhere as a secular messianism in which faith in science and technology has been combined with the idea of progress to promise a new world order—a secularized version of the Kingdom of God.

The most telling symbol of this single world civilization is the city. Industrialization and urbanization are related terms. They may be regarded as different aspects of the same phenomenon, namely, the Westernization of the world, the "modernization" of life everywhere. Man has become a city dweller to such an extent that in the year 2000 six out of every ten persons will live in urban centers. Even more significantly, already today, as Jacques Ellul has observed, "*the country* (*and soon this will be true even of the immense*

Asian steppe) *is only an annex of the city*."[2] Urban growth goes together with industrialization and, therefore, with the spread of the consumer mentality around the globe.

Hardly anybody in the Third World would fail to recognize the superiority of Western technology which is at the basis of the present world civilization. Almost everybody would agree, however, that Western technology is something which no longer belongs exclusively to the West but which is to be shared by all humanity. It is debatable whether technology would in fact have been possible apart from Christian premises; but it is clear that, because of its ties with a politically powerful and economically wealthy minority, technology is far from benefiting "the disinherited of the earth". Industrialization in the Third World is taking place by direct transfer from the West—with Western standards of technology and Western concepts of capital and conditions of employment. Applied to the underdeveloped countries, it has produced a small wealthy minority obsessed by what Josue de Castro has aptly described as "ostentatious consumerism", and a large poverty-stricken p. 232 majority for whom the promised new world order is forever fading into the distant future.

In conclusion, technology has brought into existence a world civilization dominated by Western materialism, unified around the ideal of building a new world order with better standards of living for everyone, yet, totally unable to cope with the gross inequality between the rich and the poor. Transplanted into the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the consumer mentality, with all its values and ideals and ambitions and standards, has flourished in terms of societies where both rich and poor give absolute value to "things" but where the rich become richer and the poor poorer. The Western philosophy of life, which could well be summerized in the motto, "In Technology we trust", has materialized in an unjust world system, in which the distribution of goods and services is made, not according to needs, but according to wealth.

Both the common acceptance of the value of the consumer society and the injustice which marks the system engendered by the spread of Western technology are the context of the Christian mission today. For people everywhere they pose questions regarding man's ultimate destiny and the need of a world community in which science-based technology ceases to be a means of human exploitation and becomes a means of service to all. They represent a new situation that older and younger churches can only face as partners in mission. The common world civilization into which the nations of the earth are being drawn calls for the breaking down of the old distinction between the "homebase" and the "regions beyond". The whole world—this consumer society with its "gospel" of progress which circles the globe—is the mission field. Regardless of its location, everyChristian congregation has its mission field at its door step—and at the end of the earth.

One Church

It is a fact of history that the modern missionary movement was at the start heavily dependent upon individual initiative. The churches were, on the whole, indifferent, sometimes even hostile, to the missionary enterprise. "Missions" thus grew as agencies totally separate from the churches. As time went on, many churches were encouraged to "support" missionaries, but **p. 233** "missions" continued to be something entirely different from "churches". As a result, for the largest number of Christians everywhere, missionary

[2] *The Meaning of the City* (Grand Rapids:William B. Eerdsmans, 1970), p. 147.

interest is something to be associated with a small circle of enthusiasts, with no claim on the totality of the Church. And now that Christianity has become a worldwide phenomenon, it is hardly possible to find another misconception about the Christian mission as commonly taken for granted as this one—that the world mission is an exclusive responsibility of the "sending churches" located in the West, and a task toward which the "receiving churches" have very little, or nothing, to contribute.

The great Church historian Kenneth S. Latourette regarded World War I as the beginning of a new stage in the revolutionary age and in the history of Christianity. Having reached its peak of world power, after 1914 Western Europe began to experience a decline that culminated in the liberation of all its colonies. Meanwhile, the process of secularization which has gained ground during the nineteenth century speeded up so greatly that it became doubtful whether Christianity would survive in that portion of humanity traditionally identified as Christendom. Paradoxically, in the non-Western countries, where in 1914 Christians were still a very small minority, the churches (particularly the Protestant churches) began to experience an unexpected vitality. Especially since World War II the growth of the Church outside Europe has been so impressive that one can safely state that never before in history has any religion spread so widely and rapidly as Christianity in the last few decades. The great new fact of the century is this exploding world-wide Christian movement, advancing mainly among the masses of the non-Western world.

It is very significant that the greatest growth of the Church in this century has taken place among animistic peoples and among the deprived classes in the cities. That Christianity should appeal to "primitive" (or almost "primitive") people or to lower-income urbanites caught in the migrations from the rural areas to the cities should be no surprise to anyone familiar with the record of Christianity in the past! But one cannot easily discard the suspicion that contemporary mass movements to Christianity (like other religious movements that are flourishing) in the Third World are both a result of the impact of Western civilization upon traditional p. 234 societies, and a reaction against it. The revolution that the advance of the West with its secularism has brought to the value system and life style of millions in the rest of the world can hardly be exaggerated. To cope with this revolution many people are returning to religion, but not mainly to westernized Christianity, associated with colonial times, but to a resurgent ancient religion (sometimes championed by nationalistic political leaders who use it to create a new national identity) or to a "native" version of Christianity (sometimes strongly nationalistic and tolerant of ancient ideas and customs) that takes into account aspects of human life that the Western churches have left out. In Africa, for instance, the Independent churches are said to attract between 400,000 to 450,000 people a year from the traditional churches, both Roman Catholic and Protestant; in Latin America, Pentecostalism—the only Christian movement with real indigenous roots in this continent, according to some observers—is the least dependent upon foreign personnel and finances. If the survival of Christianity is not in doubt in the Third World, the survival of those churches founded by Western missionaries and mbedded in Western culture certainly is.

A common problem of the churches in the Third World is their "over-denominationalism". In Africa alone approximately one hundred new "independent" groups are formed every year. The same trend is present in both Asia and Latin America, where denominational allegiance is one of the major hindrances to mission. When it is remembered that in 1900 there were sixty-one missions working in China, and that between 1900 and 1913 the number was increased to ninety-two, it becomes clear that the history of the Church in the Third World has been marked by imported splits and divisions from the beginning. With the passing of time the younger churches have in turn

produced their own fractures, often brought about by individualistic leaders with little or no concern for the unity of the body of Christ.

The fact remains that, despite its problems, the Christian Church is today a world-wide movement. As Stephen Neill has put it,

> *"Christianity alone has acclimatized itself in every continent and in about every country. In many areas that hold may be precarious, and numbers may be small. Yet in country after country the Christian Church evinces the power of a dynamic* p. 235 *minority, but as the Church of the countries in which it dwells."*[3]

That being the case, the Christian mission can no longer be regarded as the task of Western missions and specialists. The bearer of the Gospel is not that portion of the Church which happens to be located in the affluent West, but the whole Church. If the Church is missionary in its very nature, now that the Church is a world-wide phenomenon the home base for the Christian mission is everywhere. The question, is, how can the whole church participate in the Christian world mission in such a way that all men everywhere can recognize the local churches as genuine expressions of corporate Christian life, living communities in which all the barriers that divide mankind are transcended? How can the unity of the world-wide Church be concretely manifest, and how can the resources of older and younger churches be harmoniously combined for the sake of the Gospel?

Partnership in mission is not a special prerogative that the older churches may or may not grant the younger ones; it is an essential expression of the spiritual equality among all Christians in the body of Christ. If (as Emil Brunner has said) the Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning, and if the Church is one in Christ, it follows that partnership between older and younger churches is basic to mission. The Christian mission cannot be anything else than the mission of the whole Church to the whole world.

One Gospel

The Christian mission is rooted in God's act in Jesus Christ. In a real sense, it is the continuation of that act, the carrying on of Christ's redemption purpose for the whole of mankind. At the heart of the Gospel is Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God, the Word that "became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth". The Gospel has to do with a new reality which has dawned upon the world through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the God-Man. It is news concerning the arrival of a new era in which God's promises in the Old Testament are fulfilled and his Holy Spirit is poured among men.

God's Spirit is a missionary Spirit, and the history of missions is from one perspective, the history of the way he has driven his p. 236 people to carry out the Gospel and, with it, the new reality to the ends of the earth. The missionary expansion of the Church can only be understood against the background of God's purpose to draw all nations of the earth into this new reality, a task for which the followers of Jesus Christ have been empowered by the Spirit. The Christian mission is in its essence Jesus' mission by the Church under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is the means through which all the nations are given the alternative of receiving or rejecting the very purpose for which God created all things and which has been revealed in Jesus Christ. As Lesslie Newbigin has expressed it,

> *"... the Christian mission is the clue to world history, ... but in the sense that it is the point at which the meaning of history is understood and at which men are required to make the final decisions about that meaning. It is, so to say, not the motor, but the blade, not the driving*

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[3] *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1964), p. 559.

force but the cutting edge. Christians go through history to bear witness to the real meaning of the things which happen in the world, so that men are compelled to make decisions for or against God."[4]

The world civilization brought into existence by the spread of technology has to be understood in the light of the new reality which has come in Jesus Christ. The new reality involves the revelation of man's ultimate destiny, the revelation of an absolute in relation to which everything else becomes of secondary importance. As the means through which Jesus' ministry is continued down through the centuries, the Christian mission precipitates a crisis—men everywhere must choose between the new reality and "this world" which is passing away, between God and Mammon.

The end of Western colonialism has brought the Church into a place where the real issues of the Christian mission can be seen in their true light. It can no longer be taken for granted that people in the Third World will accept Christianity because of its association with the political and economic and cultural power of the West. On the contrary, many will find in this association a big stumbling block. Consequently, the Christian mission today has to be carried on from a position of weakness. A new possibility p. 237 has thus been created for the Gospel to be presented as a message centered on Jesus Christ rather than as the ideology of the West. Free from its entanglements with Europe and North America, the Christian mission can now be seen as motivated by the desire that Jesus Christ be acknowledged as the Lord of the univese and the Savior of all men.

Even today, however, the universal nature of the Gospel can be obscured, and is in fact often obscured, by the persistence of policies and patterns of missionary work which assume that the leadership of the Christian mission lies in the hands of Western strategies and specialists. Witness the schools of "world mission' based in the West, with no participation of faculty members from the Third World. Witness also the frequency with which an older church (or, more often, a missionary board) in the West maintains a one-way relationship with a younger church (which may or may not be regarded as independent). As long as this situation endures, partnership is no more than a myth.

A universal Gospel calls for a universal Church in which all Christians are effectively involved in world mission as equal members in the body of Christ. Partnership in mission is not merely a question of practical convenience but a necessary consequence of God's purpose for the Church and for the whole of mankind, revealed in the Gospel. When Christians fail to work as partners in mission, they also fail to concretely manifest the new reality which they proclaim in the Gospel. Because there is one World, one Church and one Gospel, the Christian mission cannot be anything else than mission in partnership. The fulfilment of Jesus' prayer, that his followers may all be one so that the world may believe in him, requires today a supranational Christian community bringing to a world unified by technocracy a Gospel centered in Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

III. THE PRACTICE OF PARTNERSHIP

If partnership in mission is to go beyond theory, it must be given concrete expression in the doing of theology, in the life of the Church as a world-wide community, and in evangelism and service. **P. 238**

Partnership in Theological Reflection

[4] *Trintarian Faith and Today's Mission* (Richmond, Virginia : John Knox Press, 1963), p. 370.

In the West it has often been assumed that Western theology is the theology for the whole world. Against this assumption, I spoke at the International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne in August, 1974.

> "*If the Church is really one*," said I, "*then there is no place for the assumption that one section of the Church has a monopoly on the interpretation of the Gospel and the definition of the Christian mission*."[5]

I continue to be convinced that theological cross-fertilization among Christians representing different cultural backgrounds is essential to mission. Western theologians, for instance, need Third World theologians to encourage them to adopt a critical attitude toward the consumer society and to show the relevance of Christian stewardship to Western overdevelopment. Third World theologians, on the other hand, need Western theologians to encourage them to use the tools of biblical scholarship and to look at the problems of today's Church from an historical perspective. If theology in the West tends to be speculative and academic, theology in the Third World tends to be time-bound and accomodated to cultural relativities. There is need for a cross-fertilization which will deliver Christian theology from its captivity to the West but will at the same time keep it from identifying the Gospel too closely with human aspirations and ideals that appeal to people in a particular situation.

The last few years have seen the emergence and development of so-called "liberation theology" which, beginning in Latin America, has rapidly spread in the affluent world, particularly in the United States. Paradoxically enough, a theology that claims to start from the life struggles and the sufferings of the poor, has become a consumer product. What is needed is not the commercialization of Third World theologians in the West, but new models of theological reflection in which Christians from different cultural backgrounds are able to wrestle together with those issues confronting the Church today and work on theological constructions that are both faithful to the biblical revelation and relevant to practical life in the modern world. A world unified by the consumer p. 239 mentality must be challenged by a theology rooted in the Gospel and concerned with a prophetic life style which calls into question the values and ideals of secular civilization. The liberation that both the underdeveloped Third World and the overdeveloped West urgently need is liberation from the myth of modernity, from a blind faith in progress by means of technology and economic growth, from slavery to a work system in which man's life consists in the abundance of his possessions. The task of technology is to show that the crisis of modern civilization on a world-wide scale is due to man's enslavement to the gods of the consumer society; that at its root it is a crisis regarding man's ultimate destiny, and that it points to the necessity of placing the totality of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ. If theology is to be truly relevant to man's needs, it cannot simply extrapolate the economic dimensions of the present crisis from the total human problem. Questions such as, what is man? what is the purpose of life? what is the meaning of history? demand an answer, and this answer is essential to any attempt to overcome the crisis and to create a new society. These are, therefore, questions to which theology should address itself so as to undergird the Church in its mission. The Church does not exist for the purpose of defending the existing order, but if it is to speak prophetically and to work for real change, it must go back to first principles.

Partnership in a World Community

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[5] "Evangelism and the World", *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, Minnesota : World Wide Publications, 1975), p. 141".

The world has become a neighborhood, a gigantic global village where people share common values and ideals which reflect the consumer mentality characteristic of the affluent West. The city, with its powerful mechanisms of standardization of attitudes and habits, is turning humanity into a mass of people who measure happiness in terms of material possessions. And yet the unification brought about by the spread of the scientific and technological civilization is but a caricature of real human unity. Men and nations are still separated; there is inter-relatedness but not community.

The first task of the Church in this context is simply to be what God has intended it to be—a world community in which, the barriers that separate men are broken down and the basis is thus p. 240 laid for a genuine partnership in mission. In other words, partnership in mission is impossible aside from a deepening experience of communion on a world-wide basis. Mission is inseparable from unity, and unity is far more than a question of structures; it has to do with willingness to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep, with those who weep, it has to do with (in Tillich's words) "listening, giving and forgiving".

Now, how can Christians be united in mission as long as many of them (especially in the West) adopt an ostentatious life style, while the large majority of them (especially in the underdeveloped world) are unable to satisfy essential human needs? The poverty of the Third World places a question mark over the life style of people, and particularly of Christians in the West. And the proper response to it, to begin with, is a simple life style and a radical re-structuring of the economic relationships among Christians everywhere, based on the Biblical concept of stewardship. As Ronald Sider has put it,

> *"... If a mere fraction of North American and European Christians would begin to apply Biblical principles on economic sharing among the worldwide people of God, the world would be utterly astounded."*[6]

It is high time for rich Christians to take seriously "evangelical poverty"—the poverty inspired in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, though he was rich, became poor for us (2 Cor. 8:9).

But life in community cannot be conceived of in terms of a situation in which one section of the Church is always on the giving end while another is always on the receiving end. Rather, it must be understood as a situation in which Christians everywhere are willing to share with one another out of what they have, able to see that the aim of giving is not that some may be eased and others burdened, but that "as a matter of equality" the abundance of those who have should supply the want of those who do not have, so that the abundance of the latter may supply the want of the former, "*that there may be equality*" (2 Cor. 8:12, 13). The possibility of reciprocal giving between churches is a basic premise without which no healthy relationship between older and younger churches is attainable. As D. Auletta says, p. 241

> *"All the churches are poor in one way or another. All of them are involved in mission and are responsible for mission. All of them should be concerned for one another, help each other, share with one another their resources. All the churches should give and receive."*[7]

Giving and receiving cannot be maintained unless there is between the churches a mature relationship based on the Gospel. If the Church ceases to be a community in which

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[6] *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblcal Study* (Downers Grove, Ill. Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), p. 111.

[7] David Auletta, *Mision Nueva en un Mundo Nuevo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe), 1974, p. 87 (my translation).

people share a common meaning derived from the Gospel, sooner or later there is a return to the old ways of paternalism and dependence. The corrective for paternalism is not independence, but interdependence, and interdependence comes with a deeper understanding of the nature of unity in Christ and of the situation in which other members of the body of Christ live. In other words, if Christians are to take interdependence seriously they need to realize that they share a common life—the resurrection life—but they also need to create channels of communication which will allow them to see people of other cultures in different light.

In order to foster mutual giving and receiving among the churches nothing can take the place of Christians coming from other nations and interpreting to fellow-Christians across the world the needs and struggles of their own churches. All too often the knowledge that the churches in the West have of the situation of the churches in the non-Western world is limited to the reports sent by missionaries. Missionaries may also be the only source of information that the younger churches have to know the situation of the churches in the West. The time has come to develop ways of closing the gap between older and younger churches. There are already useful experiments that are being carried out for this purpose, but much more needs to be done to shape patterns of solidarity across political, economic, social and cultural barriers, and to stimulate the mutual sharing of gifts among the churches.

Of particular importance in connection with this aim are projects making it possible for young people from the West to live in a foreign country, in close contact with human needs, at least for a limited period. Perhaps nothing will do more to awaken the p. 242 younger generation to the inequalities in the modern world and the urgency of partnership in mission than a first-hand experience of life among the least privileged. It is not surprising that the best suggestion that a North American professor was able to give to his Christian friends with regard to what could be done in the face of the problem he had seen in Latin America was as follows:

> *"Maybe the best thing the young can do is just go there. Not to teach them what we think they must know, but to be taught by them what must be done and then just simply be the manpower, musclepower, brainpower that is needed to do it. And do it without pay: Just for shelter, water and some cornmeal. And if there is energy left, to listen, to comfort, to encourage, to lift up and to love in many ways. And on the basis of that finally to say that true shalom comes from the Lord Jesus Christ."*[8]

Partnership in Evangelism and Service

In view of the affluence of the West and the poverty of the Third World, it is unavoidable to ask, 'How can the material resources of the wealthier nations be used to help the poor, without allowing the "aggressive benevolence" of the West (in Max Warren's words) or the ugly subservience of the Third World to raise its head?' There is no easy answer to this question. Perhaps in no other area has the modern missionary movement more often been put to the test and found failing than in relation to the use of funds. The tensions created in this area throw into relief the weakness of the economic patterns which the missionary societies have adopted from the business world. Partnership calls for the internationalizing of funds so that these cease to be an instrument of manipulation by the Church of the West and become an instrument of service at the disposal of the worldwide Church. This internationalizing of funds does not presuppose their centralization. It presupposes confidence based on the recognition that no material giving is genuine

[8] Hendrik Hart in a mimeographed letter dated July 20, 1975 and entitled: "Latin America: Report of a visit".

Christian giving unless it is accompanied by the giving of the giver in response to and for the sake of the Gospel. Partnership can only take place in the context of a mutual commitment to God's call to mission.

As long as the Western missionary societies as such have at their p. 243 disposal the vast economic resources of the West and the funds are given predominance over mutual commitment to mission, the paternalistic patterns that have characterized the relationship between the churches in the West and the Churches in the Third World will be perpetuated. Missions will continue to support their own institutions and to sponsor their own projects, often with a complete disregard for the desires of the local churches. The local churches will continue to be controlled through their purse strings. The dichotomy between Church and Mission which still persists from the past is in the end the last refuge of missionary imperialism.

John H. Yoder has rightly suggested that the best way for Western Christians to reconcile their duty to serve others with their economic power is by going overseas to serve as persons, but working for the local churches. "*The main resource we should export*," he argues, "*is people: and the reason is that only people can legitimately have strings attached, just by being who they are. Yet you can't give a dollar without strings, without corrupting. But you can be there as a person, and neither of this has to happen.*"[9] The need today is for a new breed of missionaries who are willing to sharpen their technical tools and at the same time, to renounce the wealth of the West in order to work in real partnership with national Christians on a permanent basis, as those who have effectively become identified with the people they have come to serve. Nothing less than a radical application of the incarnation to missionary work is an adequate answer to human needs today.

Partnership in evangelism involves giving up patterns of mission heavily dependent upon a denominational approach. Here again the call is for radical change with regard to the way in which the Western missionary movement has operated in the past. In this respect the Mennonite Board of Missions has set an example in West Africa by seconding many of its personnel to other missions and churches, rather than concentrating on its own denominational church.[10]

Evangelism and service, word and deed, are inseparable. Both p. 244 of them point to the new reality brought into the world by Jesus Christ. Partnership in mission, therefore, involves partnership in service. And the possibilities for service in the Third World are unlimited. The danger here, however, is to conceive of service in terms of a development patterned on the affluent West, as if the road to development were identical with the imposition of the consumer society on all the peoples of the earth. This concept of service is totally unrealistic—no economic resources are sufficient to meet a world market demand at the level of consumption to which the West has become accustomed. Furthermore, no development is true development if it concentrates on economics but fails to give adequate attention to the deeper questions concerning man and the ultimate meaning of human life. The Christian mission is concerned with the development of the whole man and of all men. It includes, therefore, the shaping of a new life style—"*a life style designed for permanence*"[11]—based on new methods of production and new patterns of consumption. The new breed of missionaries needed in the Third World today are not

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[9] "Radical Christianity: An Interview with John H. Yoder", *Right On*, (February, 1975), p. 12.

[10] Cf. Edwin and Irene Weaver, *From Kuku Hill: Among Indigenous Churches in West Africa* (Elkhart, Indiana: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1975).

[11] E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful* (London: Abacus, 1975), p. 16.

devotees of western-styled progress; they are not people who isolate themselves in a "little West" with all the comforts of the consumer society in the midst of a poverty-striken "mission field". They are pilgrims on the way to "the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10), people whose life-style sets an example of Christian stewardship.

There is an urgent need today for models of mission fully adapted to a situation characterized by a yawning chasm between rich and poor. Their models of evangelism and service built on the affluence of the West condone this situation and condemn the indigenous churches to permanent dependence. In the long term, therefore, they are inimical to mission. The challenge both to Christians in the West and Christians in the underdeveloped countries is to create models of mission centered in a prophetic lifestyle, models which will point to Jesus Christ as the Lord over the totality of life, to the universality of the Church, and to the interdependence of men in the world.

Over twenty years ago Max Warren claimed that "partnership p. 245 is an idea whose time has not yet full come"[12]. The question today is whether partnership will have to survive again for twenty years as an idea, or whether the Church is ready to put it into practice for the sake of the Gospel now—at last.

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The Place of the Cross in the Evangelistic Message

by DR. J. B. A. KESSLER

Reprinted with permissiou

TWENTY-FIVE years ago the cross occupied a central place in the evangelistic message of the great majority of the Evangelical churches in Latin America, but the writer of this article has doubts about whether this is really so today. Not only is the cross missing from many evangelistic sermons, tracts and modern choruses, but the concepts which underlie the New Testament teaching on the cross seem to be receiving less and less attention. This change can be ascribed to three factors: first the emphasis placed by Liberation Theology on the Kingdom of God rather than on conversion; second the emphasis of the Charismatic movement on the Spirit and third the growing influence of secularism which finds the message of the Cross to be both offensive and inexplicable. Liberation theology has undoubtedly helped the churches to a deeper understanding of their duty towards the world and the Charismatic movement has given them a new appreciation of the spiritual gifts and resources at their disposal for this task, but the question remains whether the churches twenty-five years ago were wrong in giving the Cross such a central place, or

[12] *Partnership: The Study of an Idea* (London; SGM Press Ltd., 1956), p. 11.