MISSION FUTURE: ISSUES WE FACE

By
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1. Introduction

As I begin to muse and meditate over the topic of this paper, I am situated in my temporary office on the highest level of Cromwell Tower overlooking the medieval quadrangle of King's College, the oldest section of the University of Aberdeen. The greyish granite towers not only bear the marks of wind and weather, their quaint designs and solid structures also bear witness to the wisdom and the vision of their makers, who must have envisioned the future as permanent rather than passing.

1.1 Present Sense in Future Tense

Our mission future will make sense only to the extent to which we are able to interpret our own historical past which has given form to our present, and to the extent to which we observe the signs of the present which will help set direction for the future. Although our knowledge of the past may be imperfect and our understanding of the present incomplete, we need not fear to lift the veil and glance into the future. Even though we know not what the future holds, we know who holds the future, a mission future that begins today as it continues many yesterdays and moves into tomorrows.

1.2 A Word About the Future

Futurologists have different ways of talking about the future. Some talk about fulfilled future, immediate future, remote future, and eschatological future. Others speak in terms of waves which encompass huge epochs or entire eons of historical time, having thrust the present into the "Third Wave" (Toffler, 1980) with its high tech sophistication of the kybernetic revolution.

Still others refer to the future in terms of such more familiar concepts as chronos or linear time and kairos or event time. Another way of saying it is to talk about futurum and adventus. The one is simply the chronological unfolding of the past in the process of reaping its inevitable consequences, both good and ill; the second speaks more of a qualitative reality, anticipating new events in hope and confidence that God is sovereign, in control, and salvifically at work to achieve his ultimate goal (cf. Lara-Braud 1983:3). In this sense, the future as adventus can begin today and God may well surprise us with the unexpected we can neither predict nor foresee within the complixities of the coming tomorrows.

But what, we must ask, may be the issues we can discern and must face in mission tomorrow? From a preliminary list of ten or

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twelve issues I have selected three to be addressed in this paper, and that not without fear and trembling. For I am not a prophet and speak more in the spirit of priestly concern than prophetic predictions, and more in terms of pastoral compassion than apostolic finality. Thus what follows are perceptions of issues which I put forward for others to judge, consider, challenge, change or even discard. That is what this consultation is all about.

2. Issue One: Religious Pluralism

Ever since World War II, ecclisiastical statespersons have talked about the church as the "new phenomenon of our time." They are absolutely right. The existence of the church of Jesus Christ in some 220 countries of the world is not only a new phenomenon, it is more than that: it is a global phenomenon, resulting from hard missionary labor, many tears, and shed blood, as Raymond Lull predicted more than six hundred years ago. Lull knew the way the lord would build his church which could stand the test of time and defy the gates of hell (Mt 16:13-19). That in itself is a mystery of what God is doing in history.

2.1 Understanding the Issue

While we rejoice that the church is showing signs of growth and vitality in many parts of the world, we cannot close our eyes to its greatest spiritual rival which is as global as the church itself, namely religious pluralism. That, too, is a new phenomenon of our time. Of course, when we take the world as a whole, religious pluralism is nothing new, as Charles Forman (1980:247) reminds us. In fact, Yahweh, the God of history, and redemption declared war against it during the time of the great prophets of Israel (cf. Jer. 46-51).

What is new, however, is pluralism of religions in every part of the world. There was a time when religious pluralism was ethnically segregated and geographically confined to particular countries or even continents. That is no longer so. It is fully desegregated and diffused across the globe. Thus we can no longer talk about "religions of the Orient," as though they were distant and removed from the Occident. In fact, they are vibrant and alive in the West as in the East. (Forman 1980:247). This is true of East Indian Hinduism as much as of Oriental Buddhism, of Arabian Islam as much as of Japanese Shinto, not to mention the many new religious movements in the West.

Only a few decades ago neither ecclesiastical nor missionary spokespersons considered religious pluralism worthy of discussion. In American history of mission theory, for example, we find an appauling indifference toward religious pluralism and its potential impact on the mission of the church worldwide. (cf. Forman 1977:69). No missiologist with integrity can ignore

the issue today, hoping it will go away if he or she ignores it long enough. Such attitude is unacceptable, three reasons. First, Christian missions from the West have been the single most powerful force in creating religious pluralism. When missionaries brought the gospel to lands like India and China, Japan and parts of the Islamic world, they added the Christian faith to whatever religious faith the people there already possessed. Christian converts then became a new religious group. Not only that. Western missions--particularly those from North America--have by their very nature of multiple denominations also created the impression that the church is not one unified whole "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3; cf. 4:1-6). On the contrary, the principle of denominationalism is in itself an ecclesiastical paradigm of religious pluralism (cf.Bosch 1987:8-11). The inevitable result has been that "Christianity began to appear along side the traditional religion of each land and created a pluralistic situation where there had previously been none or increased pluralism where it already existed." (Forman 1980:247)

A second reason touches on the missionary aggressiveness of some non-Christian religions themselves. While Western Christianity has generally displayed an attitude of indifference to non-Christian religions, these have established themselves as a missionary force throughout the world, especially in the West. Not many decades ago Christian scholars of non-Christian religions contended that Christianity was the major--if not only--missionary religion. That is no longer the case. Today the non-Christian religions of the world are missionizing not only among non-Christian peoples, but also among Christians. The many Islamic mosques, as well Sikh and Buddhist temples in Western Europe and Anglo America give evidence of that contention.

Finally, religious pluralism is not a threat, but a challenge and mission opportunity for the church. But the church will have to reconceptualize its mission: the religious of the world have become the neighbors of the Christian church in nearly every city of the West. Thus God has reduced the geographical distance between the mission force and the mission field.

2.2 Missiological Imperatives

As I reflect on religious pluralism and its implication for mission tomorrow, I can see three inescapable imperatives for the church and its mission.

First, the church must acknowledge this new phenomenon of religious pluralism at her doorstep. It has two alternatives to do so: It can either recognize "the continuing there-ness of diverse faiths" and make the gospel real by demonstrating the meaning of Christ to them, or it can retreat into its safe shell

and "concentrate on its own parochial well-being" (Gensichen 1971:29). The latter, of course, would be a serious mistake. The church dare not renounce its essential sentness into the world with the message of hope and redemption for faiths not anchored in Christ. If the church wants to aim beyond survival, it must be willing (a) to recognize each religion on its own merits; (b) to accept the religious person with a conviction other than Christianity without abandoning its own loyalty and commitment to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (cf. Bosch 1987:12; Gensichen 1971:29); and (c) to declare the Christian faith with boldness and conviction without attacking the non-Christian's beliefs with arrogance and rejection.

Second, the church must equip itself with the fundamental teachings of the religiously pluralistic world. It is not enough to know what the Bible teaches about Christian action, character, and faith. If we take our sentness as church serious enough to declare our faith, we must also know what adherents of non-Christian religions believe and why they believe as they do. This is why we at the Seminary offer at least one course in theology of religions which deals with the theological tenets of each religion on its own grounds. Not only does this cause students to think through theological issues of the faiths they study; it also helps them to understand their own faith much better.

In order to communicate Christ across the frontier of another faith, we must do so in full acknowledgement of this faith's validity and in full commitment to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ Whom God has appointed to be the Savior, Lord, and judge of this world by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:22-31; Eph 1:15-23).

Third, religious pluralism demands witness with conviction and a decisive world missison strategy on the part of the church. The sum total of adherents of non-Christian religions is a staggering three billion and growing.

Recent research has shown (Gallup 1986:4 and 13) that during the last fifty years Buddhism increased by 63 percent, Hinduism by 117 percent and Islam by 235 percent, whereas Christianity recorded a mere 47 percent growth rate for the same period of time. Much of non-Christian religious growth took place in the Western world through missionary efforts of these religions.

The Christian church must not only recognize this, but also change its mission strategy from foreign missions to world mission. Religious pluralism is clearly co-territorial with Christianity. Therein lies the new mission opportunity. God has reduced the geographical distance between the mission force and the mission field.

A decisive strategy will require a decisive attitudinal change on the part of the Western Christians by adding to its role of teacher that of learner. Christians in many lands have lived for generations side by side with Hindus and Shintos, with Buddhists and Muslims. In view of this fact, should we not assume that these Christians have a far better understanding of religious pluralism than missionaries from traditional sending churches of the West? If that is the case, then we should learn from them how best to communicate the saving gospel of Jesus in a religiously pluralistic context.

3. Increasing Poverty

In a statement on "Mission in the 1980s," Mennonite Brethren mission leaders predicted that their projected strategy would have to take into account the grim reality of growing proverty throughout the world. Now that the decade is almost over, their predictions have become historical fulfillment.

3.1 Explaining the Issue

Future analysts like Alvin Toffler, John Naisbitt, Ted Ward, Tome Sine--to mention only a few--all agree that poverty is here to stay, a conclusion that reinforces the words of Jesus when he said, "You will always have the poor among you." (Jn 12:8)

Today we live on a globe that carries five billion people on its worn shoulders. By the year 2000 that number may have increased to more than six billion. The present records show (Sine 1987:16) that 800 million or about 16 percent of earth's inhabitants live in "absolute poverty," with an annual income at about $90.00 per person. Approximately 50 percent of their children die before they reach their fifth birthday. Researchers forecast increase in poverty as we approach millennium three, and predict a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Here then is the problem in a nutshell: First, while the number of the poor and powerless will increase, the hope of ever bridging the widening chasm between them and the powerful and wealthy will continue to decrease. Second, while the prevailing conditions are brought about by natural calamities and circumstances beyond the control of the church, the church cannot be a neutral bystander in the situation. On the contrary, the church is God's handmaiden with a prophetic role to change conditions through her sentness to the world.

3.2 Missiological Imperatives

Both the prediction of increasing proverty for the masses and the prospect of increasing profit for a minority confront the missionary church with inescapable missiological imperatives at the threshold of the third millennium. I suggest three.

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First, engage in anticipatory planning. This is an enormous challenge, because it requires human resources equipped with time, wisdom, vision, hindsight, insight, and foresight. The onus falls on mission administrators. Anticipatory planning is more than long-range planning. In long-range planning we make projections as though the future will continue to be made up of more of the same or similar ingredients--such as needs, challenges, and opportunities as the present. In anticipatory planning, however, as Sine (1987:16-17) points out, "we develop the capability to anticipate the emerging needs, challenges, and opportunities" which arise as a result of changes that occur both externally and internally.

This means for that we must take the future seriously by analysing internal denominational demographics, such as the age of membership, growth curves, earning power, giving patterns and capacities, denominational loyalty, the missionary spirit, directions and modes of missionary recruitment, and much more. By doing so we can be proactive rather than reactive. "If we gain a little lead on some of the anticipated problems," notes Sine (1987:16), "we will have time to create some new forms of mission response."

Second, live by a stewardship theology. When the Biblical Seminary began the decade of the 1980s as its decade for mission, the missionary vision of faculty and students gained momentum by the use of the slogan, "From Maintenance to Mission." This created a sense of stewardship theology among students and teachers alike. Many fasted and contributed the savings toward the poor and hungry. Others made additional donations and became aware of earth-keeping responsibilities by participating in recycling programs in Fresno. Unfortunately, that phrase was soon misappropriated by other agencies and the Seminary felt compelled to drop its usage in the interest of integrity. I am not here bemoaning the loss of a slogan or phrase. But I do regret the resulting loss of impact it might have had on our stewardship theology which is so imperative in the face of increasing poverty. The importance of the slogan, in my judgment, was the evident awareness on the part of a generation of seminarians to keep the dialectical tension between maintenance and mission constantly before themselves without losing its delicate balance.

This brings me to the imperative of a stewardship theology on a much larger scale. Evangelical denominations in the United States, Canada, and some Western European countries have traditionally upheld a stewardship theology which was demonstrated by their commitment to mission with a balanced sense of maintenance. Such watchwords as "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation" (Robert 1986:146) helped to keep their mission spirit vibrant for many decades. In fact, it must be said to the credit of the major Evangelical mission organizations

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that they have been in the vanguard of evangelism, education, development, and health programs in many parts of the world (Vatter 1987:8) But such zeal and fervor, according to Sine (1987:18-29) is rapidly changing as Evangelicals are shifting their focus from world mission to self-maintenance. Major resources are being poured into their own bureaucracies, church institutions, and affluent lifestyles. Their humble places of prayer and worship have in many instances become show palaces and tourist attractions. Many local congregations have built multi-million dollar structures to satisfy their self-perceived needs. As a result, they need all they have to maintain these structures.

David Barrett's research (1983:146 ff.) shows that Christians make up only 32 percent of the world's population but receive 62 percent of the world's earned income. While that means that Christianity constitutes less than a one-third minority, it also means that it controls nearly two-thirds of globally earned money. But how do Christians handle the question of stewardship and earth-keeping? Barrett says that they spend 97 percent of their 62 percent of the world's earned income on themselves. This makes them more efficient consumers than effective stewards.

Even more alarming is this: Of the 3 percent which Christians give for church purposes, "only 5 percent flows into global Christian giving that supports world mission" as (Sine 1987:19). Sine contends that a growing share of all Christian resources is being spent on buildings, institutions, and overhead costs because Christians fail to examine critically the priority of mission giving.

The problem is clearly spiritual and moral in nature. Christians who have bought into the selfishness of a consumer society have abandoned their stewardship responsibility under the Lordship of Christ. The Anabaptist motto for mission, "The earth is the Lord's, and all that it contains" (Ps.24:1) challenges us to a biblical theology of stewardship. That can change both our pattern of living and giving.

Third, there is the imperative of gospel proclamation to all. If we believe that the gospel "is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes"--Jew and Gentile (Rom 1:16), and if we believe that the gospel actually transforms lives then we stand under the missiological imperative to bring this gospel to all--the poor and the rich, the exploited and the exploiters, the oppressed and the oppressors.

The point I want to make is this: In view of increasing poverty and injustice in the world; and in view of the widespread opinion that poverty is caused by the rich and powerful; and in view that exploitation and injustice are spiritual and moral problems; and in view of the biblical affirmation that the gospel is the power

of God to transform minds, hearts and lives, we must develop a strategy to evangelize the rich as well as the poor. Salvation in Christ makes no preferential treatment of people, although the poor may be more accessible as well as more receptive than the rich.

There is a great deal of truth in Frans Verstraelen's argument (1987:43) that we in the West will need to concentrate more "on mission to those in power" than on "foreign mission." This will mean "a shift from mission to the poor toward mission to the rich and powerful who sustain a world order where death reigns-- hunger, poverty, wars--instead of the abundant life promised by Christ (John 10:10)." This is not to say that we should not evangelize the poor in future mission; we must continue to do so. But we dare not neglect the rich--even if they may be resistant and hard to reach. The power of the Holy Spirit is far greater to convict of sin and justice and judgment (Jn 16:8-11) than the power of the rich is to resist him.

My concluding point is this: The sin of the church to withold the bread of eternal life from the rich and powerful of this world is as serious as the sin of the rich who withold the bread of temporal life from the poor and powerless.

4. Shifting Populations

There is a centrifugal force that drives and a centripetal force that pulls. These are shifts of gravity. The result is movement of people from one part of the globe to another, from one mode of living to another, from one religion to another. Failure to take into account this phenomenal occurrence when viewing the future of world mission places the Western church in jeopardy of becoming buried in a global landslide of shifting populations.

4.1 Exploring the Issue
Four areas have a special bearing on the future of mission. My concern will focus more on the outcome than on the process of these shifts.

First there are historical shifts. Leaders of the missionary movement in generations past often defined the world in terms of the Christian Occident and the non-Christian Orient. In the West were the Christian fellowships and churches, in the East the pagan shrines and temples. The Western peoples were considered "civilized" and peoples elsewhere "primitive." The West was enlightened, the rest was benighted.

As late as 1910, the delegates of the international missionary conference in Edinburgh perceived the world as consisting of neatly defined geographical territories (cf.Walls 1987:27-29). There were then "fully missionized lands," "not yet fully

missionized lands" and by implication, "yet fully unmissionized
lands."   .

The evangelization of the East became the white man's burden of
the West. Thus developed the idea of foreign missions as a one-
way street: From Western Christianity to Eastern paganism. Such
clean definitions made the world religiously, theologically, and
sociologically enviably less complicated for the church's
evangelistic task than it is today.

But that time is over: Not the time to win people to Christ; not
the time to obey the biblical imperatives; not the time to
exercise love and justice in the world; not the time to go into
all the world and make disciples; not even the time to send and
be sent is over. But the time of Western mission in whatever
form is past and the time of global mission is upon us. The
populatjion is shifting and so must the church if it wants to
remain relevant and missionary in a changing world.

Second there are territorial shifts. Such factors as
international warfare, internal revolutions, political upheavals,
economic depressions, natural disasters, and religious
persecutions have revolutionized the face of human geography.
Millions of people have voluntarily moved and many more millions
have voluntarily moved and many more millions have been
coercively pushed across tribal, national and even continental
boundaries. Geographically, the situation is comparable to the
time of the Fall of Rome and its subsequent "Christianization" of
the West during medieval Europe. As a result, Europe became a
continent of many states and nations, all of them "Christian" by
name within their own territorial boundaries (cf.Walls 1987:29).

The fact that today some 4 million troops are engaged in 40
different wars are an indication that the territorial shifts and
relocations of peoples en masse will not only continue, but will
escalate around the globe (Gallup 1986:6). Warfare and
revolutions alone uproot millions of people who search for "a
city of refuge," for some kind of sanctuary, for a "place to feel
at home." But such places are hard to come by.

Another way of speaking about the territorial shift of peoples as
Andrew Walls explains (1987:29), is in terms of diffusion--
ethnic, cultural, and evangelistic. Europe and North America
became the centrifugal centers in this diffusion process, with
the missionary movement acting as the major catalytic force.
While in past centuries, it did affect every demension of
diffusion, it proved most effective in the evangelistic realm.
Millions of people--sometimes whole peoples--responded to the
gospel and thousands of churches among them were planted in many
lands. Yet very few--if any--of these lands can be referred to
as "homogeneous Christian states" as those of Europe and Anglo
America were once called. This means that "the idea of

territorial Christianity, of geographically contiguous Christian states, lies irretrievably lost."

All we have left are conglomarate sociocultural communities with Christians and churches among them. Metropolitan Los Angeles may serve as an example of diffusion and population shifts. According to research done by Peter Wagner (1986:60-61), Los Angeles is not only the second largest Mexican city, but a territory with dozens of major and minor ethnic people groups living within its boundaries. An overview will be helpful.

People	Number	People	Number
Hispanics	4,000,000	Israelis	90,000
Blacks	972,000	Dutch	75,000
Germans	450,000	Hungarians	60,000
Italians	350,000	Samoans	60,000
Koreans	270,000	French	55,000
Armenians	225,000	Thai	50,000
Iranians	200,000	Greeks	50,000
Japanese	175,000	British	50,000
Arabs	160,000	East Indians	30,000
Yugoslavs	150,000	Indonesians	30,000
Chinese	150,000	Egyptian Copts	10,000
Filipinos	150,000	Romanians	10,000
Vietnamese	100,000	Turks	5,000
American Indians	95,000	Gypsies	5,000
Russians	90,000		

The fact that students in the Los Angeles Unified School District speak 104 languages and that the television station KSCI in that city offers programs in 10 languages (English, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, Armenian, Vietamese, Japanese, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Korean), indicates that the above list of peoples may not be exhaustive.

Third there are also sociocultural shifts. No futurist can overlook the social mobility of peoples within their own national boundaries. These are primarily shift from the rural to the urban areas. While it has been suggested that emigration to urban centers may slow down as levels of expectation from city and country gain greater parity (McIntosh 1986:25), there are at present few, if any, clear signs to indicate such trend. In the year 1900, there were some 400 metropolises called "mother cities." Each had a population of 100,000 or more. Only 20 of these were then megacities, having a population of over one million each. Of these 20 there were two supercities--London and New York--each with over 4 million people. In 1986, the number of metropolises had grown to 1,780, that of megacities to 286, and the supercities had reached 46 in number. Researchers have

added another category, namely 14 supergiants with over 10 million people living in each (Barrett 1986:22).

By the year 2000 the world may look more like a "globalopolis" than a global village, with such supergiants as Mexico City (31 M), Sao Paulo (26 M), Tokyo-Yokahama (24 M), and Shanghai (23 M) leading the way (Bakke 1984:153). The sociocultural mobility of people is one-directional--from rural life to urban life--particularly in the Two-Thirds World. Seventy-five percent of the people in Latin America, for example, will seek their existence in the cities by the beginning of millennium three (Sine 1987:17). By the same time there will be more than 50 major cities in the United States alone inhabited predominantly by ethnic minority peoples (Wagner 1986:60).

Finally, there are ecclesiastical shifts. A sobering fact for Christians is not generally religious, but specifically ecclesiastical in nature. A recent survey of the Evangelische Kirche Deutschland (EKD the Protestant component of the official West German State Church) for the period from 1970-1985 provides a detailed regional analysis of membership mobility. the concluding figures show a decrease from 28.5 million to 25.1 million members of whom 2.2 million simply removed their membership.

Speaking at the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists in Amsterdam, Wilfried Reuter (1986:15-16) offered three reasons for this shift. (a) Evangelism as a subject is a rare exception in any of the theological curricula where the pastors are trained. Thus young pastors have no idea of evangelism and mission when they assume their responsibilities in churches. (b) The church members in general see any evangelistic effort in their area as something strange, exotic, and even threatening. Therefore, they keep their distance or reject such efforts altogether. (c) There is also a historical reason. Quoting Martin Kahler, Reuter says: "The main reason for the ecclesiastical plight in Germany lies in the fact that we have never been truly missionized. The Irish monks pastorized us. The Reformation gave us many a believing preacher, but never a (believers') church. Thus mission must be repeated. Because we have failed to realize the need for ongoing conquest, spiritual alienation has continued on its course. That is why each generation cannot only be pastorized, it must also be evangelized. Spiritual life is not hereditary."

The spiritual condition of the West German church is representative not only of Christendom in all of Western Europe, but in the western World as a whole, including Anglo America. The process of secularization--if not repaganization--is evident everywhere. Moral and Christian values have fallen sharply while crime and violence have reached an all-time high. This has lead

Alfred Krass (1982) and others to call for the evangelization of the neopagan West.

Some years ago Walbert Buhlmann (1978) predicted that by the year 2000 more than 50 percent of the world's Christians will live in the Southern Hemisphere. This means that the leadership of the churches is also going to shift not only from the West to the East, but also from the North to the South. Such reorganization process is nothing new in church history. We only need to think of the one-time evident Christian stronghold in Asia Minor or North Africa. Even if we do not know all the details why and how it happened, we know that the church suffered enormous losses and the regions turned non-Christian. A one-time mission force turned into a mission field within a relatively short time.

4.2 Missiological Imperatives

Against the background delineated under 4.1, several missiological imperatives become binding for the church's future mission.

4.2.1 Review of mission thinking.

Western mission agencies suffer from what I call "a geography syndrome." Mission must be far away--in foreign lands or overseas--to be authentic. This way of mission thinking has had historical validity. The evangelization of the world in past centuries could not have happened had the church not crossed geographical frontiers and sent its sons and daughters to bring the gospel to regions beyond. But now that the church exists on every continent and in nearly every country of the world, distance is no longer the main criterion to authenticate mission. There are, for instance, no more fully unevangelized lands. But there are everywhere multitudes of unevangelized people and entire unevangelized peoples.

The call for "mission on six continents" extended from Mexico City in 1963 (Androussa, 1960) is most relevant at the end of this century. Many European church and mission leaders concede that Western Europe has become a mission field. While many Anglo American church leaders may still find this hard to admit that Canada and the United States have become mission fields, they should realize that it is not enough to "pastorize people," as Kahler put it: "Unless people are being evangelized and then nurtured and pastorized, the churches lose their viability of a mission force and become a mission field. The recent book by Earl Parvin entitled Missions USA (1985) should be read by every North American pastor and mission leader. This book's message and hard data, as well as my arguments for the repaganization process put forth earlier in this paper confirm my thesis that we must think in terms of world mission. This demands a shift in our mission thinking.

4.2.2 Revision of mission strategy.

Churches tend to invest too much time and energy in things they have always done before and in doing them the same way they always did them. I am not suggesting a cure-all prescription or method which I do not have; I am suggesting principles.

First, the principle of creativity. Every situation and context demand a different method. The risen Christ has given to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (cf.Eph 4:7-16). These are not spiritual gifts as those listed in I Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 12:5-8; these are people graced with charismata to enable or equip church members for special ministries and missions. The potential for creativity and mission in this combination is untapped. Western churches have become bound by the selective pastoral model which is hardly an inclusive biblical model for leadership in mission.

Second, the principle of Prayer. When God's people mobilize for prayer they resort to the supreme power of God, a power greater than all principalities and forces of this world (Eph 1:15-23; 6:10-18). World mission will move forward into the future only by that power.

Third, the principle of missionary dimension and missionary intention. We hear and read much of the missionary church. And that is valid. The church is missionary by its very nature; it has a " missionary dimension," to use Vicedom's term. This missionary dimension acts as a centripetal force; it attracts people from the world to the church. Here they find something they do not find elsewhere: a place to feel at home. (cf. Vicedom 1963:39-51). By their kindness, oneness and hospitality believers display their missionary dimension as a letter written on their hearts by Christ and read by unbelievers (Bosch 1980:199-201; cf.) II Cor 3:2-3; Phil 2:14-16; I Thes 4:9-12; I Cor 5:12-13; Col 4:5). That is basically how the church under totalitarian regimes missionizes and expands, as I have recently witnessed it in Rumania.

While the missionary dimension is absolutely essential for the life of the church, it is by itself inadequate for effective mission of the church. The church also needs a missionary intention, which means that the church must be actively missionizing in the world (Gensichen 1971:86f.). Everything the church is reflects its missionary dimension, but only what the church intentionally is and does in direct relationship to the world shows its missionizing action.

Finally, the principle of contextualization. Since Lausanne 1974 we learn more and more about the people approach to world mission. "The basic thrust is to identify the people groups that

are as yet unreached and move in with an objective of planting churches to fit the culture of the group." (Wagner 1986:64). While I am not advocating the Homogeneous Unit Principle of the Church Growth Movement, I believe that we must become culturally much more sensitive in our church planting and church building efforts as we move toward the third millenium of mission. Contextualization also means careful selection of leadership to match the need of the given people group. I believe Wagner (1986:64) has a point when he says, "Denominations that require college and seminary for ordination will not be able to move ahead rapidly in planting churches in most ethnic groups."

5. Conclusion

While I have named only three major issues we face in future mission, each has broad implications which must be highlighted.

5.1 Religious pluralism is a theological challenge. Biblical scholars must deal with the questions of sin, lostness, salvation and final judgment from an evangelical perspective. So far, they have neglected to do so.

5.2 Religious pluralism is also a missionary opportunity. The great religions of the Orient have invaded the Occident. Western cities and institutions of higher learning embrace large numbers of religious representatives from all over the world. The mission field is at the doorstep of the mission force.

5.3 The shift of gravity is sober. A phenominal reality. Repaganization of the West presents a double challenge: (a) The Western church faces ever larger numbers of people groups from other lands who belong to the "not-yet-Christians." This calls for "pioneer mission" on home turf. (b) It faces increasing numbers who belong to the "no-more-Christians." This calls for re-evangelization of the many neopagans.

5.4 Poverty is here to stay. This calls the church to a stewardship commmitment which means a reduction of consumption for selfmaintenance and redistribution of means for mission purposes. The service arm of evangelism will be stretched to help the needy.

5.5 The global church is a mission force in partnership. Beyond the focus on immediate needs and opportunities, there will be need to perfect international partnership and structural relationship in world mission.

5.6 The spiritual dimension deserves guardianship. While I am opposing the dichotomy between a spiritual and a material ministry in favor of the centrality of the gospel in wholistic mission, I am concerned that the issues are kept in delicate balance.

I look to "Curitiba '88" as an adventus for new inspiration, motivation and direction. God is sovereign. We are his servants--worldwide working with him to achieve his purposes in global mission before Christ returns.

SOURCES

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