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April 2002

Carrying the Gospel to All the non-Christian World

The theme “Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World” expresses the spirit of the International Missionary Conference in Edinburgh held June 14-23, 1910. In his “General Account of the Conference” John R. Mott, its chairperson, writes;

Edinburgh was a fitting place of meeting. In the earlier missionary enterprise which evangelized Europe no country was more prominent than Scotland, and no country has in proportion to its size contributed to the evangelization of the world during the last century so large a number of distinguished and devoted missionaries. ... Never has there been such a gathering in the history of the Kingdom of God on earth. ...Forty-six British societies were represented by slightly over 500 delegates; sixty American societies also by rather more than 500 delegates; forty-one Continental societies by over 170 delegates; and twelve South African and Australasian societies by twenty-six delegates. These societies represented practically every type of doctrine, worship, and polity included in the Church of Christ, with the exception of the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches. ... And never before did the representatives of the older churches of the West meet with so many representatives of the young churches of the East. ... It was an epoch-making conference; and the closing meeting was memorable. ...culminating emotions of the members found expression in the closing doxology –

Now blessed be the Lord our God,
The God of Israel,
For He alone doth wondrous works,
In glory that excel.
And blessed be His glorious name,
To all eternity:
The whole earth let his glory fill,
Amen, so let it be” (1)

The Part I (pp.5-49) of *World Missionary Conference, 1910. Report of Commission I, Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World* lists nine subjects the Commission studied: (2)

1. The present possibility of carrying the gospel to all the non-Christian world
2. Present tendencies and movement in the non-Christian religions.
3. Corrupting influences in western civilization
4. Plastic condition of non-Christian nations
5. Modern secular education
6. Growing spirit of nationalism
7. Rising spiritual tide in many mission fields
8. To enter into heritage of the period of preparation

9. To ensure the life and efficiency of the home church

Part II (pp.50-288) presents a “Survey of the non-Christian world” which includes: Japan, Formosa, Korea, the Chinese Empire, Siam, British Malaya, The Dutch East Indies, The Philippine Islands, Australasia and Oceania, India, Ceylon, The Asiatic Levant, Central Asia. Then there is a survey of Africa: Northeast Africa, Northwest Africa, Southwest Africa, South Africa, Southern Central Africa, East Africa, and Madagascar. The final survey is of Non-Christians of the Western Hemisphere: Indians and Orientals in South America, Orientals in the West Indies, Indians in Central America, Indians in the United States, Orientals in the United States, Indians in Canada, and Orientals in Canada and the Arctic Regions. Part II concludes with two more subjects: the Evangelization of the Jews, and Unoccupied Sections of the World. Part III (pp289-361) focuses on the logistics of this great world mission enterprise and ends with the “Findings of the Commission.”

The responsibility of this paper is threefold: (1) how this priority of “carrying the gospel to all the non-Christian world” was understood by commissioners; (2) the evolution of missionary thinking during the 20th century; and (3) a missiology for the future.

I. Commissioners’ Understanding of the Theme

The commissioners believed, with a sense of urgency, that God entrusted the great work of the evangelization of the whole world within their lifetime. With fervent spiritual dedication to the truthfulness of the gospel, and confident of the material resources they were convinced to be available in the western Christian world, they accepted this responsibility. Christians of the west understood themselves to be the chosen people of God, the heart that pumps the gospel’s blood of life to all extremities. (p.47). The pagan world was there to be “conquered” by the gospel if the missionaries followed “the three great laws of God:” the law of sowing and reaping, the law of intercession and the law of sacrifice (pp.43f.).

The world consisted of the two worlds: the Christian world *and* the non-Christian world. The theology that supported this missionary geography was twofold. First, there was the conviction that human salvation is possible *only* in the name of Jesus Christ. Other religions, great and small, were seen as obstacles and menaces to the missionary effort of spreading the kingdom of Christ. Second was their faith in God who is “the Great Missioner.” (3)

II. Evolution of Missionary Thinking in the 20th Century

The Edinburgh was a remarkable expression of Western Protestant Christianity’s dedication to world evangelization, and yet it contained within itself the element of its break down. The reason for this must be that Edinburgh 1910 was basically a missiological monologue within the Christian west, though the monologue was sincere and accompanied by many prayers. If this diagnosis has any merit, it tells us that Christian mission requires more than sincere theological formulation and admirable piety. Mission must be subordinated to the interest of the building up of human community in order to prosper. The missionary geography of the two worlds, Christian and non-Christian, was a facile orientation which eventually made Christian dedication, though fervent, unable to communicate, and its material resources, though rich,

ineffective. How soon after the Edinburgh 1910, the world was to experience decades of the deadly violence as wars enveloped the world! The 20th century became the most violent century in the entire history of human civilization. How do missionaries today understand the propagation of the Christian message through the 20th century in which 187 million people perished by human violence? (4)

In terms of church history and of world history the missionary ideal expressed in Edinburgh is significant. It was based on the classical Christian worldview, associated with the authority of St. Augustine, that there are two worlds, the one pious and the other impious. Has not the image of the opposing two worlds increased violence in the world by justifying theologically the destruction of the people named “enemy”? At the beginning of the 21st century the one world is, in *crescendo*, split into two antagonistic worlds, Islamic and Christian. All conflicts in this world are Cain/Abel fratricide. This conflictive dualism threatens the entire human family, yet it has been generally accepted as the holy war. The concept of the holy war has been proven to be not only irrelevant but barbaric in the technological context of 21st century. All wars are unholy because murder is unholy. The concept of the Christian world is as unrealistic as that of non-Christian world. The complexities and ambiguities of human existence do not allow such a self-serving distinction.

The gospel moves freely into the unholy zone. This has created the ever changing and expanding relevancy of the gospel’s message for the world. Transformation, *metamorphosis*, is fundamental to Biblical theology. This motif has inspired a transition from a church-centered missiology to a world-centered missiology based on a theology of the kingdom of God. To say that all humanity is condemned (*massa perditionis*, Augustine), and to base missionary obligation on this thesis disregards the presence of the grace of God in the so-called “non Christian world.” There are millions of people in the world who do not confess the name of Christ, yet practice what he said. There are millions of people who confess the name of Christ, yet do not practice what he said. (5)

Let me trace the history of missionary thinking since Edinburgh. The focus of Edinburgh 1910 is “to persuade human hearts everywhere that Jesus Christ is their Saviour” (p. 312). “Our message is Jesus Christ. ... in him we find God incarnate” proclaims the 1928 International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem. Ten years later, in Tambaram 1938 International Missionary Conference we read: “The core of evangelism is the presentation of the Gospel . . . The Gospel concerns the individual . . . It is a whole Gospel – personal first and social always”. (6)

The world plunged into the Second World War between Tambaram 1938 and Amsterdam 1948, the year the World Council of Churches was inaugurated. During this period of unprecedented human despair and turmoil missionary thinking went through a deep search. Some decades afterwards in the Asian Catholic bishops’ Conference in Manila in 1979 recorded the following:

The purpose of mission is to proclaim salvation to the whole man and to all men. It is neither simply to convert people to an organized religion nor win them to membership in an institutional Church. It is rather to convert people to authentic human values and to deepen and fulfil these values in Christ so that the people who are evangelized may come to form the community which is His Church. (7)

This line of thought is expanded in their 1991 statement:

The Reign of God is a universal reality, extending far beyond the boundaries of the Church. It is the reality of salvation in Jesus Christ, in which Christians and others share together. It is the fundamental “mystery of unity” which unites us more deeply than differences in religious allegiance are able to keep us apart. Seen in this manner, a “regnocentric” approach to mission theology does not in any way threaten the Christo-centric perspective of our faith. On the contrary, “regno-centrism” calls for “christo-centrism” and vice versa, for it is in Jesus Christ and through the Christ-event that God has established his Kingdom upon the earth and in human history. (8)

This brief review indicates an adjustment in missionary thinking since 1910. The conviction that “Our message is Jesus Christ” firmly stands. In Jerusalem 1928 the name of Jesus Christ is associated with “the ultimate reality of the universe.” Jesus Christ means freedom in all aspects of life. These words point to the kingdom of God beyond the church. God, who is “perfect and infinite in love,” is free to be gracious beyond the boundary of the church. The gospel affirms the centrality of Jesus Christ in the image of Christ crucified. This paradoxical centrality is the fundamental structure of theology and missiology. This is the theological basis on which “regno-centrism calls for christo-centrism and vice versa.” (9) In this light the following observation may be made.

1) The missionary will “persuade human hearts everywhere that Jesus Christ is their Saviour.” Yet, Jesus Christ remains a stumbling block to *all* cultures and religions, including the Christian world. What does this acknowledgment mean?

2) Is there a specifically Christian understanding of repentance and faith? How are Islamic or Buddhist or Hindu repentance and faith related to the proclamation of “our message is Jesus Christ”?

3) People are invited to convert to “authentic human values” because the Christ of the kingdom of God blesses such values. Can the people of the other faiths find authentic human values within their faith and world-view? And when their faith deepens, do they also encounter Christ? (10)

4) Japanese Lutheran theologian Kazo Kitamori says that God embraces the world in its rebellion against God. (11) God who embraces the world defines the nature of the church because it is only in this embraced world the church can exist.

5) In 1995 bishop Osthathios of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in India wrote of the gospel message in the richness and comprehensiveness of the mission of the Holy Trinity:

It is the outreach of this love that prompted God to create all things visible and invisible and also prompted Him to send His only begotten Son for the salvation of the world and the Holy Spirit for the consummation of salvation which is deification or *theosis*. (12)

True to the Orthodox tradition, *kosmos* is becoming *ekklesia*. The gospel embraces “all things visible and

invisible” and history is, by the providence of the Holy Trinity, moving towards the blessing of our *theosis*. The gospel is indeed “a big story” that points to the kingdom of God.

III. Missiology for the Future

Enormous violence in the 20th century has dashed our hopes that the great religions of the world could prevent humanity from falling into the abyss of destruction. Particularly disappointing was the specter of one Christian nation going to war against another. Christianity is now seen to be **on the same level** with other religions. Missiology must fully acknowledge this historical judgment.

This thesis needs to be clarified. Christianity, as a world religion, is a comprehensive concept, religiously, culturally and socially identifiable. Humanity’s appreciation of the historical behaviors of this religion centered in the west is ambiguous. The world named non-Christian by Edinburgh 1910 has, in the last 500 years, been exploited, colonized, and victimized by the nations of the West which Edinburgh called Christian. The world judges “Christian” civilization today, not on the basis of sublime doctrines and saintly presence, but on its observed association with the evils of racism, colonialism and militarism. Christian theology itself insists that the faith is historical. Its founder says, “The tree is known by its fruit.” The tree is known by its power to create a healthy human community, the kingdom of God upon the earth. Christians cannot establish wholesome human community by themselves. The participation of the peoples of all the languages of the world is needed.

Religious **pluralism** must be discussed in the context of the creation of wholesome human community, free from racism and militarism. Pluralism, religious, moral and political, is necessary for the creation of the healthy human community. Accepted that the question of the truth is at stake in any genuine discussion on religious pluralism. But truth must relate to the human endeavor to establish wholesome human community upon the earth. Christian *shalom* will be truly Christian when it participates in the universal human *shalom*. To engage in a competition for doctrinal superiority among religions is counter-productive to the interest of human welfare. It would be better for all six billion of us to live in a wholesome community free from fanatic religion-ism than to let doctrinal differences destroy us.

The truth of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith, for instance, is not self contained. It *becomes* truth as it contributes to the creation of human community. This *becoming* process is open to the participation of the those who feel alienated from the Christian world. All of us, with our different experiences of the human spirit, are involved in this common human mission. Missiology has a greater horizon than we knew, because God is the God of “expansive vision”. (13) Religious pluralism is to be seen in the context of its participation in the realization of the kingdom of God upon the earth. The words “upon the earth” are now more important than the words “in heaven”. It is while we are “upon the earth” that we can be responsible for the quality of human community. Missiology must have an eschatology oriented toward “the earth”.

At this point, our thoughts on pluralism and **globalization** intersect. They come together, for our interest is in global health, *shalom*. Globalization, as we experience it today, is intensely ambiguous. It has creative potentials, but arguably its potential is largely destructive. It is a world system that primarily benefits the rich

and powerful who control the mass media throughout the world. The idea that the world has become a “global village” is also a self-serving ideology that has been useful for the dominant nations and/or corporations. Globalization is being experienced differently by the poor of the world from those who are rich. In fact, the global gap between the rich and the poor has become staggering.

Religious pluralism should be judged by its influence to reject monopoly-globalization in favor of a sharing-globalization. Sharing is the mark of the *vere religione*. It must be the mark of a viable missiology. The gospel does not tread this world alone. Nor does it enjoy a “one way traffic.” The power of the gospel is shown as it engages others, not in our way but in the way of the radical self-denial of the crucified. Georges Khodr, the Orthodox theologian writes, “Christ is hidden everywhere in the mystery of his lowliness”. (14)

Great religious traditions called Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism, are not enemies of Jesus Christ. The missiology of the mystery of the lowliness of Christ must ponder how the distance between Jesus Christ and Christianity compares with the distance between Jesus Christ and Islam, or Jesus Christ and Buddhism. The gospel of Jesus Christ is problematic to all religions and all civilizations. Yet, the gospel has power to baptize them and mobilize them for the purpose of the gospel. This is possible because of the mystery of Christ’s lowliness.

Crucified, Jesus Christ accepted *all* without exception. That moment was the unparalleled moment of cosmic openness. When the one who is “before all things” and “the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:15-20) was publicly crucified, all boundaries we *draw* - cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic, racial, economic, educational, ideological, political and gender - are abolished. This thought is deeply puzzling and threatening. The crucified Christ upsets all our value systems. “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal.3:28). This is the work of the mystery of “his lowliness”.

This vision is the foundation for the **contextualization** of theology. For such contextualization religious pluralism is not a threat, but an opportunity for fruitful mutually benefiting dialogue. Christ makes diversity a reconciled diversity. In the contextualization of the missionary message monopoly-globalization has no place. The truth of Christ moves from sharing to sharing. The gospel cannot be contextualized into a world system that leaves most of people of the world in dire poverty. Contextual missiology must challenge the context itself.

Human context is always cultural. To be human is to be cultural. And in turn **culture** is a creation of human condition. Culture is always inter-cultural since cultures are always intersecting. The dynamism of the inter-cultural is always present in the situation of the inter-religious. Theological contextualization cannot be done apart from serious engagement with the complex reality of culture. There is not one *purely* theological word in isolation from culture. Culture prepares words, theology baptizes them, and makes use of them. W. A. Visser’t Hooft observed that Paul and John took the risk of using such Greek words as *logos*, *soter*, *mysteria*, and *metamorphosis* which carry heavy pre-Christian associations. (15)

The theological mind has been engaged in this act of baptism since the day of Pentecost. Mission/evangelism

necessarily uses the culture as a channel of communication. “Hinduism has been digging channels. Christ is the water to flow through these channels.” (16) The Second Vatican Council states; “The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions.” (17) It is difficult to conceive “what is true and holy in these religions” without thinking of the culture as a vehicle of such values. It is important, however, to know that culture is not concerned with moral examination. A gun culture accepts a profusion of firearms among citizens. A racist culture does not criticize racial prejudice. The chair culture of the Christian west allows people to worship with shoes on as would no other world religion. Is there a disconnect between the practices of Christian culture and the dictates of the gospel?

Yet, it is striking that the gospel displays its power in whatever the historical context is.

In 1945 both Shinto Japan and Christian Germany completed their own self-destruction through the misuse of transcendence, which the Biblical tradition speaks of as idolatry. In idolatry “something essentially partial is boosted into universality. (18) Why does this “boosting” universally produce destruction? Why is this possibility of disaster indigenous to all cultures? Christian culture, as well as the caste culture, must be subjected to critical examination. All cultures stand equally under the judgment of God. Even as we criticize a certain culture, we may be living and breathing within that very culture. This is why the missionary act of baptizing words becomes a serious exercise.

The gospel cannot be completely contextualized in any theological orientation –black, feminist, Asian, *Dalit* or any other theology. The apostolic admonition for all of today’s contextualization of theology is, “We have this treasure in clay jars” (2 Cor. 4:7). The cultures of the “Christian world” are not necessarily closer to the gospel than the cultures of the “non-Christian world.” “Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first” (Mt.20:8). Is missionary thinking prepared to express this “scandalous” freedom of the gospel in the 21st century world (1 Cor. 1:23)?

Since life itself contains the interpretation of life, all **religions** are hermeneutically related. To think of religions as independent boxed-in units that can be identified by name, as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, is conventional and questionable. No religion can be isolated and contained in separation from others.

All religions are in the state of mutual transformation. Simply put, they are webbed. Whatever one finds in one religion, may be found in its variation in others.

The human spirit cannot be boxed in. Missionaries are not called to persuade people to discard *this* box and take up *that*, like car-dealers asking people to exchange their old cars for a newer model. A comment such as “by far the greater part of the Mohammedan world is practically unoccupied. ... The unreceptive and even defiant attitude of Islam towards Christianity, and its unwillingness to acknowledge the supreme Lordship of Christ, will yield to the gospel if Christians do their duty” (36f) must be carefully examined. What does it mean to say, “The Mohammedan world is practically unoccupied?” How can a territory be “occupied” by Christianity? What are the reasons behind the “defiant attitude of Islam towards Christianity? What treasures do Christianity and Islam share? What does the doctrinal conflict between the religions mean to the spiritual lives dedicated to Christ or to Mohammed? What kind of “obstacle” does Islam pose to Christianity? These questions will free our missiology from the image of boxed-in religion.

Obviously, there can be no Muslim without Islam, no Christian without Christianity. But Islam does not engage in dialogue with Christianity. Muslims and Christians can dialogue. Muslims are “creatures” of complex cultural and theological realities as are Christians and Buddhists. Though the expression “people of other faiths” is useful, it is not a clear concept since people are a larger and a far more complex reality than the religions of their particular cultures. Buddhists create many Buddhisms. Christians have made many Christianities. There are all kinds of Buddhists as there are all kinds of Christians. Not one of the great religions has one uniform faith, doctrine and confession.

The biblical interpretation of life is discovered at the intersection of real life and the biblical witness. A similar suggestion can be made of Buddhism or Islam. If the *outsider* is lacking, - if the *stranger* is not there, - the possibility of meaning disappears. Yahweh speaks with force because Baal is there. Hermeneutics takes place in the borderland.

Christian **fundamentalism** reveals the hidden irritation of Western Christian civilization with the presence of the incomprehensible God. The finality of Christ is affirmed at the risk of being placed in a theological box. On the contrary, Christian insistence on the exclusivity of salvation in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12, Jn 14:6) is a confession of faith in the incredible openness demonstrated in Jesus Christ. The astounding reach of his openness cannot be defined in terms of exclusiveness. The truth confronts us. But ultimately the truth embraces us.

Harold W. Turner, however, raises a question. He writes, “Indeed if the Christians of the first centuries had been ‘benevolent inclusivists’ there would have been no Christian history at all, as the present-day pluralists are forced to recognize.” (19)

Was exclusivity at one point necessary to the Christian message? True, Buddhism disappeared from India by its over-accommodation. Yet, no truth so perceived by humans can exist in history without some measure of accommodation. Raimundo Panikkar writes, “It [Christianity] is the ancient paganism or to be more precise, the complex Hebrew-Hellenic-Greco-Latin-Celtic-Gothic-Modern religion converted to Christ more or less successfully.” (20) There is no unchanging identity. Christianity in China is different from Christianity in Sweden. The Christianity embraced by the rich is different from the Christianity in which the poor place their trust. Buddhism has, in fact, not disappeared at all. It has achieved the status of a world religion.

The time and space orientation of human salvation has shifted from “over there” to the **here and now**. A suggestion that this is a result of secular influence is superficial. Here and now is at the heart of responsible grace. The here and now is the zone of human responsibility. Salvation must be experienced, if at all, within this life, not *after* our personal end or the end of this planet or of the universe. This means that the location of transcendence is in this history. In fact, because history is ambiguous, all the more transcendence must be placed inside history, as the Christian teaching on the Incarnation and the Two Natures of Christ suggest. (21) The meaningful *beyond* is the beyond that is this side of the beyond. “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rm.5:20) The salvation in the Buddhist *nirvana* is anticipated in the centrality of “elimination of greed” here and now.

Biblical faith is time oriented. "Time is the heart of existence," says the Rabbi Abraham Heschel. (22) Biblical religion places time above space. Time is sacred. It is invisible, as God is invisible. It is beyond our control. It has the quality of transcendence, the *beyond*. It is proper to call God the eternal God. Christian liturgy does not invoke God as the spacious God. Indeed, a space-oriented theology is a dangerous concept. Space connects with the Baal, time with Yahweh. The idolatry of *Lebensraum* has been used again and again by totalitarian regimes throughout history. Yet, is not the eternal God also the spacious God, though God is more eternal than eternity itself and more spacious than space.

The eternal God has become a distant God. Space is immediate to our everyday experience. Time-oriented Christian civilization expressed its vitality, not in the acquisition of time, but by the acquisition of space, even displacing "native" populations! Now, after 500 years, liberation theologians, *Dalit* theologians, and Black theologians are demanding dignified space for the people they represent. A theology of space, even more than a theology of time, makes the issues of justice and injustice in society visibly clear. The time-oriented eschatology has made humanity insensitive to the welfare of the *present* time. It inspired the program of "building bigger barns." (Lk.12:16-21). It has supported the *status quo*.

Eschatology is the doctrine of last things. The word "last" is not about time but about the Kingdom of God. It puts the time crisis. It is *kairos*, "critical now." Eschatology is not about a dispensationalist's elaborate schedule for the end of the world. It is about practicing love of God and neighbor, now, in this moment of history. It is to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God" today because in this is the meaning of the beginning and end of history (See Micah 6:8). It is to respond *now* to a boy's question, "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?" (Martin Luther King Jr. "Letter from the Birmingham City Jail" 1963) "Today salvation has come to this house" declares Jesus (Lk.19:9). "For Jesus salvation did not seem to be a matter of saving one's soul for a life after death nor even a matter of religion, nor religious practices, but a matter of proper relationship." (23)

Whether the image of history is circular, straight, triangular, or zigzag is not important. To live in the *kairos* way of Micah is important. Colonial space must be replaced by the space of "a single garment of destiny." (24) All *beyond* stories must be brought into "this side" because the location in which salvation is experienced is in this one Noah's Ark, the planet earth.

Mother earth is our Noah's ark. The destruction of the biosphere augurs global suicide. Humanity is terrorizing mother earth. The thought of the ecological crisis is new to our time. It was not there in 1910.

The words "ecological" and "ecumenical" are derived from the Greek word *oikos* meaning "house." Ecological and ecumenical movements signify Good-House-Keeping. The ecological refers to the maintenance of the biosphere. The ecumenical refers broadly to the cultured spaces in which human languages are spoken, houses are built, things are named, education is conducted, ideas are exchanged, religions are conceived and practiced, political powers are exercised, time is measured and symbols are born and die. God's benediction embraces all beings. All beings exist in webbedness, interdependence, communication and reconciliation. This is the basic structure of the sacramental: "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (1Cor. 12:26.) Here theology

and ecology coincide. Tillich's "Ground of Being" can be understood to mean that God is the relatedness of all that is. One of the remarkable Orthodox theological books is titled *Being as Communion* in which we read; "Love as God's mode of existence 'hypostasizes' God, *constitutes* His being. Therefore, as a result of love, the ontology of God is not subject to the necessity of the substance. Love is identified with ontological freedom." (25) If missiology is fully aware of the "relatedness of all beings" it will have relevance for humanity. The eschatological and the ecological are one. The vertical and the horizontal, time and eternity, *this* side and *other* side are one. This is a missiology of the Mother Earth as Noah's Ark.

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Missionary thinking must be engaged in a public dialogue. "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7.) There is no individualistic *shalom*. In order to "pray on its [the city's] behalf" one must have a good knowledge of the city. This exercise is crucial to missiology. "City-study" (country study, world study, cosmos study) and mission study must come together. Missiology must become inter-religious, and inter-cultural. It must be in dialogue with the various areas of human knowledge: physics, biology, anthropology, psychology, sociology. It must belong to the family of good knowledge. Christians, saying, "Our message is Jesus Christ" and Buddhists, saying, "Our message is the universal moral law, *dharma*, that the Buddha taught," must be brought into a dialogue. Werner Heisenberg says, "In the beginning was energy." (26) The Gospel of John says, "In the beginning was the word" (1:1.) The *energy* thought and *word* thought must engage in dialogue, not in competition. If the world experiences *shalom* we all shall experience *shalom*. This is the future missiology of the "Larger Christ" the image suggested by John R. Mott.

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Footnotes

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Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott, Volume Five, The International Missionary Council, New York, Association Press, 1947. pp.12,13,19.

The Edinburgh Conference was composed of the eight Commissions:

Commission I, Carrying the Gospel to All the non-Christian World

Commission II, The Church in the Mission Field

Commission III, Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life

Commission IV, The Missionary Message in Relation to non-Christian Religions

Commission V, The Preparation of Missionaries

Commission VI, The Home Base of Missions

Commission VII, Missions and Governments,

Commission VIII, Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity

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Published by Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, Edinburgh and London, and the Fleming H. Revell Company New

York, Chicago and Tronto. In this paper all unspecified page numbers are taken from this book.

*3

John R. Mott expressed the commitment of all eight Commissions when he wrote; “the world’s evangelization is a divine enterprise, ... the Spirit of God is the great Missioner” *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, vol. v. The International Missionary Council, p.25f.

A summary of the Commission I discussion with notable quotations:

(1) A sense of **urgency** enveloped the commissioners. The Introduction to the entire report opens with these words: “It is a startling and solemnising fact that even as late as the twentieth century the Great Command of Jesus Christ to carry the Gospel to all mankind is still so largely unfulfilled” (p.1). Under the heading “The Opportunity and the Urgency of Carrying the Gospel to All the Non-Christian World” Part I begins with the words: “The study of the reports of hundreds of discerning missionaries has convinced the members of the Commission that the Christian Church has at the present time a wonderful opportunity to carry the Gospel simultaneously to all the non-Christian world, and they are also profoundly impressed by the urgency of the present situation.” (p.5)

(2) Though the “*non-Christian religions are losing their hold on certain classes*” (p.11), there is **resistance** to the Gospel. “*In some parts of the world the non-Christian religions are attempting to adapt themselves to modern conditions, and are manifesting increased activity, enterprise, and aggressiveness*” (p.13f).

(3) Missionary engagement in the non-Christian world is hampered by the **corrupting influences of western civilization**. “The missionary forces cannot win the non-Christian world for Christ until Christian nations and the new world movements of all kinds are more thoroughly permeated with the spirit of Christ.” (p. 25).

(4) This is the moment to **ask the great question**: “The great question with reference to all of these countries is, Shall they be dominated by Jesus Christ and His religion or not? Is their new civilization to be cast in Christian or in pagan moulds? Unless the principles and spirit of Christ do shape the new civilisation it is sure to become materialistic and rationalistic” (p.28). The commissioners understood that their time was the critical time, *kairos*, in which the non-Christian world was to decide between the “pure religion” of Jesus and paganism.

(5) Education is reaching great masses in the non-Christian world by government initiative. However, **modern secular education** excludes Christian teaching. “In China, ‘Science without Christianity’ is the watchword of many students”(p. 29). Secular education is “one of the greatest menaces to the Christian faith, and in many respects the greatest obstacle in the way of carrying the Gospel to all the non-Christian world” (p. 31).

(6) The commissioners recognized the growing spirit of **nationalism** in the non-Christian world. “Since the war between Japan and Russia there has been, in all parts of the non-Christian world, a growing spirit of nationalism and, associated with it, a spirit of racial pride and antagonism” (p.32). “This national and racial

spiritwill have much power to hinder or to facilitate the spread of Christ's Kingdom" (p. 33). "Pure Christianity should be brought to bear at once in order to help to educate, purify, unify, guide, and strengthen the national spirit" (p. 35). "Christianity is universally indigenous and will bear its richest and most abundant fruits in any soil where it is not choked by the weeds of error or falsehood" (p. 35).

(7) The spirit of humanity is **moving towards Christ**. "In all parts of the Turkish Empire and in Persia since the recent revolutions, there is a widespread spirit of enquiry, as shown by the unprecedented demand for the Scriptures" (p. 40). The commissioners understood that the world was basically open to the message of Christ.

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The number "187 million" is taken from Eric Hobsbawn *The Age of Extremes* p.12, 1994

*5

"To become aware of the secularity of God is to relativize the religious institutions as special and exclusive mediations of the Sacred", Michael Amaladoss, *ibid.* p.75

*6

Evangelism: "The Madras Series" 1938. Chapter IV, "What is Evangelism? A Symposium of Views Collected by J.R.Mott" p.53f. Here are fuller quotations of Edinburgh 1928, Jerusalem 1928, and Tambaram 1938:

"The chief aim [of the Christian proclamation] must ever be to persuade human hearts everywhere that Jesus Christ is their Saviour, standing ready in an attitude of love, compassion, and power, to realize to them, upon condition of repentance and faith, all that the Gospel promises to do for a soul that receives it" (p.312). "Our message is Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of what God is and of what man through him may become. In him we come face to face with the ultimate reality of the universe; he makes known to us God our Father, perfect and infinite in love and in righteousness; for in him we find God incarnation, the final, yet ever unfolding revelation of the God in whom we live and move and have our being. ... Christ is our motive and Christ is our end. We must give nothing less, and we can give nothing more" (Jerusalem 1928).

"The core of evangelism is the presentation of the Gospel – the Christian message that God loves mankind and has sent His Son into the world to save men through the life, death and resurrection of His Son and the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. The Gospel concerns the individual. .. The Gospel likewise and equally meets the social needs and problems. ... It is a whole Gospel – personal first and social always. A Christian social order is to be achieved by Christians. The new world comes through new men and new women. There can be no new world without new world builders" (Tambaram 1938).

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Eds. Gaudencio Rosales, C.G.Arevalo, S.J., *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Documents from 1970-1991* p.144

*8

ibid., p.342

*9 “Salvation is therefore not necessarily linked to a religion but to the human community, to building up communities of love, justice and freedom, which Christians call the Kingdom of God” writes the Jesuit J. Mattam. *Mission Studies*, Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies, 1992, p.151.

*10 Mott writes: “He has been working through the non-Christian religions, not alone in using such truth as they may possess for the betterment of men, but also in making these religions a schoolmaster to lead the peoples to recognize in due time their need of Christ.” *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*. p.26

*11

Kazo Kitamori, *Theology of Pain of God*, 1946

*12

Mission Studies, vol. 23.1995, p.87.

*13

Donald Senior, Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, p.340

“The Bible , then, is not primarily a collection of a-historical truths to believe in, e.g., the Trinity, the divinity-humanity of Jesus, etc. ... Nor is it primarily a collection of moral laws to follow in order to find personal salvation” , Carlos H. Abesamis, “Some Paradigms in Re-Reading the Bible in a Third-World Setting, in *Mission Studies*, Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies, Vol. 13, 1990, p.21f

*14

Quoted in *The Ecumenical Movement, An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. by M.Kinnamon and B.E.Cope, p.403.)

*15

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*16

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*17

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*18

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*19

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*20

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* 21

“We have to discover transcendence as the depth or roots of the cosmos and of the human”, Michael Amaladoss, “Mission in a Post-Modern World, A Call to be Counter-Cultural” in *Mission Studies, Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies*, Vol. 25/26, 1966. p.75.

*22

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*23

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*24

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*25

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*26

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