

78/No. 8

May 15th, 1978

We are happy to announce that Father Divarkar, sj has been elected to the Executive Committee. We are grateful for his valuable help during the past year and look forward to his continued assistance from now until December 1979.

This issue contains an article recommended by Dr. Spindler as preparation for our Seminar as well as a review of one of his booklets along with the propositions arising from the ecumenical study in which he is engaged.

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Coming Events

19th May - Replies to Seminar/Assembly - invitations are due.

May Seminar and General Assembly
on
ECUMENICAL ASPECTS OF MISSION
Monday, 29th May at 9.30 to 6 pm.
at the Generalate of the
Christian Brothers
Via Aurelia, 476

Preparatory Material - May Seminar

The following is one of the articles suggested as background material by Dr. Spindler.

RECENT THINKING ON CHRISTIAN BELIEFS
Mission and Missions

By the Rt.Reverend Lesslie Newbigin, Selly Oak Colleges

No major volume on mission or missiology dominated the period from 1950 to 1976 in the way that Hendrik Kraemer's Christian Message in a Non-Christian World dominated the scene for the period 1940 to 1960. To discern the movements of thought one has to look at the conference reports and at the large number of smaller books written to interpret their findings.

A convenient starting-point is the conference convened by the World Student Christian Federation at Strasbourg in July 1960 on the Life and Mission of the Church. It was planned, mainly by D. T. Niles and Philippe Maury, as a 'Teaching Conference'. Those who planned it were the products of the era of 'Biblical Theology'. They believed that there was a clear and coherent missionary theology which could and must be communicated to the rising student generation.

The central themes of this missionary theology had been adumbrated at the World Missionary Conference at Willingen in 1952. Mission is the work of the triune God. It is the Missio Dei. George Vicedom's book of that title (published in German in 1959 and in English in 1965) is a landmark of this period. The mission is entrusted to the Church and the Church as such is the bearer of the mission - though, it must be added, serious questions about the adequacy of this church-centric missiology surfaced during the Willingen discussions. Johannes Blauw's biblical study of The Missionary Nature of the Church, written in 1961, admirably expounds the missiology developed in the 1950s, and D. T. Niles book Upon the Earth placed it in the context of the newly experienced reality of one global missionary fellowship.

But the Strasbourg meeting did not conform to the expectations of its planners. The rising generation was not willing to accept what had been prepared for them. There was a sharp rejection, mainly by those from Europe and North America, of the accepted forms of mission. The concept of the Missio Dei was not questioned: what was attacked was its imprisonment in the institutions of the Church. Strasbourg sounded the most characteristic note of the coming decade by celebrating the secular as the field of God's saving work. Central to the thrust of the conference was the call to 'move out of the traditional Church structures in open, flexible and mobile groups', and to 'begin radically to desacralize

the Church' (The Student World, LIV (1-2) 1961, 81f.). Hans Hockendijk, from whose address at Strasbourg these words are taken, was one of the powerful voices calling for a radically secular missiology during the ensuing decade. The Missio Dei concerned God's offer of shalom to the whole creation, and was by no means to be domesticated in the Church. Mission was not a function of the Church: rather the Church was a function of the mission. In this view the mission is the greater reality, the Church the lesser.

The theological problems which the 1952 Willingen conference had recognized but failed to solve were to dominate the scene during the 1960s, and it was the Strasbourg meeting which thrust them into the foreground of the debate. The central issue was that of the relation between 'salvation history' and world history. The dominant theology of the 1950s had placed its emphasis on the former: in the centre of the picture was the Church as the bearer of salvation. In the 1960s the emphasis was upon the latter, upon the world as the place where 'God is at work', and where the Church must go to find him and to co-operate with him. This was supremely the decade of the secular.

Of outstanding importance was Arendt van Leeuwen's book Christianity in World History (published in 1964 by the Dutch and British Missionary Conferences with a commendation from Hendrik Kraemer). This interpreted world history in terms of the impact of the biblical message upon the 'ontocratic' societies in which men live before they meet the Lord of History, and it concluded with the claim that the contemporary movement of secularization is the present form of this impact. 'The technological revolution is the evident and inescapable form in which the whole world is now confronted with the most recent phase of Christian history. In and through this form Christian history becomes world history.' The movement of secularization is, however, ambiguous: in it both the Lord and Satan are at work. The Church's task is to 'stand and interpret this invading history to those who are suffering it' (op. cit.; 408f.).

A similar optimism about the role of secularization in God's purpose for world history was expressed in Harvey Cox's best-seller The Secular City (1965). And in fact the city was the context of a great deal of missiological thinking in this period. The Church-centred missiology of the 1950s had inevitably raised the question of the forms of the Church's life. To be convinced on biblical and theological grounds that the Church not only has a missionary task but is itself the form of God's mission ('As the Father sent me so send I you') was to be driven to acknowledge that congregations as we know them are not structured for mission. They reflect the assumptions of the Christendom era that the whole of society is already baptized and therefore within the Church. They invite people to come out of the world into the Church: they do not themselves go into the world as those who are sent by God. The question of 'the missionary structure of the congregation', formulated at the end of the 1950s, was probed in a series of studies pursued by the World

Council of Churches in the years 1962 to 1965. The resulting report, The Church for Others (Geneva 1967), shows that the original Church-centric missiology which prompted the study had given way to a missiology whose focus of attention was 'God at work in the secular world'. 'Thinking about the Church should always begin by defining it as part of the world' (17). It is the world, not the Church, which 'writes the agenda' (20-23), and the Church is not to be concerned about increasing its own membership (19). 'Participation in God's mission is entering into partnership with God in history, because our knowledge of God in Christ compels us to affirm that God is working out his purpose in the midst of the world and its historical processes' (14). So 'What else can the Churches do than recognize and proclaim what God is doing in the world' - in the emancipation of coloured races, the humanization of industrial relations, and so on?

The North American section of the Missionary Structure Study carried these insights further. 'If mission is understood as God's working out his purpose in creation, the Church does not have a separate mission of its own' (75). Consequently mission was seen as participation in secular programmes for urban renewal, for civil rights, for community organization, etc. In this perspective 'the Church is a happening on the road from one event to the next' (71) and the events are events in secular programmes for human liberation. From these convictions it was a natural move to the massive programmes carried out in many parts of the world under the name of 'Urban Industrial Mission', and so into the liberation theologies characteristic of the following decade (see below). From the point of view of this programme the Church as an institution is only of peripheral interest. A line of thought which had begun with the conviction that 'the Church is the Mission', had led into a missiology from which the Church was practically eliminated.

The church-centred missiology of the 1950s had other developments. The final integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches at New Delhi in 1961, and the similar movements by which the national missionary councils in Europe were related to or integrated with church bodies, were organizational expressions of the belief that mission is the task of the whole Church. This involved a change in perspective easy to describe but difficult to achieve. Mission had to be seen as having its home-base everywhere (because the Church is now a world-wide family) and its destination everywhere (because there is now no more 'Christendom'). 'Mission in Six Continents' was a good slogan, but what did it mean in practice? Roman Catholic missiology continued to insist on a distinction between 'mission lands' and others. In face of the famous phrase 'La France pays de Mission', the Professor of Missiology at the Propaganda Fidei University insisted that this is a confusion between 'the real mission countries' and 'the lands with a dechristianized milieu where the Church is still geographically implanted' (Andrew V. Seumious O.M.I. in The Theology of the Christian World Mission,

ed. G.H. Anderson, 1961). In line with this official position, the Second Vatican Council promulgated two separate texts, both of which referred to the mission of the Church to all the nations. The famous Decree on the Church proclaims in its opening words (Lumen Gentium) the missionary orientation which controls the whole. Here the Church itself is described in missionary terms. But another Decree (Ad Gentes) defines missions as 'those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the Gospel are sent out by the Church and go forth into the whole world to carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ. These undertakings are brought to completion by missionary activity and are commonly exercised in certain territories recognized by the Holy See' (Ad Gentes I.6). To use (rather crudely) the language contemporaneously current in the World Council of Churches, mission is an affair of six continents, but missions are directed to only three.

The World Missionary Conference at Mexico City (1963) tried to give precision to the idea of mission in six continents. In terms of structure this was still a period of church-centred thinking at the global level: it was hard to distinguish missions from inter-church aid. Many mission boards renamed their missionaries as 'fraternal workers', and 'departments of mission and ecumenical relations' replaced the old foreign mission boards. Only near the end of the decade was the 's' removed from the International Review of Missions, but this was a belated expression of the dominant concept, that of the one global Missio Dei.

In terms of content, however, the whole enterprise reflected the prevailing conviction that mission is concerned with the doing of God's will in the secular world. This was, let it be remembered, the first 'Development Decade' of the United Nations, and for many the Church's involvement in world mission was justified only by its contribution to 'development'. 'Development' was still understood from the perspective of the rich world. Nations were 'developing' in so far as they were moving in the direction set by Western Europe and North America. This line of thought reached definitive expression at the Uppsala Assembly of 1968 which described mission as 'for God's people everywhere' (including those already members of the churches) and gave as the criteria for evaluating missionary priorities the following: 'Do they place the Church alongside the defenceless, the abused, the forgotten, the bored? Do they allow Christians to enter the concerns of others to accept their issues and their structures as vehicles of involvement? Are they the best situations for discerning with other men the signs of the times, and for moving with history towards the coming of the new humanity?' (Uppsala Report, 32).

1968, the year of the Uppsala Assembly and of the Paris student revolution, is a good point at which to begin looking at the new

currents of thought which were to dominate the 1970s. The 'counter culture' was to challenge the domination of concepts of development based on the science, technology and industry of the west. The secularity fashionable among theologians in the 1960s was to be challenged by a growing interest - especially among young people - in the world of religious and mystical experience. Pentecostalism - largely ignored in the early stages of the ecumenical movement - was to emerge as the real growing edge of Christendom. Latin America was to become the source of a new missionary theology which rejected development in favour of revolution. And the conservative evangelical missionary forces, hitherto remaining aloof from the ecumenical movement were to organize a powerful challenge to its thinking and practice.

We may take the last movement first. At Wheaton, Illinois in 1966 there took place a Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission organized jointly by the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association and the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association - bodies linking the work of more than 11,000 foreign missionaries. The Declaration of the Wheaton Congress, while affirming a conservative evangelical understanding of missions, was also a call to take seriously and penitently into consideration issues such as unity and social responsibility which were being stressed in ecumenical circles. Further world congresses in Berlin (1966) and Lausanne (1974) gave shape and force to these developments. The central missiological thrust of the movement is well expressed in John Stott: Christian Mission in the Modern World (1975). Three distinct stands can be recognized within the movement.

(a) Led by Peter Beyerhaus of Tübingen there is a vehement polemic against the missiology of Uppsala, claiming that it replaces the preaching of the everlasting Gospel by a programme of humanization. This is represented in the 'Frankfurt Declaration on the Fundamental Crisis of Missions' (1970) and in Beyerhaus's book of the same year Humanisierung: einzige Hoffnung der Welt?

(b) Led by Donald McGavran of the Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, the Institute of Church Growth has inspired a stream of books illustrating, applying and developing the thesis that enormous multiplication of churches is possible and therefore imperative provided that missions will abandon their misplaced emphasis on 'perfecting' and pursue single-mindedly the goal of 'discipling the peoples' as distinct ethnic and cultural entities. Among the forty or more volumes coming from this source in the present decade one may select the volume called God, Man and Church Growth (1973), a Festschrift representative of the school as a whole.

(c) From Latin America new and powerful voices are being raised within the conservative evangelical circles calling for a missiology which gives a central place to the struggle for social justice, without muting the call for personal conversion. Typical of this is Orlando Costas: The Church and its Mission (1974).

The challenge from the conservative evangelical side has met with a serious response from the side of the World Council of Churches. The World Conference on 'Salvation Today' (Bangkok, 1972) was primarily concerned to celebrate God's gift of salvation as a presently experienced reality in the personal life, in culture, and in the political order. Here already we find salvation being understood as a deeply religious experience as well as a political one. And at the Fifth Assembly in Nairobi a statement was accepted on Confessing Christ Today which brought together in a genuine wholeness the different emphases of 'evangelicals' on personal conversion, of 'ecumenicals' on cultural and political liberation, and of Orthodox on the witness of the eucharistic community.

It was from a Latin American bishop that the Assembly heard the call to a holistic evangelism which did much to shape the final report. It is primarily from within the Latin American churches that the powerful movement known as 'Liberation Theology' has come, though it has important links with the Black Theology of North America (See James Cone; Black Theology and Black Power, 1969). The Theology of Liberation accepts most of the Marxist analysis of the economic and political reality of today, and accepts also the Marxist (and biblical) insight that theory divorced from praxis can only be illusion. The work of Juan Luis Segundo (A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity, 3 volumes, 1968-72, Eng. tr. 1973-74), and of Gustavo Gutiérrez (A Theology of Liberation, 1971, Eng. tr. 1974) have given powerful and lucid expression to a Catholic theology of liberation. The most impressive work on the Protestant side is José Miguez Bonino (Revolutionary Theology comes of Age, 1975). From the same milieu the educational work of Paulo Freire (see Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1972) exercises a growing influence all over the world. His fundamental axiom that all education is either education for oppression or education for liberation has the power to haunt not only those concerned with formal education but all (and this certainly includes missionaries) who are concerned with altering the attitudes of others.

Liberation Theology is primarily a Latin American product, but developments in European theology were pointing in a similar direction. Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope (1965, Eng. tr. 1967) had the world mission of the Church as its point of orientation and its dynamic expression. 'The real point of reference for the exposition and appropriation of the historic Bible witness, and the one that is their motive and driving force, lies in the mission of present Christianity, and in the universal future of God for the world for all men, towards which this mission takes place' (op. cit., Eng. tr. 283). In a further development of this future oriented Christology, Moltmann's Crucified God (1973, Eng. tr. 1974) culminates in two chapters on the psychological and political liberation of man. A debate is in progress between Moltmann and Miguez Bonino which, while

it exposes their differing estimates of Marxism, expresses also their close agreement.

Latin America is also the scene of the greatest expansion of Pentecostalism. This too is a movement of liberation among oppressed people, though its offer of liberation is in the first place inward and spiritual rather than outward and political. Pentecostal leaders, however, often make clear their solidarity with the struggle for political liberation. But Latin American Pentecostalism is only one segment of a global movement which embraces not only the rapidly growing Pentecostal churches and the burgeoning charismatic movement in the Catholic and Protestant communions, but also the vast explosion of independent churches in Africa and - to a lesser extent - in Asia. Here is, without possibility of question, the contemporary growing edge of the Church. To a large extent it is a matter of spontaneous expansion and not of organized missions on the nineteenth-century model. W.J. Hollenweger's standard work on The Pentecostals (1969, Eng. tr. 1972) is itself a condensation of his unpublished work in ten volumes available in eleven libraries of Europe and North America. David Barrett's Schism and Renewal in Africa (1968) touches more than 6,000 African Independent Church movements, and analyses the dynamics of their growth. There are numerous monographs describing the growth of individual movements. If Mission is concerned with the numerical growth of churches, then this is the area of greatest significance in the present decade.

The swing away from the secular missiologies of the 1960s has brought a greatly increased interest in religious experience and correspondingly an increased eagerness for contact and dialogue with people of other faiths. The effect (certainly not the intention) of Kroeber's emphasis on the absolute uniqueness of the Gospel had been - in many cases - to put a stop to the kind of inter-faith dialogue that had been common in the first four decades of the century. It was only slowly and with hesitation that the dialogue was resumed. Hallencreutz (New Approaches to Men of Other Faiths, 1970) chronicles the story. Numerous publications of the World Council of Churches (e.g. Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement, 1975) and of the various study centres around the world during the past twenty years, carry the story further. At the same time a growing number of theologians in the West have called for a re-examination of traditional attitudes to the world religions. The questions raised for those responsible for Religious Education in the multi-faith cities of England have powerfully reinforced the assumption (generally unexamined) that Christianity is one variety of the inclusive species 'religion'. Under pressure of the demand for trained teachers of religion, the study of theology as a normative discipline tends to be replaced by the study of world religions as varied manifestations of man's innate

religiousness. In this context any assertion of uniqueness and finality for the Christian variety is out of order. And if - as with Karl Rahner - it is assumed that religion is the sphere of God's universal purpose of salvation for mankind, it follows that the non-Christian religions are the 'normal' means of salvation for the peoples of the Third World. Of the growing flood of books about world religions one may note Wilfred Cantwell Smith's The Meaning and End of Religion (1964), John Hick's God and the Universe of Faiths (1973) and - on the Roman Catholic side - Karl Rahner's essay on Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions. (Theological Investigations, Vol. V, 115-134). With a quite different and deeply Christo-centric approach M.M. Thomas in Man and the Universe of Faiths (1976) examines what is happening to the world religions under the impact of modernity from the point of view of the concrete reality of Jesus Christ as God and Man.

To draw these observations to a tidy conclusion is impossible. A multiple debate goes on and will continue. I am tempted to end this survey with one personal observation. It is a common and not unjust comment on the missionary thinking of an earlier day that it unconsciously identified the Gospel with Western culture, and that it therefore transmitted too much of the latter along with the former. Today it is common to find writers who assume that Christianity is just the religious aspect of Western culture and therefore assert that it should not be exported. Professor John Macquarrie - for example - regards the notion of converting all nations to Christianity as 'a thing of the past', and looks forward to religious pluralism rather than the universal acceptance of the Gospel as the 'good and healthy state of affairs'. (Christian Unity and Christian Diversity, 109). What is perhaps most needed now is a discovery among Western theologians of the extent to which they are the victims of syncretism. It will be the work of theologians of the Third World to re-state the uniqueness and finality of Christ in terms which liberate Christian theology from its long imprisonment in the thought-forms of the Western world.

Also recommended:

"Towards a Dialogue of Life". A Statement on Ecumenism in the Asian Context". The final statement and recommendations of the First Asian Congress of Jesuit Ecumenists. In the preface the editor states: "While accepting the contribution of 'Western ecumenism' to the cause of unity in Asia, it would also prove useful to reflect on what the Church in Asia could offer to the Church Universal; in particular what contribution 'Asian ecumenism' could make to the cause of that unity of which the Church is sacrament".

(Exchange No 16, April 1977).

LE CHRISTIANISME CONJUGUE

The brochure "Le christianisme conjugué" ("Christianity Conjugated") contains the text of the discourse Dr. Spindler gave on the occasion of his appointment as extraordinary professor of Missiology and Ecumenism at Leiden. He is concerned with the relation between the two terms "Mission" and "Ecumenism". In the first part he describes the historical development of the two terms, especially as they were enunciated at various international meetings. But in the end a serious controversy remained. In August 1951 the Central Council of the World Council of Churches stated: "We must pay particular attention to the confusion that has recently risen regarding the term 'ecumenism'. We must insist that the term which, according to the original Greek, means the whole inhabited world, is correctly used to describe the task of the entire Church to bring the whole Gospel to the whole world. The word, therefore, includes missionary work as well as work for unity and it should not be used for the latter in opposition to the former." However, one who did not accept this explanation of the term was the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches himself, Dr. Visser 't Hooft. Only two years later he again restricted the term to the work for the unity of Christians. Thus the confusion concerning the terms remained.

Dr. Spindler is of the opinion that this tension is in itself inevitable, since mission in its very essence refers to multiplicity and ecumenism to unity. He regards it as quite normal that a Church in the process of diffusion should undergo various developments, that is, that schisms and heresies should arise. The fact as such cannot be avoided. In order to overcome the dilemma, he proposes a "conjugation" of Christianity.

In the West we say "I believe"; but does not belief begin with the "thou", that is, with God? And from I and thou one passes spontaneously to the third person, that is, to the others. Furthermore: when we say "We believe" that does not mean that in this "We" all individuals are included and that all individuals believe one and the same thing. Why is it not possible to include the "they" in the "we?" The We and the They lead to dialogue; and in dialogue we preserve the hope that some day we will arrive at an all-inclusive WE, that is, that We will all of us together be bearers of the whole Gospel to the whole world. In this sense, according to Dr. Spindler, the conjugation of Christianity is another word for ecumenism.

(reviewed by Fr. Karl Muller, svd)
Sedos Doc. No 4/2918.

TOPIC: TOWARDS AN ECUMENICAL CONCEPT OF MISSION - Preparatory Material
for the May Seminar

(Dr. M. Spindler, the speaker for our May Seminar has been engaged as assistant director of the project described below.)

Mutual Assistance: Everyone is a Giver as Well as a Receiver

In 1969 the Inter-University Institute for Missiology and Ecumenism in Leyden, known in missionary circles in The Netherlands as IIMO, started a project of research into the mutual assistance of churches in the world. The evaluation of this study project has recently been completed. The protestant missiologist, Jansen Schoonhoven, has written an extensive evaluative report about the research work on four levels of study: scriptural, historical-missiological, sociological and socio-missiological. The name of this report is: "Mutual Assistance of Churches in Missionary Perspective." It is available in Tilburg for the sum of ten guilders.

By way of review and recommendation we give here eight missionary propositions, distilled from the book by his fellow-scholar from Utrecht, Professor Van der Linde.

PROPOSITION 1 All churches, parishes, Christians, depend on the Lord, who is the Head of His Body and the Shepherd of His people. Mission happens from each church, parish and Christians, wherever in the world. These three organic parts of God's mission have to serve each other, that is, mutually, with their gifts and talents.

PROPOSITION 2 Beginning with Paul, till around 1940, this mission took place from the West in the form of a planting of the Western Church. From 1940 till about 1970 we experience among the overseas churches a growth towards independence. Western missionaries had functioned in the churches, in the offices, the hospitals, schools and universities as managers and directors. After 1970 there are three possibilities: Western missionary societies remain dominant overseas because of personnel and funds which they send. Secondly, indigenous, independent churches ask that western support be postponed or stopped. This is the beginning of the moratorium. Thirdly: the dependency on the Lord and Spirit and on each other are practised in mutual assistance and in mature relationships.

PROPOSITION 3 The Old Testament teaches that no man can exist by himself. Man lives between the Word of God and the response that comes from himself. Being human means: living in covenant, in partnership, in relationship. The New Testament gives examples of mutual dependence and assistance. Compare, for example, Acts 1 - 11 and the journeys Paul made to collect funds for the poor in Jerusalem. (1 Cor. 16, 2; 2 Cor. 8, 9; Rom. 15, 25.)

PROPOSITION 4 Are the churches and their missionary societies in the rich countries of Europe and America really equal parties if you compare them to the churches and their mission in the destitute, or just ordinarily poor Third World? For sociologists it is as clear as daylight that wealth means power. And missiologists say: Do not discard this problem too easily as non-important. Look at the unique riches and treasures of each church-in-mission in the world. Some have money, others specialists and others fresh new ideas.

PROPOSITION 5 The real treasures of the churches are faith, hope and love. These are the sources and they give inspiration for the proclamation of the Gospel, for ordering the community and the practical service to each other. Each church, parish and Christian can and should develop its own "gem" of faith, hope and love, and contribute it. We should learn mutually to discover these treasures and contributions of the others, to appreciate them and to use them as far as possible or to allow ourselves to be inspired by them.

PROPOSITION 6 We live in the post-1970 era. It is time to develop new, mature relationships among churches everywhere in the world, which are called to render optimal service in God's mission. This means: the essential mutual contribution from one church to the other, from one mission to the other, is revival in faith, hope and love. These express themselves in witness of words as well as deeds.

A pattern of mutual expectations should be created. We can and may expect help from each other. But structural and organizational measures should always bear the hallmark of the real treasures of the church. Mutually the sparks from the one Fire, Christ, who was lit for the world, should be made visible.

No churches, parishes or christians may be kept in a status of unilateral dependency and passivity. That would be utterly unchristian. Europe and America must convince themselves of the fact that churches, parishes, christians in their own country and elsewhere, near or far, each in his own "mission country", are givers

and senders as well as, receivers. Exchange of men and women in the service of the Gospel is necessary. Other forms of exchange of inspiration are possible and ought to be promoted. A passing on of power by economically wealthy churches and missionary societies to poor ones ought to be promoted, because mutual sharing of common power in personnel and in means is thoroughly christian.

PROPOSITION 7 Twenty-two churches from Asia, Africa and England have recently formed a "World Council for Mission". Together, and in mutual dependence, they want to search for ways to assist one another. Each church, big or small, will be able to act both as giver and as receiver. Existing work which is useful and serves the church (and society) has to remain. But in mutual assistance new tasks can be undertaken.

PROPOSITION 8 One question: Would there be occasion, within our churches, to consider whether factors of power, money, experience and tradition, hamper our efforts at mutual assistance by being a giving as well as a receiving church? For each christian, community and church it is true that the active expression of salvation in giving is better than the passive role of receiving.

from: Saanhorig, November 1977.

(translated by Sr. Josephine Gosselink, scmm-t.)

The above propositions formed the basis of discussion at the first preparatory meeting for the May Seminar. The 25 Members present were asked to discuss two questions: how closely do the above propositions represent your view of mission? are there some elements which have been overlooked and which should be added? In the reports given some of the following points were noted: today mutual assistance is an important aspect of mission and mission is nearly always a response to a call of the local church; some participants were surprised at the emphasis made on the sharing of wealth and personnel and thought "sharing of the Good News" deserved more stress. Others asked; are those not formally part of the local church included in "churches, parishes and Christians?" Some members wondered if the propositions did not represent that of a "sending" church -would a "receiving church" see it differently? It was felt that the role of the Church was not just to serve each other but to make Christ known to others. There seemed to be more emphasis on structures e.g. parishes and less on Christian communities. The emphasis the riches of the receiving Church was appreciated. These were just a few of the many ideas expressed. It was pointed out that a review of the Catholic view of "mission" would be useful.

SEDOS MEETING

On 18th April, 34 Sedos members representing 26 congregations met to discuss "New Problems facing the Central Government of Religious Institutes Engaged in Missionary Activity". After a brief introduction by Fr. Divarkar, S.J., the following paper was presented by Fr. Caspar Caulfield, C.P.

HELPING THE SUPERIOR GENERAL HELP MISSIONARIES

As one who has completed an inquiry among sixteen Institutes as to how, in the wake of Vatican Council II and the Chapters of Renewal, assistance to missionaries has been updated at the level of General Government, I am asked to outline briefly the findings. (1)

Concisely, the areas where change is taking place is in the manner of reaching decisions affecting missionaries in General Government, a new concept of representation on their behalf on the international level, and a recognition of the importance of breathing spirit and life into the Missions at all levels: international, regional and local.

I. Decision Making

Missionaries in the non-exclusively missionary (2) Institutes expressed the difficulty in the past, that decisions affecting them were often made by Superiors who had little experience of Missions before being elected to office. The Propaganda Fide recognized this and in the first sixty years of this century encouraged Superior Generals to attach missionaries to their staffs who possessed the requisite skill and other suitable qualities to be of counsel and help to the General and his Council in handling mission affairs (3). This technical expert was named the Secretary General for Missions; and the office through which he functioned, the Mission Secretariat.

Vatican Council II however and especially the Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae which implemented its goals in Missionary Institutes expressed the principle that "government should be such that chapters and councils... express the participation and concern of all the members for the welfare of the whole community." (4). Missionaries rightly took the word "all" to include them, and the search was on for a way to participate more actively in decisions in their regard in the General Government. Among many proposals the one that finds favor is to involve in decision making - where mission affairs are concerned - the missionary already in General Government, by assigning the Mission Secretary a vote, or deliberate voice, in the General Council. Thus of 15 Institutes replying to this point in a questionnaire, eight have upgraded this official to membership and vote in the General Council as an Assistant or Consultor General (5). three assign this official a deliberate voice in the

General Council but not a vote (6); and four retain the former concept unchanged (7). One may describe this trend as a significant breakthrough in the effort to involve missionaries in decision making in their regard.

II. Representation

A second area where the role of Mission Secretary is undergoing expansion is in advocating the interests of missionaries on the international level. This official has been usually the personal envoy of the Superior General to the Sacred Congregation for Evangelization; saving the rights of Procurator Generals. But in the new legislation since Vatican Council II he is viewed as the upholder of the rights of missionaries to be consulted before all departments of the Holy See concerned with Missions; and far beyond. The limits in which this extended charge-ship is being conceived may be judged from the following list:

- a) Rome, over and above the S. Cong. for Evangelization, to the other Sacred Congregations, the Secretariats (Union of Christians, Non-Christians, Non Believers), the Commissions and Councils, but strictly and only so far as the business of the Missions is concerned (?);
- b) International Donor Agencies and Pontifical Mission Aid Societies;
- c) Other Missionary Institutes so as to arrange fraternal collaboration among missionaries (9);
- d) Ecumenical, as World Council of Churches, Commission on World Mission and Evangelization, Commission on Living Faith and Ideologies; so as to promote fraternal co-existence with the Separated Brethren (10).

The reason for this expanded advocacy role is easy to understand. The representative of the missionaries in General Government stands close to the highest echelons of government in the Church, and to the world-wide organizations which aid Missions. Here is where planning takes place, decisions are made, approvals are given, generous financial grants are allocated. It is of supreme interest to missionaries that someone knowledgeable of their points of view, uphold their interests at this level.

III. Animation

Another new field of operation of the missionary in General Government is to energize missionary action at the level of the Generalate, regionally and even locally. Mission Secretariats are being conceived of now as Centers for the dynamic revitalization of the Missions of the Institute. Much reflexion by Chapters of renewal have identified the

fact that team work among missionary groups involved coordinated action by sub-units of personnel who are pretty much tied down to local situations. Such enterprises too often require permission of Superiors back home. After much discernment it was perceived that the best place to rest the lever for moving these divergent groups to cooperation is on the fulcrum of General Government. Such energizing to be successful requires also a realistic awareness of conditions in the Missions, together with time for planning and facilities for multiple correspondence. The mission secretary and Secretary seemed to be suited to this, so the role of mission animator came to be assigned there. It might have seemed obvious; but with the tide of subsidiarity running so strongly in the opposite direction so as to give Superiors on every level sufficient authority, it took a lot of insistence on the part of mission delegates to Chapters to hold that the duty of animating missionaries to action and collaboration still rests at the top.

One or two examples based on recent legislation can be given to show the scope of this role, and how its accomplishment is being envisioned.

O.M.I. The Secretariat (of Missions) is a center of animation, research, reflection and evaluation, within General Government; where Conferences are held as reunions *ad hoc* to study certain problems; and where permanent or temporary Commissions are constituted as needed by decision of the General and Council. Local levels, and also specialists, are to be involved in this study.

The Coordinator for the Missions takes part in conferences on the continental level, and in others which are of special importance to the Missions. He should be the initiator of action (*catalizzatore qualificato*) in the administration...to make it more a group of animation...than one which merely approves what requires approbation.

(Letter of P. Marcello Zago OMI,
2/III/1975)

OFM Cap The Department which...treats with the Sacred Congregation for Evangelization must...above all give inspiration and dynamic direction to the missionaries by promoting among them reflexion on common problems through the use of questionnaires, and an exhaustive annual report on a single topic based on research, methodology and pastoral practice.

The Secretariat of Missions as well as being a center for information and consultation, is the agency of coordination, inspiration and dynamic vitalization, through which the Order makes fruitful its missionary undertakings.

(Directorium pro Missionibus / 36; and

Interview with P. Walbert Buhlmann OFM Cap,
5/IV/1975).

Conclusion

Enough has been said to show the kind of development which constitutes a "breakthrough" in helping the Superior General and Council to discharge their responsibilities towards missionaries; and which will serve to get a discussion started. The SEDOS member Institutes will be able no doubt to offer a much wider panorama of change. Before separating into discussion groups, some final guidelines can be offered.

"Where a clerical or lay Institute of men or women accepts, in accordance with its own character,...a function of collaboration (with Diocesan Bishops in mission lands), the Superior General of the Institute alone is competent to receive the Mandate.." Instr. SCEN "Some Principles", 24/II/1969, # 6). The place therefore for the Official and Office through which the Superior General exercises this responsibility is in the Generalate.

Focus more on what this duty implies, than on the number of persons needed to carry it out. Mission sending Institutes vary greatly in size. The question is, what should be done, not how many will it take to do it. This follows.

Many Institutes are completing their process of renewal through General Chapters to be celebrated in the next two years. Examples of good legislation which embodies the type of "breakthrough" under discussion will prove particularly helpful.

Notes:

- 1.) This Inquiry was made among the non-exclusively missionary Institutes of men, 23 in all, and each of which numbered more than 1,000 members. Sixteen Institutes sent detailed replies.
- 2.) Missionary Institutes divide into exclusively missionary, and non-exclusively missionary. The former are those established under the S. Cong. for Evangelization, or which have half of their personnel in the Missions. The latter have heavy commitments in the non-missionary parts of the world, but send a percentage of their personnel to the Missions. Among SEDOS present membership (45 Institutes in 1978) about half are exclusively missionary (membership approximately 36,800 of whom 26,833 are in the Missions), and half are non-exclusively missionary (membership approximately 171,171 of whom 23,487 are in the Missions).
- 3.) Evidence for this will be found in the Mission Statutes approved by the SCPF. Vide X. Paventi Brev. Iuris Miss. (ed 1960) pp 71-77, where 20 such Statutes are listed.
- 4.) Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae Paulus PP VI, 6/VIII/1966, II, 18.
- 5.) O.P.; SDB; OSA; CMF; CSSR; OMI; CM; OCD.
- 6.) OFM; O.Carm; CP.

- 7.) OFM Cap; SCJ; SJ; SSCC.
- 8.) OFM Cap; (W. Buhlmann interview 5/IV/1975). OP; SCJ; CP.
- 9.) OFM (Reg. Const. 128, ¶ 2 et Cap. G. Straord Medellin ¶ 4,3); SJ;
SEDOS member Institutes undertake also "to collaborate actively on projects." Statutes Art. 20.
- 10.) OFM (Reg. Const 128 ¶ 3; et Medellin ut supra ¶ 4,e); SJ (Job Descrip. 1974 Ary R. Crollius SJ).

The discussion groups raised the following points:

1) The Role of the Mission Secretary

Group A—After pointing out the difference between mission congregations and congregations with missions, various functions were noted for the Mission Secretary — representing the congregation in relation to various organizations here in Rome, organizing Continental Conferences for missionaries in an area, serving the spiritual and material needs of the mission personnel, animating the congregation with reference to the mission work, doing research on the mission, etc.

Structural problems which were noted concerned the need for continuity, expertise, and a general knowledge of all the congregation's missions. The advantages of having such a person elected or appointed was discussed as well as his/her influence (or lack of it) on decision-making.

Group B—In some Institutes the Mission Secretary was not a member of the General Council. Rather he served as a resource person who pooled together information, problems, etc., and thus helped the General Council in the decision making. It was pointed out that this system had certain structural problems such as the relation of the Mission Secretary and the members in the field on the one hand and the Mission Secretary and the General Council on the other. To avoid this, one of the Council members is often made the Mission Secretary. Some Institutes, especially the exclusively Missionary Congregations have abolished the office of the Mission Secretary as they felt all their apostolate is of missionary nature.

Though the Mission Secretary has a place and carries out several functions yet there is the problem of making his role more intelligible and meaningful to the members.

Group C—In mission-sending institutes there is a general tendency to name a person at the generalate level to handle the responsibility of animation, re those members who are missionaries in other cultures; there is likewise an indication that there is some dissatisfaction with the various role descriptions given for this task, and that there is a good deal of searching going on at present to clarify the role description.

Some questions which arose from this reality:

- one mission-sending institute has suppressed the mission secretary... would this be due to its internationality? to its specificity in the educational field?
- how many congregations have had mission secretaries and have suppressed this office? Why?
- what is the relationship of the Mission Secretary to the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples?

2) Terminology

Group A—One non-missionary group have removed the distinction between "mission and "non-mission" territory - all the congregation is mission. Is our distinction causing us to be less concerned with making local churches of the "mission countries" missionary?

Group B—Several felt the problem: can we still speak of the Mission Lands? Should we speak of the "Mission or "Missions"? The problem in our context becomes acute because at present in most Congregations the majority of members in formation are in the "Mission Lands". Can we solve the problem by speaking of "Younger Churches", "Mission in Six Continents", etc.?

Group C—There is, especially in mission-sending (as compared with missionary) institutes, a tendency to reject as "mission" only certain areas in other parts of the world. All of the membership consider themselves "missionary".

There is likewise the problem, general to all, that what were formerly referred to as "missions", are now "Local Churches".

The terminology has changed with Evangelii Nuntiandi. A question was raised: how seriously do we take this document?

(For other comments on terminology, see the article on "Recent Thinking on Christian Beliefs" pp. 143 - 144.)

3) Breakthroughs noted:

-towards some specifications in regard to terminology as realized in practice:

-missionary priests (missionary societies) are no longer assigned territories by SCEP; now—after discussion with Bishops of Local Churches, there is an effort to send small teams of 5-6 men to help the Local Bishop.

- missionary congregations of women have tended to be more definite about their priorities: e.g. frontier posts, places where the Church does not exist; where Christ is not known: where the Church is least established.

- tendency to use the word "insertions" to describe efforts to be present to local people, to share with them.
- with reference to on-going formation more responsibility was being taken by the Central Government in organizing it on a Regional Level in Conjunction with the Local Church.

FROM THE GENERAL DISCUSSION

After the reports of the various groups were read, Fr. Divarkar raised the following question:

What else do we feel we need for follow-up?

There was some discussion about the need to collect documentation about the role of mission secretariats; and it was noted that SEDOS would have the following kinds of information already:

1. Statistics of institutes re: location of personnel
2. Which institutes are missionary and which are mission-sending
3. Which institutes have a mission secretariat

We probably need to find out those institutes which had mission secretariats and suppressed them.

Further discussion concerning the possibility of a questionnaire resulted in the following as possible questions:

- What is ecclesial/post-counciliar terminology re: mission?
- What is our organizational terminology re: mission?
- What is done in mission-sending congregations re: animation of missionaries; formation for those sent in mission
- What should be the central government's function in relation to mission?

Recently received:

- "L'inculturazione del messaggio evangelico"
Fede e Civiltà No 4 April, 1978
- "Ethical Issues and the Multi-Nationals in Blueprint Vol. XXX
No 2 and 3 October and November 1977
- "Vita e attività dei Frati Missionari" - a set of documents in preparation for the Plenary Council of the Capuchin Fathers.
- "Copte e Musulmani in Egitto"- Nigrizia, No 7 Aprile, 1978
- "Solitude and Community", by Henri Nouwen - lecture presented to the U.I.S.G., 4 April, 1978.

From the Mill Hill Communications Department, we have received this account of a mission in Europe.

MISSIONARIES IN EUROPE: PASTORAL AND SOCIAL WORK AMONG ASIANS IN ENGLAND.

Father Tom Geerdes (67), a Dutch Mill Hill missionary for forty years in the diocese of Rawalpindi, Pakistan, worked in that area as far as the North-West Frontier, bordering on Afghanistan. In 1975 he decided, for health reasons, to return to Europe but not to retire. As his health improved, he felt he could offer the service of his missionary experience to the Birmingham Archdiocese where it could be put to good use. There he co-ordinates and shares in the pastoral and social welfare work of Asian immigrants with his Asian assistant, Mr. Peter Frank, who emigrated to England some 17 years ago. Mr. Frank and his family are from Jullundur and are well known in Birmingham which, with its $1\frac{1}{2}$ million inhabitants, is after London the largest city in England. Together they visit Asians in hospitals and in their homes and try to bring about some sense of belonging among them and to integrate them into the local community. Many Asians naturally cling to their own language, culture, food, dress and forms of amusements; but some feel estranged and keep at a distance from their neighbours. Father Geerdes and Mr. Frank publish a monthly news circular for them in the Urdu, Punjabi and English languages. It spreads even to London and Yorkshire. Whenever an appeal from a parish reaches them, they will honour invitations, administer baptisms, bless marriages and perform funeral services in Urdu or Punjabi. They are available to anyone of whatever faith within the Asian population. But, as they say, they will never form a parish within a parish, rather they encourage Asians to become part of the parish they live in.

Their address is: The Asian Chaplaincy, Archdiocese of Birmingham,
St. John's Church, 31 George Street, Balsall Heath,
Birmingham B12 9 RG, England.

(Also received: an account of "Antique: A Progressive Diocese in the Philippines" Sedos Doc. No. 1/778).

"Christians and Muslims, as common believers in the same God and common human family, face a common challenge from an unbelieving modern world. This should prompt cooperative efforts to protect life wherever threatened, and to promote freedom, peace, justice and equality in the spirit outlined in Vatican II's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World."

-from the Winter Issue of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies (Temple University) Philadelphia, Pa 19122 USA - Vol. 14, No 11, "The Doctrinal Basis Common to Christians and Muslims and Different Areas of Convergence in Action" quoted in Spiritual News, No 13 April, 1978.