

THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT SINCE EDINBURGH; HISTORY, CURRENT ISSUES AND TRENDS.

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Introduction: We are living through the greatest and most rapid changes in history. Globalization has many aspects. The advances in technology are staggering. The center of the Christian Church has changed from Europe and North America to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. New forms of the Church are emerging. House churches are growing in areas where there is persecution. The Muslim world constitutes a great challenge. So does the growth of secularism in the West and elsewhere.

Throughout history missionary thinkers have constantly asked new questions about the movement. What were the best methods? What kinds of structures were needed to mobilize, train, and support men and women in mission? What was the primary focus of mission; evangelism or social transformation? What should be the end product? If churches, what should those churches look like? Should they be replicas of those from which the missionaries came? Or if they were different, what were the essential values that kept them historically Christian? As the historical context of mission changed, what were the new challenges? How were they to be met? And what new opportunities did changing contexts bring?

In the midst of these changes, the Christian mission remains the same. I BELIEVE IT IS TO COMMUNICATE THE Good News of Jesus Christ, call men and women to become His disciples, and be gathered into worshipping, nurturing, witnessing, and serving communities, which we call churches. These churches should become sources of ministries of evangelism, compassion, and social transformation in their own culture and beyond their own culture. That is, all churches are called to be involved in cross-cultural mission.

But we will often be led to carry out the mission in new ways. The context in which we engage in mission is constantly changing, never more than today. One of the issues in any movement as that happens, is how to make the adjustments that are necessary if it is to fulfill its goals-- and to do so without compromising or losing its essential message. We can observe two different errors in history. One way seeks to maintain the original values by repeating the patterns and methods of the past when the changing context demands new patterns. The other is seek to adjust to the new context by making changes that betray the core values and message of the movement. The challenge to the Christian mission today is to be faithful to our central values, in this case, the mandate to make disciples of all "ethne," even as we discover ways of doing so that are more appropriate and effective in our new context of globalization and new technologies.

While we have much to learn from the past, above all, we remember that the Holy Spirit is constantly creative. So we constantly look in two directions. We look at what God has done in the past and learn lessons from that. We also examine our changing context, looking for the Holy Spirit to lead us. As we seek to be sensitive to His guidance, we can be confident that He will lead us to new and fruitful methodologies today.

The new methodologies should include the following issues. And you will probably see other important issues that I do not mention here. One question is how leaders are to be selected and trained. I believe that traditional institutions, seminaries, Bible Schools, and professional schools continue to be essential. But we must recognize that there are at least two million functional pastors/evangelists working as evangelists and pastors, who have no formal biblical or theological training. A second major question will focus on the growing urban centers of the world. The world is urbanizing rapidly, by the middle of this century, some say that 80% of the world's population will live in urban centers. Furthermore, the urban centers have great disparity between rich and poor, between high rise apartment houses, and tragic slums. We are challenged to reach all segments of urban society with the Gospel. And that might require some new forms of the Church. A third question is the extraordinary growth in international migration, primarily from the poorer countries to more developed nations. I recently heard that there are now over one million immigrants from other parts of Asia, working in Korea. Around half of them are Muslims. Fourth, how can we demonstrate the compassion of Christ for the poor without losing our focus on evangelization? Fifth, how should the People of God, the Church, should be structured in our changing societies, especially in situations of persecution. House churches led by laymen and women are growing rapidly in some areas; Cuba, Iran, and elsewhere.

I. The missionary movement began in the 18th century, as the result of renewal movements which sought to move beyond the Christendom model in Europe and its nominal Christianity. The foundation of the movement consisted of Puritanism, Pietism, the Moravians, and the Evangelical awakenings. All four of them, in different ways, sought to go beyond the Christendom model and stress the importance of personal conversion and a life style of discipleship.

Mission was not supported by the established churches at the beginning. They began on the periphery of the larger church structures. Carey, (1792) a member of a small Baptist group, was denounced in the British Parliament. The London Missionary Society (1795) was established by a group of Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Anglican laymen and pastors. The Anglican Church Missionary Society (1799) was established by a group of priests and laymen, the bishops would not recognize it for fifty years. And the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810) came as the result of the initiative of students.

One of the 'accidents' of history was the movement accompanied western colonialism. While that brought some advantages, it also brought many misunderstandings and disadvantages. The obvious advantage was that it made it possible for missionaries to travel to foreign lands. But it often led to the confusion of Christian faith and western culture, and confusion about the underlying aims of mission. Was it merely the religious side of colonialism? Often the missionaries were caught in the middle, between the aims of the colonial powers and their concerns for the people to whom they went.

II. Assumptions; There were always assumptions, spoken and unspoken in the movement.

- A. It would be wholistic, The sharing of the Gospel and the growth of the Church would bring social progress. The book by James Dennis, " Christian Missions and Social Reform," at the end of the nineteenth century, indicated this hope. It was partially true, but overall the assumption was too

optimistic. They failed to see the complex structural and cultural issues underlying the injustice in every society.

- B. The second assumption; Western Christianity was the norm. Churches in other nations should look like those in the West. But they should become self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating (but normally it was assumed, in their own culture). But how churches were to be self supporting in impoverished cultures when the pastor had to be trained in western type educational institutions that almost inevitably moved him into the middle class?
- C. The third assumption, Western culture was Christian. The Christian life in other nations should look like that in the West. The role of “manifest destiny’ in the United States, and the belief that Western people had a special genius for administration were assumed.
- D. The fourth assumption; Western theology was the norm. But it did not deal with many issues in non-western cultures; for example, the attitude toward the ancestors and the role of the spirits, the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. How should the Gospel deal with poverty and political oppression, how should it relate to western colonialism. And the most important religious category for most non-Western cultures was power, power over evil spirits, power to persuade the gods or spirits to help. Western theology did not address that issue.
- E. The fifth assumption was that leadership would remain in the hands of western missionaries for some time. Korea and Brazil were exceptions. That often led to resentment and delayed the growth of genuinely indigenous churches.

III. But we must recognize the amazing heroism and sacrifice of many. The great number who died. Judson, whose first two wives died, is an example. In Africa, often half of the missionary families were dead within six months after arrival.

IV. We also recognize that we never communicate nor understand the Gospel perfectly, our attempts are always less than adequate. But the Gospel is greater than our attempts to communicate it, and its power goes beyond our understanding.

V. The accomplishments.

- A. Churches were established in many nations. In 1942, William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke of “The Great New Fact of our Time.” He said that the church exists in nearly every nation on earth. There were probably five exceptions, Nepal was one of them.
- B. Schools and universities were established. They often opened education to girls and women and the poor. Examples are MacKenzie University in Sao Paulo, started with a small school for street children by Mrs. Chamberlain in 1871, and Ehwa University, started by Mrs. Scranton as the first school for girls in Korea, in 1895, in Seoul. Speaking of the women’s missionary movement, Beaver called it the “first feminist movement in North America,” and added that it “set in motion forces that still work for the liberation of women in Asia and Africa.”
- C. Modern medicine was introduced; hospitals, clinics, medical and nursing schools, the treatment of lepers and tuberculosis. Dr. Ida Scudder and the medical center at Vellore, India, is an example. Dr Scudder, just out of medical school, began using a cot in a spare room in her

parents' home. It grew into a great medical center, with a medical college, nursing school, traveling medical clinics, and a fine hospital with Indian physicians trained in many specialties.

- D. In a number of cases, new agricultural methods were introduced. Dr. Sam Higgenbottom and the agricultural college at Allahabad, India is an outstanding example. The cultivation of Cacao was introduced in Ghana.

VI. The end of the Theological Consensus came at the beginning of the 20th century.

A. The Fundamentalist/Modernist struggle created great controversy in the missionary movement. Fundamentalism reduced mission to saving souls, the lifeboat theology. (The ship is sinking, get as many into the lifeboat as possible.) Liberalism or modernism reduced mission to social reform. Both reduced mission to less than it is, biblically. But we must recognize that fundamentalism held on to the essential core of mission. And evangelical missions today have their roots in a reformed, or broadened fundamentalism that continues to focus on the necessity of evangelization, but also affirms the importance of ministries of compassion and social transformation.

B. The attitude toward other religions changed for the extreme liberals. The Hocking Report, 1932, said missions should not seek conversion, but were to "seek the best in all religions." The reaction came quickly. The Presbyterian leader, Robert E. Speer, wrote "The Finality of Jesus Christ." Hendrik Kraemer, a Dutch former missionary to Indonesia, wrote, "The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World," in response. Both insisted on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the centrality of evangelization.

VII. The Edinburgh Conference, 1910 occurred in that context.

- A. It was inclusive; High Anglicans to Faith Missions, e.g. China Inland Mission.
- B. There were 1200 delegates, all from the West except for 17 Asians.
- C. The focus was on cooperation. It led to formation of the International Missionary Council, and Indirectly, to the World Council of Churches (WCC). The goal of the WCC at first was "Unity for the sake of Mission." "That the world might believe."
- D. Mission was understood as going from 'Christian countries' to 'non-Christian countries.' Edinburgh assumed that the West was Christian. Underlying this was a Christendom concept of western society and church.
- E. Latin America, except for mission to indigenous peoples, was excluded. Anglicans and some Lutherans insisted on that point, because that part of the world was Roman Catholic and thus part of Christendom. Naturally, the growing evangelical movement in Latin America was greatly offended.
- F. A tragic defect of Edinburgh was its attitude of triumphalism and pride in Western culture, Consequently it failed to see the tragic flaws in Western Christendom that would lead, four years later, to World War I, fought between so called "Christian nations." Millions of men were senselessly killed in the trenches of France. It has been estimated that half of the future missionary candidates from England, Scotland, and Germany, were killed in the war. Even worse, for many in both East and West, it called into question the validity of the

- Christian Faith. If “Christian nations” behaved in such a manner, how could their faith be true?
- G. Another interesting fact. Four years earlier, the Pentecostal revival began in an obscure building, a former stable, in Los Angeles. We would not have expected the leaders at Edinburgh to notice it, but most scholars believe that Pentecostalism, in all of its manifestations, brought more people to the Christian Faith in the twentieth century than any other movement of the Church. It stands as a reminder to all of us that the Holy Spirit is constantly creative and that we can never anticipate everything He will do.
 - H. Edinburgh did not deal with theological issues. Probably that was because of the great diversity of mission organizations and churches involved. Theology would no doubt have been divisive in view of the different organizations involved and also the loss of theological consensus that was taking place at the time. That lack of theological foundation would later lead to great losses in missionary activity in the conciliar movement that was the heir of Edinburgh.

VIII. Mission from 1945 to 2010.

- A. There was a move from optimism in 1945 to great pessimism in 1949. In 1945 some thought that Japan would become Christian if enough missionaries were sent there after World War II. That did not happen. Then, in 1949, Communism triumphed in China and the church was persecuted and eventually closed. In the 1950's and 60's political colonialism ended in Africa and Asia. In some countries, India and Myanmar, for example, western missionaries were no longer permitted to work. The widespread perception was that most former colonies would expel missionaries and that the churches would collapse and close. With the 'cold war,' and communism, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union persecuted churches and missionary work was not allowed. As Muslim lands became independent of European colonial rule, mission to those areas became very difficult. That left a relatively small part of the world open to overt cross cultural mission.
Thus, in the 1950's many believed that the missionary movement had ended and that it had failed.
- B. The 'mainline' denominational missions which pioneered mission from the United States in the nineteenth century and still accounted for 60% of North American mission personnel in 1935, declined. Those missions total only 5% or less of American missionaries today. There was a similar decline in missionaries from Europe. But the growth of evangelical, Charismatic, and independent missions, many of them multid denominational, replaced them. We need to recognize that many of the personnel of the newer missions came from the evangelical wing of the older denominations, even as the denominational mission boards declined greatly.
It is important to examine the reasons for decline in the historic groups. I believe they are twofold; one is theological 'erosion,' the loss of the centrality of the Gospel, and cryptic universalism in the WCC and among many in the older denominations. The other is the loss of structures that focused on mission and world evangelization. An example was the move

in my own denomination from a Board of Foreign Missions to a Program Agency. In the latter, mission become only one 'program' among many, with low priority.

- C. We see two kinds of ecumenism today, both having roots in the missionary movement.
 - a. The first is the World Council of Churches. The International Missionary Council became part of the WCC in 1961. While the original hope was that unity would lead to more mission, the opposite has been the case. Mission in the sense of the communication of the Gospel to non-Christians, does not seem to be an important part of the agenda of the WCC today. For example, a WCC statement in 1966 said, "The passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the exodus for all men. Now the whole of mankind is delivered from bondage and brought into covenant with God...Every man has been made a member of the new mankind." Of course, if that is true, there is no need for evangelization. Another statement which affirmed that "the world must set the agenda for the Church," also undercut the imperative for mission.
 - b. The other stream is the new evangelical ecumenism. (The definition of the word 'ecumenical,' adopted at the Lausanne II meeting in Manila in 1989, is "the whole church taking the whole Gospel to the whole world.") It has been centered in the Lausanne Movement, Its covenant adopted in 1974, is one of the great Christian documents of the 20th century. The 1982 document, 'Evangelism and Social Responsibility, is also important. Another result of Lausanne, 1974, was the change in focus in mission from geography to culture. Ralph Winter's address on 'unreached peoples' was an epoch making event. Thus, two streams have come out of Lausanne. One was the focus on "unreached peoples," the other was the recovery of mission to include ministries of compassion and hopefully, social transformation.
 - c. So mission terminology has changed from 'foreign mission' before 1974, to 'cross cultural mission' today.
 - d. Perhaps most important of all is the fact that Christian cross cultural mission is now global. No longer is it primarily from "the West to the Rest." Today men and women from many nations are communicating the Gospel to those of other cultures, and the number of those from Asia, Africa, and Latin America who cross cultural and linguistic barriers to do so, outnumber those from the West. This is the most important development in mission since Carey sailed for India.

IX. Here are some of the most critical Issues that I believe we must face in our changing era.

- A. The importance of growing discipleship, a deeper understanding of the Christian life; focused inward on the person (union with Christ), on the Christian community, and outward toward the world. This threefold focus is essential, and usually follows a certain order. We normally come to personal faith in Jesus Christ in the context of the Church and cannot live a healthy Christian life in isolation from the Body of Christ. Evangelism is only the first step. We must call believers to a lifelong journey of discovering what it means to be disciple of Jesus Christ. And that will lead us to involvement as His servants and witnesses with the

world around us and far away. It will lead us to involvement with the poor and marginalized in every culture, caring for them just as our Lord did.

For example, how do we address the tragedy of genocide in Ruanda, where 'revival' had taken place earlier? Or the rapid growth of the Church in sub-Sahara Africa where there is still great political corruption? Or the fact that one third of the American public claims to have been 'born again,' but where we see little impact on our culture?

- B. Globalization and Migration. Mission is now from everywhere to everywhere. Nearly every city in the world is multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic. An example is an Egyptian Christian evangelizing Muslims in an American university community. I am an interim pastor of the Hollywood Presbyterian Church, where Campus crusade for Christ began sixty years ago. We estimate that within two miles of our campus, over one hundred languages are spoken. It is estimated that there are over one million immigrants in Korea now, coming from other Asian nations. Probably half are Muslims.
- C. Urbanization. Cities of the world are far larger than ever before, It is estimated that by the middle of this century, 80% of the world's population will be urban. I believe this will call for new forms of the Church. We need churches that minister to the middle class who live in high rise apartment buildings. But tragic slums also exist, with great poverty and lack of hope. Incarnational ministry among the urban poor is also an urgent necessity. New forms of the Church may be needed.
- D. Mission as transformation. The 'world Inquiries,' conducted by Dr. Luis Bush, indicates that Christian leaders in many areas believe God is telling the Church that we need to work for the transformation of our societies. That will address different issues in various places; equality between men and women, treatment of minorities, health care, and other questions. The relationship between evangelism and the concern for economic development is another. And how is the Church to address the devastation of AIDS?
- E. Contextualization and 'Insider Movements.' Is the Holy Spirit pushing out the boundaries of the Church today, as Muslims and others do not want to leave their traditional communities but growing numbers are worshipping God through Jesus Christ and affirm Him as Lord? Sensitivity toward receptor cultures is important. We always run the risk, just as the earlier Western missionaries did, of thinking that the way we worship in our culture is normative, failing to see positive elements in receptor cultures. We need to trust the Holy Spirit to work in culture affirming ways, even as we recognize that every culture needs to be transformed by that same Holy Spirit. We are also called to avoid syncretism even as we contextualize.
- F. The need for partnerships and greater cooperation. We are not competitors in the one mission of Jesus Christ. How do we express our unity as we work in separate mission structures? Each mission group brings special gifts to the total task, but we need each other. We need to listen to each other, recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, part of the one mission of Christ, and discover how we support and affirm each other.
- G. The need for new methods of leadership selection and training in the contexts of ministry. It is estimated that there are at least two million functional pastors and evangelists in the world today who have no formal biblical or theological training. They cannot attend our traditional institutions, seminaries or Bible schools. We need to construct training programs

that will go to them in their context of ministry., helping them to grow in their understanding of Scripture and to see the relevance of such study.

- H. Along with the challenges listed above, there are two important theological issues to be addressed. We need a more biblical theology of the Church, its nature and purpose. The classical definition of the 'true church,' from the Reformers defined it as 'where the word is truly preached and the sacraments correctly observed. That was a definition for sixteenth century Christendom, which assumed a Christian society. It lacked the missionary element. But a genuinely biblical understanding of the Church must have mission at its center. So the understanding of the Missio Dei is essential. That is, the Mission is God's. He initiated it, He carries out His mission in history, and He calls us to participate. It is His mission, not ours. We can trust Him, We seek to discover how and where He is at work, and are given the privilege of participation. And the purpose of the Church, the Body of Christ, the People of God, is to participate in the Missio Dei.
- I. The opening words of Jesus were, "repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." That is, Jesus brought a new reality into history, the Kingdom of God. Even though it has not fully come yet, it is a reality and we are called to live as its citizens. The theology of the Kingdom of God provides a framework for a more biblical understanding of mission and evangelism. It expands and deepens our understanding of evangelism. In evangelism we are called to become citizens of the Kingdom. It gives us a framework for ministries of compassion and social transformation. As citizens of the Kingdom we are called to express the values of the Kingdom; justice, concern for the poor, etc. in our personal lives and in our societies. An understanding of the kingdom provides a place for the Charismatic emphases, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Because the Kingdom has already come into history in Christ,(even though it has not fully come), He is active in power and thus His miraculous activity, dreams, visions, and healings are still a part of His mission. This also gives us a foundation for a theology of power, so important in most traditional cultures.
- J. Finally, we recognize with joy that the Christian mission is now global. Never before in history has such a multitude of men and women from so many nations, races, and languages taken part in any movement in history, communicating the Good News of Jesus Christ to people of so many different races, languages, and cultures. The promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3) is being fulfilled today to a remarkable extent.