



The
Story
of the
Reformed
Church
in
America

A PEOPLE IN MISSION:
THE SURPRISING
HARVEST

Eugene Heideman

The Heritage and Hope Series of the
Reformed Church in America

Focus Three: Missions

**A PEOPLE IN MISSION:
THE SURPRISING
HARVEST**

by
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FOREWORD

A People in Mission: The Surprising Harvest is the third in a series of sourcebooks offered to members of the Reformed Church in America through the Heritage and Hope Curriculum. The intent of Heritage and Hope is to provide educational resources to supplement the regular and ongoing educational ministry of congregations. The Reformed Church in America, having a long-term commitment to world ministries, has in this sourcebook a caring analysis of the dynamics and issues which have been present in world ministries.

While the major focus of this sourcebook is upon world ministries outside the limits of the United States, some references are made to mission on the North American continent particularly as that mission was struggling with issues similar to those in overseas missions. A future focus of Heritage and Hope will more explicitly tell the story of mission on the North American continent.

Dr. Heideman has provided not only historical information, but has done so in the context of those issues which have been at the core of the mission movement during various periods of history. With enthusiasm, he focuses the reader's attention upon not only the problems but also the possibility in world mission, not only the unmet expectations but also the surprising results. He enables us to see why world mission continues to be an important issue for the RCA.

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CHAPTER 1: THE VISION OF THE HARVEST

"And he said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'" (Luke 10:2)

The Vision

The story of missions always begins with a vision of the harvest. Such visions are given by God. Human beings who implement those visions are caught up in matters greater than they can understand. As a result, they do things which are in some cases courageous, in other cases heroic, at times tragic, and sometimes almost laughable. God uses these people as missionaries in his fields around the world. Their work often produces a surprising harvest quite different from their own expectations. They are forced to recognize new possibilities, even where such opportunities seem far beyond their own resources.

In 1864, the vision of the harvest was present among the Dutch settlers of Holland, Michigan. They gathered together on the shore of Black Lake, an inlet from Lake Michigan, to lay the keel of a missionary ship which was to carry missionaries and missionary supplies to all parts of the world. With the leader of the colony himself, Dr. A. C. Van Raalte, presiding, the citizens of the colony gathered for a service of dedication at which the keel of the ship was officially laid. The great Reformed Church missionary in China, Rev. J. V. N. Talmage, gave the address. This ceremony was in keeping with the resolve of the Dutch colonists, who since 1851 had been seeking to fulfill their resolution to use fifteen per cent of their church money for foreign missions and fifty per cent for domestic missions. Rev. Philip Phelps, Jr. had written an eight-stanza poem for the occasion, the third stanza of which reads:

Hasten on the work of Hope
Hope will soon be sight;
In expectant vision's scope
There is full delight.
See the strong ribbed sides outstand,
See the masts arise,
See the eager sails expand
Beauteous to our eyes.¹

However, the keel of the ship never touched the water. For many years it bore silent testimony to a zeal and vision that produced the first surprising harvest of a plan ill-advised. But that keel, laid with such pomp and ceremony, was not laid in vain. Even while over the next several decades the keel lay decaying, scores of graduates of nearby Hope College went out in service abroad.

In laying their keel, the Michigan settlers had accepted the vision of the "Father of the Reformed Church in America," John H. Livingston. In 1804, in New York City, Livingston preached a missionary sermon which was reprinted throughout New England. In that sermon, he stated that a careful study of the Book of Revelation in connection with the date of the establishment of the Papal power (which in his opinion represented the reign of the anti-christ), leads to the conclusion that the millennial reign of Christ will begin in approximately the year 2000 A.D. For the two hundred year period between 1800 and 2000 A.D., he had a vision of a church on fire for missions which would go out to the ends of the earth in preparation for the coming of the Lord.

We are compelled . . . to look forward for the accomplishment; and are now reduced to the short remaining space of two hundred years. Within this compass there can be no mistake. At some point of time, from, and including the present day, and before the close of two hundred years, the angel must begin to fly in the midst of Churches and preach the everlasting Gospel to all nations, and tongues, and kindred, and people in the earth . . . This time, we believe, is arrived.²

Livingston's chronological calculations about the day of the coming of the Lord may seem rather presumptuous. Nevertheless, we cannot help but be impressed by the harvest which has come out of his dream. His vision combined with that of other persons to lead young people to offer themselves for service in China, India, and Burma. One can credit the important role played by the Reformed Church in America in the modern missionary movement to the vision of Livingston.

Yet Livingston was not alone in his vision of the harvest. Four years earlier, in the year 1800, Rev. Peter Stryker had urged the Reformed Church to open up new mission lands in the western frontiers of the emerging nation. He called upon Reformed Churches to support mission work among the settlers in western New York State. Within the next sev-

eral decades, churches were begun in Virginia, Kentucky, Ontario, Michigan, Ohio, and even Illinois. Stryker wrote,

The Lord in the course of his Providence is opening a large field in the Western Territory for the Extension of his Church and the Spread of his Gospel . . . The Period is not far distant when the Fullness of the Gentiles shall come to the Knowledge of divine Truths as they are revealed to us . . . to insure to Thousands and Millions all temporal, Spiritual, and heavenly blessings.³

The vision of Peter Stryker was not shared by everyone, however, for some feared that the beginning of new churches on the frontier would endanger the Dutch-language tradition of the Reformed Church. Others feared that missionaries such as John Schermerhorn, with their zeal for evangelism, would compromise the doctrine of predestination by teaching a revivalistic doctrine of free will. Those who simply wanted to preach the gospel to the unconverted were often surprised that their vision of the harvest resulted more in theological and ecclesiastical controversy than in the establishment of new and growing churches. Yet it was through their vision that the church grew and that their followers developed a Reformed Church base for missions.

The Missionaries in the Fields

During the Revolutionary War, John Livingston had preached a sermon in Dutchess County, New York, in which he set forth his missionary vision. A German drummer boy, who had been taken captive in the war, heard the sermon. That boy was to become Rev. Christian Bork, pastor of the Franklin Street Reformed Church in New York City. One of the members of that congregation was to be Dr. John Scudder, the first Reformed Church missionary to India. In the Scudder family, the vision of Livingston was to reach epic proportions.

One day Dr. John Scudder read a tract written by Gordon Hall and Rev. Newell, missionaries to Bombay, entitled "The Conversion of the World, or the Claims of the Six Hundred Million." The authors of this tract maintained that it is the duty of the churches to plan and to send out missionaries to furnish the means of instruction and salvation to the entire world. They showed that the whole world could be reached if each missionary sent would reach 20,000 persons and if the churches would send 30,000 missionaries. To accomplish this task, each congregation in every seven year period was to educate a youth from its membership to be a missionary. John Scudder read and reread the tract with its tales of the millions in Asia who had to suffer and die with no doctor and no knowledge of a loving savior.

It was like a lightning flash from heaven. He heard the call, 'Come over here and help us!' Falling on his knees, he cried, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Silent, but emphatically, something said to him, 'Go and preach the gospel to the heathen.'⁴

Just at that moment, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Boston needed a pious physician for India. John and Harriet Scudder offered themselves for service, and taking their baby with them, sailed for Calcutta on June 8, 1819. They soon encountered the high personal cost of missionary service: their baby died on the way. From Calcutta, they moved to Jaffna, Ceylon, where they were blessed with eight sons and two daughters, all but one of whom were to become missionaries in the Arcot Mission of the Reformed Church.



Dr. John Scudder and his wife Harriet.

In 1836, the Scudders left Ceylon, moving to Madras, on the eastern coast about four hundred miles from the southern tip of India. While working there, John Scudder searched for a new area to proclaim the gospel. Locating such an area, about ninety miles inland, three of the Scudder sons along with their father and three native elders met near the town of Arcot on May 31, 1853, and officially formed the Classis of Arcot. By virtue of that action, not only was the missionary activity of the Reformed Church established in that land, but natives of India became members of the Protestant (Dutch) Reformed Church in America. That Tamil and Telugu-speaking Indians would become members of an American church of Dutch extraction surely is a surprising, perhaps even miraculous, harvest of missionary proclamation. The Reformed Church in America was pleased. The General Synod noted:

We cannot but rejoice that our brethren there have now an ecclesiastical organization of their own, and that the standards of the Reformed Dutch Church have been set up in the heart of Eastern India. Let us hope and pray

that around it multitudes of the now degraded worshippers of Brahman may gather, delivered from their idolatries, converted to the faith of Christ, and prepared to do good service in extending the conquests of the Church.⁵

Since that small beginning—one family settled among the three million people in that district—the Reformed Church in America has continuously supported missionaries with the vision of teaching all the people of an area to know Jesus Christ as Lord.

Even before the Scudders began work in Arcot, another young man, David Abeel, who graduated from New Brunswick Seminary in 1826, had become the first missionary to be officially supported overseas by the Reformed Church in America. He too had been influenced by Dr. Livingston. While in his teens, he had experienced an awakening to his own sin and guilt and allowed Dr. Livingston to probe his heart and lead his penitent soul to resign itself to the mercy of Christ. From that time on, David Abeel constantly asked himself, "How can I be of greater service in the cause of my Master?" He served for two and one-half years in the Reformed Church of Athens, New York, and even while he was impressing the people of that community with his deep piety, he began "to consider the claims of the heathen" upon his life. He wrote:

The dreams of heathen countries and missionary labors often possess my imagination; though, while God continues to bless my labors, I must remain in the field of my present exertions.

In general, I have no inclination to be encumbered with a family. At present, my mind is entirely willing to leave all my friends; and live, and labor, and suffer, and die in a land of strangers.⁶

In 1829, David Abeel suffered a breakdown in health so severe that he was forced to give up his pastoral duties in Athens. He offered himself for service in the Seaman's Friend Society with the understanding that he would serve on a ship sailing to Canton, China. Upon his arrival there, he would work among the seamen in that harbor. Then after working one year for the Society, he intended to remain in the Orient as a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which was a cooperative missionary society supported by Presbyterian, Reformed, and Congregational churches. Abeel had a broad vision. His spirit comes through clearly in the words he wrote in his diary:

My ultimate object, as they were informed, was the introduction of the Gospel within the extensive unevangelized regions of Eastern Asia. My present employment will afford me, not only a safe residence among that benighted and strongly prejudiced people, but also the means of such information, as may originate some practical plan of evangelizing this populous nation. After preaching one year in the service of the Seaman's Friend Society, I shall probably visit the Islands of the Eastern Archipelago, ascertain the best means of introducing religion, and devote myself as far as possible to its dissemination.⁷

In these words from his diary, we sense what nineteenth century missionaries felt about people overseas: that they were benighted heathen, living in superstition and ignorance. The missionaries knew also how urgent it was that the Gospel be preached to the large populations of those lands.

They were also mission strategists, planning for those missionaries who would follow them. They surveyed broad geographical areas, searched out places where there was access to interior areas of Asian countries, and established stations and residences which would serve as a base from which they could deploy in carrying out their missions in the fields.

In the nineteenth century foreign missions was one aspect of a much wider cultural and political movement. The missionaries followed European, British, and American political and commercial interests. They sailed on the ships of merchants and settled where western influence was strong enough to allow missionaries to live in safety. In the nineteenth century, when people believed that western nations were Christian nations, the close relationship between the Christian faith and political influence was accepted without question. In the second half of our twentieth century, we have become much more conscious of our own weaknesses and of the oppressive ways of "colonialism." Now many people are disturbed about the possibility that international missions be used as a means of extending western influence over underdeveloped areas of the world. We will look at this issue in greater detail in later chapters.

In 1834, Abeel's vision brought the Reformed Church in America into a close relationship with the Netherlands Missionary Society's work in Bornea. In that year he visited the Netherlands and made arrangements for Reformed Church missionaries to be accepted by the Dutch Government in the East Indies. In 1835, he visited many churches in the United States and awakened a great interest in the proposed work in Borneo. One graduate of the 1835 class at New Brunswick Seminary and three graduates of the 1836 class, Jacob Ennis, Elihu Doty, Elbert Nevius and William Youngblood, together with their wives sailed from New York on June 7, 1836. They were joined by Azubah C. Conduit, who was the first single woman to engage in foreign missionary work. She served as an "assistant missionary." The nature of the sacrifice of those early missionaries is illustrated by Elihu Doty's diary notation dated June 9, the day they actually left New York harbor.

. . . but in consequence of very slight and variable breezes did not pass the Hook until 6 o'clock P.M. Here the Pilot left the ship and by him we had once more the opportunity of forwarding letters to friends scattered abroad in the land so near our hearts, but which we shall, probably, see no more.⁸

From its beginning the Borneo Mission was characterized by an international and ecumenical flavor, a flavor that became typical of Reformed Church missions. Doty's journal reflects the spirit of close coop-

eration with other missions and with government. He reports his first day on land, August 15, 1836:

We met with a kind reception by the American Consel and Mr. Forrestier to whom we had letters. Thence we proceeded to the missionary residence of London Missionary Society and received a most hearty welcome by Mr. Young and were much cheered by unexpectedly meeting with Mr. Lockwood and Mr. Hanson of the Episcopal Church in America and Mr. Barnstein, the German missionary, who has visited the Dyaks of Borneo and has made a covenant of peace by blood.⁹

The Reformed Church continued to support missionaries to Borneo until 1849. However, very soon after their arrival, several of the missionaries experienced poor health and therefore eventually were compelled to leave. The ties with the Dutch government did not, on the whole, encourage the progress of the work and the anticipated financial and other support was not forthcoming from that quarter. In 1844, the Doty and Pohlman families were transferred to China. When in 1849 the health of missionaries Thomson and Steele failed, they had to return to the United States. Though they made an appeal for reinforcements at New Brunswick Seminary and in the churches, they gained no new recruits. Therefore, the mission in Borneo was abandoned as the Reformed Church turned its eyes toward China, where Abeel had been since before the "Opium War."

David Abeel seems to have paid little attention to the great political changes taking place around him. So caught up was he in his visions of proclaiming the gospel throughout the Orient that he said little about political issues. Seeing the hand of God in all things, he accepted the political gains of the West as a means which God was using to open doors to the preaching of the gospel.

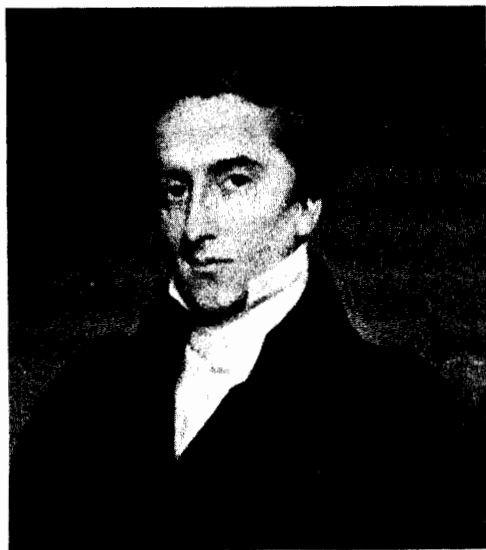
In 1839, he was in Canton when what became known as the "Opium War" broke out. Relations had been strained between Great Britain and China because Chinese rulers regarded themselves as superior to others while Europeans insisted upon international dealings on the basis of equality. Moreover, Chinese rulers believed that the whole community could be held responsible for a crime committed by one of its members. As a result, when a Chinese citizen was killed at Hong Kong by a British soldier, the Chinese authorities took a number of British sailors into custody and imprisoned them, even though it was not clear who had committed the murder. At the same time, when the Chinese refused to legalize the import of opium and tried to take action against the foreign smugglers, the British insisted upon opening China's doors to foreign trade, including the import of opium. Even though missionaries did not favor the use of opium, their sympathies in the war were on the side of the British. The war ended in the humiliation of the Chinese rulers and the opening of five Chinese ports to foreign traders.

Rather than dwell on the moral issues of the case, David Abeel saw the opening of the ports as the opening of China to the gospel. He went to

the port of Amoy and began a Reformed Church mission which continued until 1951, when the Communists brought the mission to an end. He wrote:

I have reason to thank God for bringing me to this place. It appears like an excellent opening for missionary labor. It is the very sphere I have desired and prayed for many years. This appears more like the beginning of missionary work in China, than anything I have yet seen.¹⁰

Abeel lost no time in beginning the work in Amoy. Within a month he had settled into a house, made his first visits into the streets of the city and established contact with the leaders of the city. Where previously he had been scarcely noticed by the Chinese authorities, they now began to invite him to dinner, providing transportation in sedan chairs. The naval commander of the province, the governor-general, and leading intellec-



David Abeel

tuals now came to call on him. Even though Abeel was suffering from the illness which within a short time would lead to his death, he labored all day long conversing with his visitors. His only regret was the shortage of fellow missionaries and the failure of Americans to

offer themselves a living sacrifice on the altar of missions. Fields the most extensive ever opened to the Christian church, now inviting the messengers of Christ to enter; the prayers of many answered in the most striking manner; and yet, scarcely any giving heed to these clear indications of Providence; very few responding to the Heavenly Call, 'Here am I, send me.'¹¹

Within a short time, Abeel was joined by several Reformed Church missionaries, including Rev. Elihu and Mrs. Eleanor Doty and Rev.

William and Mrs. Theodosia Pohlman, who came from the earlier Reformed Church work in Borneo. Thus began the Amoy Mission in China.

Political changes in the world also forced Japan to open its doors to the gospel. In 1854 Admiral Perry sailed an American fleet into Tokyo Bay and thereby forced Japan to open its eyes to the outside world. By 1859, a treaty had been signed between the United States and Japan which allowed Americans to live in Japan and practice their own religion. The Japanese, however, were not allowed to become Christians.

In the fall of that year, two Episcopal, one Presbyterian, and two Reformed Church missionaries arrived to become the first Protestant missionaries in Japan. In a previous century, Roman Catholic missionaries had been active and converted a large number of people. However, their vigorous proselytizing had provoked a reaction, resulting in the Japanese banning the practice of Christianity. Japanese authorities erected large "edict boards," like modern billboards, on which it was written that any Japanese person who embraced Christianity was liable to the death penalty.¹²

Guido Verbeck, one of the two Reformed Church missionaries, was forced to live quietly among the Japanese. He learned their language and gained the confidence of some of the people. The Japanese regarded him with suspicion, believing he had come to seduce the masses from their loyalty to their country and to corrupt their morals. The lower classes regarded him with less suspicion than the community leaders. He did manage by 1872 to found a school and to baptize a government official, Wakasa Murata, who had previously found a Dutch New Testament floating in the harbor. In a remarkable way, Wakasa Murata had learned the contents of that New Testament even before he sought out the missionary. In 1866, with the shutters of his house closed and five persons present, the first Japanese convert was baptized. After 1873, a greater measure of evangelistic activity was finally permitted by the Japanese authorities, and regular missionary preaching in Japan began.

From the very beginning of Reformed Church missionary activity in Japan, missionaries built their efforts on schools for the young people of Japan. In 1870, while most of the restrictions against Christianity remained in force, Miss Kidder opened Ferris Seminary, the first school for girls in Yokohama. Meiji Gakuin in Tokyo, and Steele Academy and Sturges Seminary in Nagasaki were also established in the 1870's. Graduates of these schools began to settle throughout the country, resulting in scores of churches founded within a couple of decades. Even while establishing schools, missionaries in Japan always had the planting of churches as a primary goal. They toured throughout the islands, preached, and distributed literature. In the twentieth century, the vision of spreading the gospel to every person in Japan received a new impetus when Albertus Pieters developed a method of newspaper evangelism. He

placed ads explaining the gospel and invited the readers to correspond with him. Thus, in an era when Japan was still suspicious of matters foreign to its own land and religion, was developed a method of evangelism that allowed the Japanese to learn about the gospel without exposing themselves to personal contact and public notice.

In the nineteenth century, John G. Lansing, Professor of Old Testament at New Brunswick Seminary, had the vision of sending missionaries into Arabia. This dream seemed impossible to implement for no religion had shown itself to be so opposed to Christian missionaries as that of Islam. To preach the gospel in the very heart of Islam, in Arabia, appeared to many as sheer effrontery. Yet the vision of their Professor Lansing caught the imagination of three students, Samuel Zwemer, James Cantine, and Philip Phelps. And so, in 1890, Zwemer and Cantine went to the area of the Arabian Gulf. They traveled in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and finally stayed for a time at Aden, where the Keith Falconer Mission of the Church of Scotland was located. From there they sailed to Muscat, then up the Persian Gulf to Bahrain and finally to Basrah, where they visited an English doctor who had been a member of the Church of England mission in Persia. In Basrah, the two young men settled in a small house and opened a little Bible shop in the bazaar. They traveled up and down the river in a long, narrow, flat-bottomed boat and sold their Scriptures and tracts. They also took with them a medicine chest and dental forceps, and began to develop a medical practice which disarmed suspicion and enmity among the inhabitants of the land. Thus began the tradition of touring and engaging in medical practice, the combination of which was to be so important to Reformed Church missions in the Middle East.

By 1892, Zwemer decided to open another missionary station, this one halfway down the Persian Gulf on the Island of Bahrain. The people there were known to be fanatical and hostile. Zwemer knew that recently they had roughly treated Bible distributors employed by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In spite of the suspicious attitude of the populace, Zwemer hoped that he could count on a favorable attitude of the ruling authorities. In the Fourth Arabian Mission Field Report, one reads Zwemer's analysis of his choice for beginning work at Bahrain.

“. . . Baherein (sic) is an independent State, under English protection, and governed by an Arab Sheikh. The population of the island is about 50,000—all pure Arabs except a few Persians and sixty Banian merchants. There are no Turks . . . Contrary to expectation our visit was welcomed, and there was no special difficulty in obtaining permission to reside on the island at the town of Menameh for a time.¹³

In going to the Arabian Gulf area, Reformed Church missionaries had demonstrated that mission strategy does not proceed simply by analyzing situations around the world and going where the greatest number of

potential converts reside. The missionary does not seek out only those who are most sympathetic to the gospel, but goes wherever human beings reside in order that each nation may have the opportunity to hear the gospel.

A number of mission stations were opened in the Gulf area. A school for rescued slave boys captured by British officials who were attempting to break up the slave trade from Africa was opened in Muscat, followed by a dispensary there and a hospital in neighboring Matrah. Another hospital was opened at the other end of the Gulf in Kuwait. Teams of ministers and doctors went into Saudi Arabia with the gospel and medical help, "with the Bible in one hand and a bottle of quinine in the other." All of this work went on, not because the people of that area were becoming Christians, for they continued to adhere to the Muslim religion, but simply because each generation has a right to hear the gospel, irrespective of how previous generations in that area have responded.

Meanwhile, in the United States during the nineteenth century, the Reformed Church was concerned with domestic missionary activity. A Board of Domestic Missions had been established for the purpose of planting new Reformed churches throughout the growing country. For most of the century, work among the American Indians was kept under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Missions agencies, especially the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Near the end of the century, however, a change took place when in 1895 the Woman's Executive Committee of the Board of Domestic Missions (later renamed the Women's Board of Domestic Missions) accepted under its care a missionary to the American Indians.

The Reformed Church mission to the native Americans in the western plains began under quite different circumstances from conditions in other parts of the world. It received its call through several young Indians who claimed to be already Christian. Dr. Harsha, a minister in Omaha in 1879, one morning read that some native Americans had been arrested and charged for vagrancy. With a certain sentimental interest in them, he went to visit them in a fort where they were imprisoned. Almost before he began to speak, one of the young Indians interrupted him with a fierce gesture, "We do not need the Bible. We and our fathers have been Christians for many years. We do not need the Bible; we need justice. We are Poncas. Have you heard of the Poncas?" Dr. Harsha shook his head. The Indian went on, "Then hear us and give us justice. If you are a good man give us justice."

It was out of the impression made by this tale of woe and injustice that in 1894, when he had become pastor of Second Collegiate Church in New York, Dr. Harsha was moved to suggest that an Indian evangelist, Frank Hall Wright, a Choctaw, be called to be a missionary among the American Indians. Wright, well-educated and sophisticated, had shrunk

from associating with his own race even while feeling the call to minister to them. Now he accepted the challenge, although his doctors told him he would never live to reach his field. He was suffering from tuberculosis. The tales which come to us of his work and return to health match in courage and romance anything coming out of Asia. At first he was despised and rejected by the Indians in Oklahoma. One reads of how he traveled long distances on the plains, walked, rode his horse, or rode in his pitching wagon. Finally he settled where the government had placed some incorrigible members of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe tribes. The Cheyenne word for white man was "Coyote," referring to that animal's habit of sneaking silently into camp at night to devour everything they could while the campers were asleep and helpless. The Arapahoe proverb was short and scathing, "Whiteman—liar."

Wright, however, slowly won their respect. He talked with the Indians and finally won the right to promote Christianity among them. The Cheyenne leader put it this way:

We think it is good for the children. They must live in the white man's houses, they must dress in the white man's dress and talk the white man's talk. It is best that they also learn about the white man's God. But we live in the Indian way and we hold by the Indian gods. For us you can do nothing. We are better as we are.¹⁴

Such are the beginnings of missions in the nineteenth century. It is a story of heroism and courage, made possible in a time when the white men were dominant in the world. They were settling in new lands. Their ships sailed the seven seas and opened ports to trade and to western influence. In the minds of the missionaries, it was clear that God was using these economic and political developments as a means of opening the world for Christ.

The Evangelization of the World in this Generation

As we have recalled the stories of how the pioneer missionaries of the Reformed Church saw the vision of fields "white unto harvest" and of how they began their work in the face of great hardships and opposition, it has become apparent that they sensed the urgency of the missionary task. Their hearts went out to the hundreds of millions of persons who had no opportunity to hear the gospel. They left family and friends, accepted great personal risks, and entered lands which did not wish to welcome them. Their spirit was typical of the dedication of many other missionaries of the Reformed Church and other churches of Europe and the United States, who with John Scudder had great plans and visions of reaching the six hundred million.

In 1910, missionaries and Christians from all over the world gathered in Edinburgh, Scotland, to plot strategy for the future of missions. A great missionary statesman, John R. Mott, gave an address entitled, "The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation." That address sum-

med up the attitude of these Reformed Church missionaries who believed that it was possible and necessary that each person be confronted at least once in his or her lifetime with the message of Jesus Christ. Such confrontation must not be a "hit-and-run" tactic in which evangelists run hither and yon dropping tracts and making incomprehensible speeches. Rather, such evangelization of the world should be done systematically and comprehensively and should use the resources available and use language that can be easily understood by those who hear. Mott refused to be caught up in controversies about how many would be converted or in debates about the differences among the denominations. He believed that in each generation the whole church must cooperate in the urgent task of proclaiming the whole gospel to the whole world.

Since 1910 much has changed. But the challenge placed before the churches by John R. Mott remains God's call to each generation. Churches have often lacked wisdom; missionaries have made many mistakes. Politicians have used Christian missions for selfish ends. In what follows we will note some of the problems encountered and errors made by churches and missionaries in the last two centuries. We will see how the churches have been forced to pay more attention to the sins among their own membership and how they have been forced to recognize their own errors. Nevertheless, God cannot wait for the North American and European churches to become righteous and mature before sending his Spirit to the people of the world. Every generation in the world urgently needs to hear the gospel.

CHAPTER 2: MISSIONS IS MORE THAN MISSIONARIES

"Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord." (Rom. 16:12)

When we talk about the urgency of the world mission of the church, we can easily lose our perspective. The heroism of nineteenth century missions can so fascinate us that we can be tempted to believe that the story of missions consists solely of heroic stories about missionaries. We want to hear that missionaries, against great odds, remain dedicated, brave, and hard-working. We want to know that they have brought persons to conversion and have healed, educated, and fed the poor and starving peoples of the world. In hearing these stories, we can feel proud. And we can reassure ourselves of the power of God unto salvation and the goodness of our church and country.

New Christians Bringing Converts

Missionaries seldom work alone. They know that proclaiming the gospel effectively depends upon persons who understand well the culture and society in which they witness. Therefore, upon entering a land, they immediately begin to look for native citizens who love the Lord and are ready to join in the missionary task. In many cases, the real missionary hero stories are the accounts of these early converts who in turn tell others about Jesus Christ. For example, Rev. Elihu Doty, missionary to China writes in a letter dated Sept. 15, 1857 about two such persons. The first, an elder named Chhou Gian, was baptized in 1855 at the age of 56. He had been the leader of a professional theater group that journeyed from town to town giving performances. When he became a Christian,

he gave up the worship of idols and left his profession, relinquishing his worldly security. He spent his time talking about Christ and leading the small Christian church, which in turn made him an elder and paid him five dollars per month. The letter states others began looking to him for leadership, and that he discharged his office with "care, wisdom, and efficiency. The local widows look to him to secure justice and effect reconciliation in matters of dispute."

The same letter tells of a second elder in the same area. Gui Bun Hown was baptized in 1855, at the age of thirty. He had been thoroughly schooled in Buddhism, was proud of his attainments, and secure in his family. When he became a Christian, he lost his village property and met with much opposition from his father. Nevertheless, as he continued to witness about his faith, several others came to Christ. As an elder, he was soon noted for his clear and accurate judgment, and for his pastoral visitation among the widows. Unfortunately both of these elders died, within several days of each other, the first of unknown causes, and the second of typhus. Doty writes of them with deep respect, almost regarding them as Christian martyrs whose labors for the Lord made them susceptible to disease.¹

In India, the Scudders knew that without the efforts of local citizens, it would be impossible for them to carry out their mission. In accordance to the plans which they formulated for the Arcot Mission, they immediately looked for ways to develop local leadership for the church. Their constitution stated:

Appreciating the impracticability of evangelizing the millions of India through an exclusively foreign agency, as well as the importance of early transforming Christianity from an exotic into an indigenous and self-propagating institution, the Mission adopted measures for the immediate founding of educational establishments, in which native youths of both sexes might acquire thorough equipment to serve both as aggressors on heathenism and as conservators and cultivators of spiritual garden-spots, wherever such should be reclaimed from the dismal wastes of Paganism.²

The Scudders in India wasted no time developing local leadership. By 1859, just six years after the official founding of the Arcot Mission, a young Indian with the Christian name of Andrew Sawyer was ordained into the Christian ministry in a great ceremony in the town of Chittoor. The ordination itself was understood by the local Hindu population as a witness to the truth of the gospel, for, as was reported, "though they may have no regard for the truth, (they) have a thorough respect for Andrew Sawyer who proclaimed it."³ For many years thereafter, Andrew Sawyer's reports appear alongside those of Reformed Church missionaries in the official reports. A portion of his 1870 report is typical of his work:

I have with a few assistants preached diligently in the villages near Gnanodiam. I have also toured within a circuit of 15 miles, reaching 4,406

persons in 121 villages and distributing 256 books. Many express a wish to become Christians, but are kept back by the great obstacle caste.⁴

Missionaries in Japan also recognized this dependence on the efforts of local Christians. In 1880, just a few years after the removal of the "edict boards" proclaiming the death penalty against Japanese Christians, one reads in the Board of Foreign Missions report about one Mr. Ito, who has been serving so effectively as an elder in Mishima, about fifty miles south of Yokohama, that he cannot be released to continue his theological education which would enable him to become an ordained minister. The 1881 report confirms the decision not to interrupt his work, for it states that he held six services every week, two in each of three villages, and began work in twelve other places. He baptized twelve persons and reported eleven more candidates for baptism as well as fourteen additional inquirers. Not only was he effective as a preacher and evangelist, but also he established a connection with a cotton factory that enabled indigent Christians to support themselves and even to work under arrangements that permitted them to rest from their labors on the Sabbath Day!⁵

Meanwhile, an even more remarkable story was emerging in the Japanese town of Uyeda. Mr. Suzuki, one of the members of the Yokohama church went to visit his relatives in Uyeda in 1875. While there, he talked about Jesus Christ. One of his friends, Mr. Inagaki, became a Christian. This was not Inagaki's first contact with Christianity. He had previously been in the capital and heard the preaching and teaching of the missionaries Thompson, Ballagh, and Stout. It was Suzuki, however, who actually persuaded his friend to become a Christian. Mr. Inagaki in turn taught Suzuki's sister the essentials of the faith and led her to be baptized. Suzuki had also spoken of the Japanese Temperance Society. Inagaki opened a chapter in Uyeda. Three times a week, the seven founding members met at his home to study the Bible. This society helped those who suffered alcoholism, most notably one Mrs. Kojuna who was baptized shortly before she died. Finally, in August a year later, a missionary, Rev. E. Miller, went to Uyeda with a young Japanese theological student, Mr. Maki. Together they examined the candidates for baptism and held a preaching service attended by more than seventy-five people, eager to see the foreigners. Miller's report of the conclusion of the visit indicates both the growth of the faith in that place as well as the desire of the people for the pastoral care of a fellow citizen. They planned to leave at 3:00 A.M.

Not many congregations are there, who would leave their beds before daylight, to say farewell to a pastor whom they had known but ten days. The thirty who had come, included some who were not then believers; but who have since avowed their love to the Saviour, though they have not yet been baptized. We are comforted in our going, that we were able to leave as an efficient substitute as Mr. Maki. He remained at the urgent request of the people until the end of September.⁶

This account of Miller's visit illustrates that the role of the missionary differs greatly from the traditional one of the lonely missionary evangelist who is the first to preach the gospel in a pagan land. Miller had the role of a supporter of evangelistic work carried out by the Japanese themselves. Where the Indian missionaries spoke of their local colleagues as "native helpers," here it is the missionary who is the pastoral helper rather than the leader. The early Indian missionaries believed that the call to evangelize the Arcot District belonged to the Reformed Church missionaries, who employed Indian assistants. At Uyeda, Miller, despite his believing his role to be exactly the same as that of the Scudders in India, came as an assistant to and teacher of a congregation that in effect already existed. While there, his role was that of an ecumenical figure, pointing out to the new Christians how their understanding of the Bible was related to that of other Christians, especially regarding the proper way of celebrating baptism, the Lord's Supper, offering private prayer, and singing Christian hymns. By the time he left, this group of new, but isolated, Christians knew themselves to be in the one holy catholic church, part of an international communion.

The Missionary as Ecumenical Assistant

Not always is the missionary a pioneer. Often a missionary is sent from one church to help another in its mission. Such a person can be called an "ecumenical assistant." The model of missionary as ecumenical assistant to local Christians has been particularly exemplified by Reformed Church missionaries in Mexico. In the early nineteenth century, Presbyterian missionaries had made several attempts to begin work among the Indians in Chiapas. There were a few converts, but the missionaries soon had to leave. About 1920, missionaries from Guatemala crossed the border and visited a town named Mazapa. There an Indian chief, Pablo, accepted the gospel. Through his influence the good news spread rapidly. The Indians of his tribe became a missionary people, spreading the gospel in the native tongues and holding worship services in Spanish. Meanwhile, in the southeastern tip of Chiapas, Guatemalans coming to pick coffee on the Chiapas plantations introduced the gospel. The resulting group of believers requested a leader from Mexico City. The Presbyterian Church in Mexico sent the Rev. José Coffin to Chiapas in 1920. Then in 1925, Rev. John and Mrs. Mabel Kempers, just married, were invited to join Coffin and became the first Reformed Church missionaries in Mexico.

In 1926 the Mexican government did not welcome foreign clergymen; it did not permit Kempers to perform any priestly functions, such as administering baptism and the Lord's Supper, conducting weddings, or other activities of an ordained minister. When he arrived, Kempers found that the church was already functioning under the leadership of Rev. Coffin. Within a few years, with three more national pastors com-

ing from the Mexican church to assist in giving pastoral care, the Kempers served in cooperation with the local churches and national pastors, preaching and counseling in the churches, printing and distributing literature, and organizing and leading an Institute to train local leadership. Each week, local Christians fanned out along the mountain trails, leading worship services in isolated areas, selling Scriptures, and preaching the good news to all who would hear.

After awhile, a difference of opinion developed between Coffin and Kempers. Coffin was of Mexican and Scottish-American parentage, an ultra-staunch Presbyterian, somewhat suspicious of the Reformed Church in America. Aware of the tense revolutionary situation in Mexico, he discouraged any move to the interior areas. Knowing the value of prudence, he felt it wise to allow the gospel to move quietly in the area, winning converts one by one. Kempers was less patient. The missionaries toured considerably into the mountain areas, proceeding on a donkey, along the mountain trails, constantly meeting natives who longed to



Francisco Sanchez, minister and trail companion, Juan.

know more about the gospel. Garold Van Engen, of the second Reformed Church missionary family in Mexico, caught the spirit of the believers living the faith in their isolated areas when in 1944 he wrote:

As we traveled from congregation to congregation we could not help but marvel at the fact that they continue to hold services when they have so few people and so little to work with. It certainly shows their loyalty to their faith. Many of the congregations are visited only once a year by a minister. The question that came to my mind was whether or not I would have been loyal if I had not had a regular minister. Time after time their loyalty and devotion causes one to cross-examine oneself.⁷

From the beginning, the Reformed Church missionaries in Mexico have been in the position of helpers of the church rather than directors of the church. Because of the government's insistence, the Presbyterian

Church in Mexico became self-governing in 1925. Reformed Church missionaries have never been voting members of the church in ecclesiastical meetings. They are allowed to be advisory members without the right to vote. Apparently, that relationship is a fruitful one, for few churches have grown so rapidly as has the church among the Indians in Chiapas, where the goal remains, *Chiapas para Cristo*—"Chiapas for Christ."

The Growth of Churches in Mission

Missions is more than Reformed Church missionaries. It is the story of people of every nation who hear the gospel and begin to share it with others. It is the account of how churches begin and grow, and about how those churches carry on the task of proclaiming the gospel to the people of their own generation. When such churches grow, missionaries serve in and with them carrying out the Great Commission.

North Americans have often been more interested in sending missionaries than in hearing about the churches which have sprung up under the preaching of the missionaries. We feel a sense of accomplishment, perhaps even of superiority, when we hear the stories of missionaries working among the poor and the lost. Stories of the accomplishments and zeal of the people in those lands can make us feel rather unnecessary, perhaps somewhat ashamed of our own lesser dedication, and even uncertain about the value of our own accomplishments. During the past several decades, these reactions have caused considerable confusion about missionary work, for those who think that missionary work consists almost exclusively of sending and helping missionaries are often discouraged by there being fewer missionaries today than in previous decades. We need to realize that native believers are doing the work done previously by missionaries from North America. Churches now thrive in lands where missionaries have worked. Therefore, more evangelism and Christian activity is going on in these lands than ever before.

As missionaries became conscious of how new converts became effective evangelists and church members, they came to a new understanding of the church. At the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the responsibility for missions and church extension was understood to be that of the civil authorities in Christendom. The church was to be the worshiping community where the word of the Lord was preached, the sacraments administered, and ecclesiastical discipline maintained. In the seventeenth century, the church began to send missionaries, but the church defined itself in terms of a gathered community. Rather than as a people reaching out to others, "missions" were placed where the church was not yet present. When the church was established, the mission came to an end.

While missionaries worked with people like Andrew Sawyer, Ito, Suzuki, Chhou Gian, and Gui Bun Hown, the vision of the relation of church and mission changed. They were not separate, for the mission be-

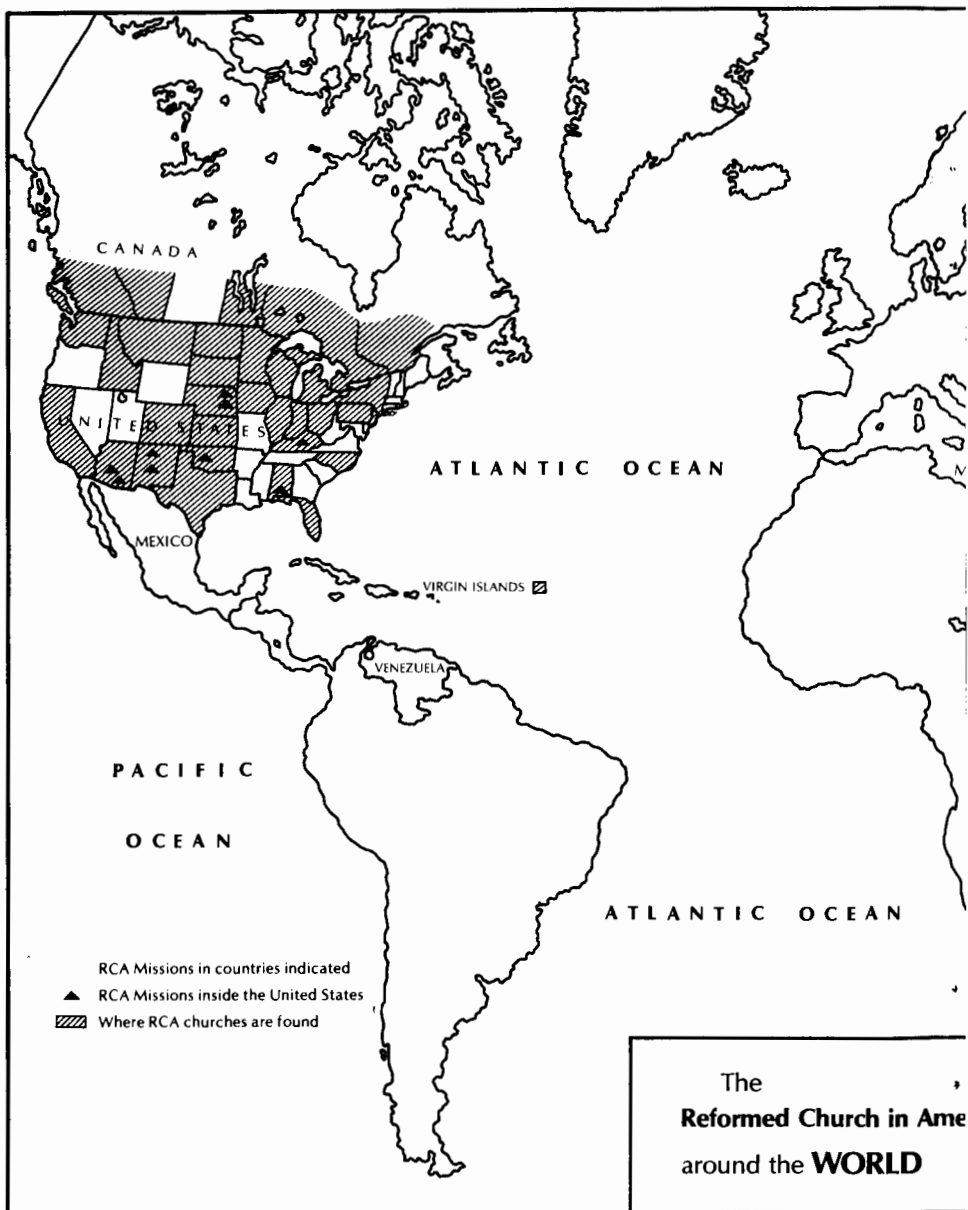
gan to take root and when the church itself became the missionary, many more accepted the gospel. As Emil Brunner put it, "The church exists for mission as fire exists for burning." When this viewpoint is accepted, one no longer concentrates attention upon the work of a few foreign missionaries, but rather on what in each generation churches in each land are doing and can do to carry out the urgent task of the evangelization of the world.

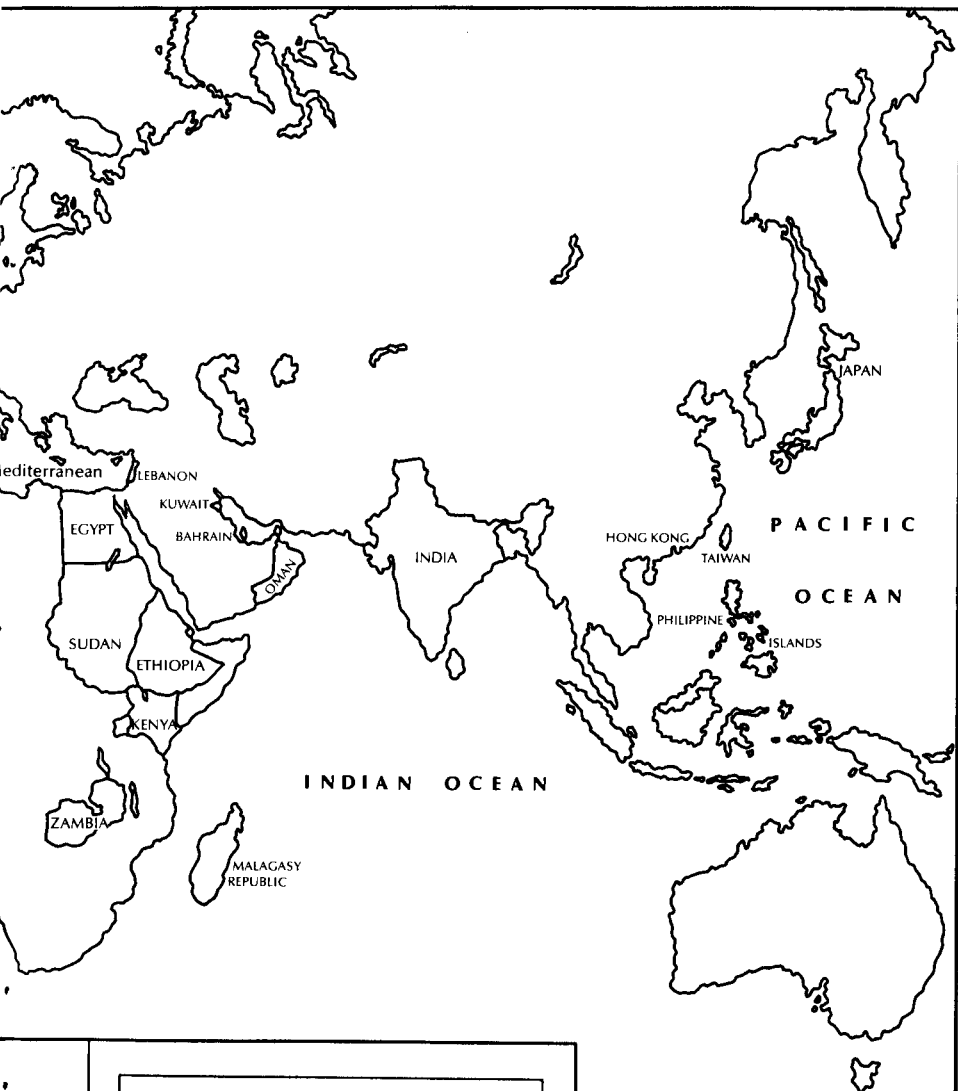
In the remainder of this chapter, we want to fix in our consciousness the important role churches in various lands have played in the missionary task. One can gain some understanding of the church's growth by following the statistics presented by Reformed Church missionaries in India. In 1864, at the end of the first decade of work, members of the church numbered 853. Twenty years later there were 5,405 members. In a review of the later growth, one discovers that between 1908 and 1918 the membership of the church nearly doubled, from 9,828 to 18,635. As the twentieth century went on, the growth began to be more integrated with that of other churches, therefore it became more difficult to know exactly which persons to count as members of the Arcot church. However, shortly after the various Indian churches merged to become the Church of South India, one discovers that more than 1,500,000 people in the four southern states are members of that church. Moreover, the reason given for the merger is that it would make the church more effective in evangelizing India. Its constitution says:

The Church of South India . . . believes that the Holy Spirit has guided the Churches into this union in order that the work of evangelization may be the more effectually fulfilled, in accordance with the prayer which Christ prayed that by the unity of His disciples the world might know that He had been sent to be its Saviour. Therefore the Church of South India purposes ever to be mindful of its missionary calling, and prays that it may not only be greatly used of God for the evangelization of the Gospel but may also take its due share in the preaching of the Gospel and the building up of Christ's Church in other parts of the world.⁹

In evaluating what is happening around the world, it is easy for an American church to become trapped by its own publicity and by what it is ready and wants to hear. Because churches in North America support certain missionaries and special projects, the reports about what is happening elsewhere are interpreted in relationship to those particular interests. Yet the most important events are often ignored; only now and then are glimpses of the work of members of churches overseas seen in their proper perspective by North American Christians.

For example, for a period of over twenty years, each Sunday afternoon in Vellore, India, a Mr. D. P. Amos, teacher in Voorhees High School, held a worship service for the inmates in the state prison and talked with the men on death row. Because he did this without financial support from outside, the reports of his work did not go overseas. Yet occasionally one did hear what happened in that jail. On one occasion, a





This map, which shows the RCA at work around the world, can be used most effectively in conjunction with other materials about RCA Missions prepared by the Office of Promotion and Communication.

murderer, waiting out his time on death row, was so angry that he attempted to bite the jailor who brought the food. One afternoon, Mr. Amos talked to him and left a Bible. The man read the Bible, talked with Mr. Amos on succeeding Sundays, and on the Sunday before his execution was baptized by the local pastor.

Other stories come out of India. A Christian school teacher who lived in a village where there were no other Christians, talked about Christ for over twenty years without a convert. Then one day while in the Hindu shrine, the local Hindu priest had a vision of Christ. Because of that vision, he believed that the people of his area must become Christians. He went to the Christian school teacher for help, and together they went to a nearby pastor. Meanwhile, people in six villages began to build churches. At that point the bishop of the Church of South India in Madras and an American missionary were asked to assist the new Christians by supplying an evangelist who could give pastoral care as well as aid in teaching up to three thousand new converts to understand the Bible. One heard further of a local pastor and his wife who ministered to lepers. Within a few years, more than one hundred persons were baptized. Fifteen more villages had Christians residing in them.

Reports came out of other lands. In 1954 an article appeared in *The Church Herald* about Mr. Aoyama, a railway worker in Japan who after the Second World War had become so ill with tuberculosis that the doctor had told him there was no hope for his recovery. His local pastor visited him and also cared for his family. Mr. Aoyama began to enjoy new health, found his faith also being restored, and began to study the Bible and other Christian books. His own doctor, who had been a skeptic, made a confession of faith in Christ, and after finishing his own medical rounds, gathered interested patients together for a Bible study.⁹

At about the same time, another report came out of Akobo in the Sudan. Lee Crandall, the Reformed Church missionary there, reported that within three months after twenty-five new followers had entered it, new life had come into the Akobo church. In analyzing why this had happened, he pointed to the fact that the six elders of the church had been gathering together for devotions every Friday morning and then witnessing two by two to their own people. Moreover, three young men, two from the Anuak tribe and one from the Nuer tribe, had overcome tribal differences and were working together encouraging people to come to Christ.¹⁰

Since 1954 much has happened in the Sudan. Reformed Church missionaries were expelled by 1964. Yet the church of that land continued to grow, thanks to the zeal of local Christians who have recognized that the church itself is mission and that in each land and in every race, God calls local people to carry out that mission as members of his church. During the fifteen years since the Reformed Church missionaries were expelled, the number of congregations in that area of the Sudan has grown from seven to one hundred fifty.

Today, throughout the world churches exist whose number of members far exceed the total number of missionaries in the nineteenth century. In Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Singapore, Mexico, Venezuela, and the countries of the Middle East one finds Reformed Church missionaries. But in every case, they are working with a church that has inherited the missionary tradition of the nineteenth century. Scudder was influenced to go to India when he read a tract that called for 30,000 missionaries in Asia and Africa. The number of persons engaged in mission in those lands today far exceeds that number, for many members of churches in those countries regularly bear witness to the faith. Those of us who live and work as members of the Reformed Church in America know that it is possible with the numbers we have today to fulfill the missionary task of evangelizing the world in each generation. What is needed is faith to take up the task and wisdom to carry it out with maturity and integrity.

CHAPTER 3: MISSIONS IS NOT A CAMPAIGN BUT A WITNESS

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" (Acts 16:9)

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the churches of Europe and the United States were becoming aware of the masses of people in the world who had never heard of Christ. It was the end of the age of exploration and the beginning of the industrial revolution. The western world was beginning to feel the power of technology. Christianity, education, science, a rising economic standard of living, and the beginnings of modern medical care, combined with political peace in Europe, were united in the hands of northern Europeans and Americans. Christianity, civilization, and culture belonged to these persons. When western people looked south and east, they saw paganism, poverty, and barbarism oppressing Africa and Asia. A feeling of superiority was linked with an attitude of compassion in the hearts of western humanity.

The Macedonian Call

Two metaphors struck responsive chords. The "heathen races" issued a "Macedonian call" for help. The western world sent its missionary armies to conquer the forces of evil. Missionary-minded churches sang:

From all the dark places of earth's heathen races
O see how the thick shadows fly!
The voice of salvation Awakes every nation,
"Come over and help us," they cry.

The kingdom is coming, O tell ye the story,
God's banner exalted shall be!
The earth shall be full of his knowledge and glory
As waters that cover the sea.

The sunlight is glancing O'er armies advancing
To conquer the kingdoms of sin;
Our Lord shall possess them, His presence shall bless them,
His beauty shall enter them in.

With shouting and singing, and jubilant ringing,
Their arms of rebellion cast down,
At last every nation The Lord of salvation
Their king and redeemer shall crown!¹

The combination of the Macedonian call with the metaphor of armies advancing was exactly what the churches of western nations wanted to hear. The call justified their presence among the heathen, for they came by invitation rather than by invasion. They justified their strategy with military language. They mounted a vigorous campaign designed to conquer the kingdoms of sin, thus delivering the lands from error's chain. In the words of one favorite missionary hymn, we have no right to withhold the blessings of salvation.

Shall we, whose souls are lighted with Wisdom from on high,
Shall we to men benighted The lamp of life deny?
Salvation! O salvation! The joyful sound proclaim,
Till earth's remotest nation has learned Messiah's name.²

These metaphors inspired people of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the greatest efforts the missionary movement has known. Seldom has there been such an outpouring of charity, good will, heroism, self-sacrifice, and mercy among those who were scarcely known and even less understood. With the best of intentions, multitudes of simple believers in the west gave of their resources to lift up the sick, the hungry, the oppressed, and the uneducated. Our generation can but be humble before them and pray that we may have for our times a vision as great as theirs.

Certain elements in their vision led to a surprising harvest. One result of their formulation of the theology of missions is our generation's being unsure of the validity of international missions and confused about whether an affluent world still needs missionaries. We who live after the Viet Nam conflict are less sure of our nation's superior morality; we who struggle with an energy crisis no longer have the satisfaction of sending old eyeglasses to the poverty-stricken world of the middle east. In this and succeeding chapters, we will trace what has been happening to the missionary endeavor in such a world. We will search for a new song with metaphors appropriate to our time.

Missionaries of the nineteenth century were considered suspect by colonialist traders and governments. Merchants suspected that missionaries

would be too solicitous of the needs of the local citizens, too concerned with compassion to permit the making of profits, and too zealous in preaching the gospel to permit the maintaining of convenient alliances between pagan rulers and western powers. However, in spite of mutual suspicion, the missionaries and the merchants needed each other. The missionaries needed the power of the merchants and military people in order to keep the ports open and the ties with the homeland. The merchants needed the missionaries for the religious needs of their own subordinates and often for assistance in dealing with the local populace.

From the beginning, missionary strategy was described in military terms. The great pagan nations of Asia and Africa, bastions of rebellion against God, had to be "occupied" for Christ. Missionary reports were filled with details about "stations" established as outposts in "occupied areas." Mission "fields" were not simply "white unto harvest;" they also were to be filled with missionary soldiers of the cross moving in accordance with Christ's orders. Moreover, the missionary movement was a great campaign, fanning out to the ends of the earth. Victory was certain.

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

From north to south the princes meet
To pay their homage at His feet;
While western empires own their Lord,
And savage tribes attend His word.³

The Three-Self Theory

Missions became the success story of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Reports of converts poured in. Churches came into existence. By the middle of the nineteenth century the strategists began to ask how long a mission would need to remain in any one place. People wondered when the missionary task would be finished. Although in retrospect we can see how closely their conclusions paralleled those of colonial political theory, their basic position continues to influence our thinking to this day.

Between 1826 and 1856, Dr. Rufus Anderson served as secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Board under which Abeel and Scudder began their work. Anderson's theory of missions had enormous influence upon the Reformed Church's missionary policies. While many persons believed that missionaries should be sent to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, few persons were specific about the goals to be reached by their preaching. In contrast with those who believed that people had to be "civilized" before they could receive the gospel, Anderson held that one must not confuse the gospel

with western civilization. He believed that one must preach the atoning work of Jesus Christ, and that the social consequences of that preaching would then grow in the lives of the believers and their descendents.

Anderson believed that there must be specific goals in missionary work. He knew that foreign missions should not be kept permanently dependent upon the whims of governments in order to remain safe and to gain permission to work. He realized too that foreigners were at a disadvantage in preaching the gospel because they could not be adequately familiar with local languages and customs. His solution, consistent with the congregational and presbyterian or reformed polity of the American Board, was to limit the objective of foreign missionaries to establishing a local and indigenous church which in turn would take over the responsibility for mission in its area. When the local church became "self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating," the foreign missionaries could leave that particular field and move on to another as yet "unoccupied" territory. When local churches had been established and had become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating in every area of the world, the foreign missions movement would be at an end.⁴

Anderson's "three-self" theory remained one of the guiding lights of Reformed Church missionary theory almost to the present. In 1958, for example, the report concerning Mexico still included a clear statement of his theory.

While the Church in Chiapas is self-governing, with missionary counsel, it is by no means self-supporting. Long stressed as a goal, self-government will call for considerable emphasis in the years ahead. With more and more pastors to officiate in the churches, with lay workers to help in rural areas, and with the converts, as always, imbued with the spirit of witnessing, the Church becomes to a large extent self-propagating.⁵

Anderson's theory represented a noteworthy advance in missionary thought and missionary strategy. It gave missionaries a specific goal and provided a place and function for converts to Christianity. Missionary interest in the western world often centered on the missionaries. However, the missionaries themselves knew that their attention had to be concentrated on the development of the local church and the recruitment of members for that church. They recognized that the missionary was one who should "work himself out of a job." The successful missionary was the one who so labored and developed local leadership that upon retirement indigenous leadership would be ready to carry on the task at hand.

Missionaries who worked in accord with Anderson's principles respected local customs and culture, insofar as these did not directly conflict with the gospel. They moved quickly to plant the new faith deep into the soil. In its *Constitution*, the Arcot Mission looking to the speedy establishment of the church, provided that wherever there lived three or more families who were Christian, a catechist should be placed among

them, a building erected, and a regular worship established. There was eagerness to ordain some Indian men as ministers and to form an Indian District Council. The Mission society was kept separate from the church in order for the church to mature, thus enabling it to take on the functions exercised formerly by the Mission.

Western Christians of the nineteenth and early twentieth century lived secure because they believed that their own churches with their creeds and ecclesiastical structures were based on scriptural models. The missionaries had a feeling of confidence derived from their creeds and structures having stood the test of time. Even while respecting the need for the development of "native churches" and indigenous expressions of Christianity, missionaries took for granted their belief that their own denominations were models of Christian maturity. They provided the models against which a church in Asia and Africa could be measured to see if it had met the standards of "self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating." Later they were surprised when local Christians in Asia and Africa began to question the biblical basis for western models and when they began to ask whether westerners were in fact the best judges of Asian and African maturity.

The western model of maturity was applied to Asian and African churches in the establishment of an educated and ordained ministry, evangelism and church membership, and finance. When people became Christians, it was essential that adequate structures be developed in order to maintain their life together in the church. Both missionaries and new converts had little regard for the pagan institutions in those lands. Therefore, their natural and unexamined choice was to place the familiar ecclesiastical structures into eastern life. For example, the Classis of Arcot was organized as soon as the Scudders established their work in that area. Within six years the first Indian had been ordained as a minister and made a member of the Classis of Arcot of the Protestant Dutch Reformed Church in America. The missionaries to China also were impressed that Reformed polity was well-suited to the needs of that land. In their 1861 report they wrote:

We continue to hear of the remarkable adaptation of our system of Church Government to the Chinese sense of propriety. In their profound veneration for age, they can appreciate as our American Churches are hardly prepared to do, the advantages of entrusting the government to 'the elders or eldest.' This tendency seems to stand in the way of their accepting *young* men of their own nation as their pastors. But the eldership, sustaining and counseling the pastor, will guarantee the Chinese against all fears from youthful experience.⁶

As churches were organized, they called ordained pastors to lead them and elected consistories. The 1863 report from China told of two ordained pastors.

They have full charge of the Churches, whose pastors they are. They preside at the consistory meetings of their respective Churches and along with

the Elders decide who are to be received, and who are not. The Consistories thus constituted, exercise discipline also, sometimes after consulting with the Missionaries, and sometimes without such consultation. These Native Pastors administer the Sacraments, using translations of our Church Forms.⁷

Developing ecclesiastical organization with ordained ministers entailed the growth of financial organization as well. The ministers were paid a salary at local rates, a salary intended to give adequate support to the pastor, yet not so high as to make it impossible for the churches to be financially independent of the Mission. As one element in the decision whether the group of worshipers should be formally organized into a church, local Chinese congregations debated whether they could support a pastor. In the Amoy area in 1863, each pastor was paid twelve dollars a month. In that year, the congregations were self-supporting, the First Church in Amoy having raised \$376.12, the Second Church \$215.00 and the Chioh-be Church \$113.21. At the year's end, the first two churches had a surplus.⁸

As the churches developed in each mission field, the missionaries kept the three-self theory in mind. In a sense they saw themselves as mid-wives, helping to bring a new church into life. As congregations became self-supporting and self-governing, the missionaries felt free to move on, to open stations in order to occupy new districts, propagating the gospel wherever they went. They looked forward to the day when the churches in that land would be numerous enough and sufficiently strong to be able to self-propagate by sending out their own missionaries, thereby making the foreign missionaries superfluous. In spite of many problems, the last half of the nineteenth century was a glorious time for missions. By 1867, American civilization and Christianity had won the respect of the pagans. The Board of Foreign Missions was optimistic.

Finally, American Christianity has never before occupied so high a position in the esteem of the nations as at present. The magnificent illustration of true Christian virtue made, through the Lord's grace, by the Church of the United States during these years, has won for us the respect, confidence, and love of the nations. Men everywhere regard us as friends, and look to us for instruction.

Grace is our responsibility at such a time as this.⁹

Weaknesses of the Three-self Theory

Valuable though the three-self theory was during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, ultimately it proved to be inadequate, as all human theories do. Today, some of the confusion about international missions stems from the many persons who continue to think about missions as a great western campaign, a campaign which will result in self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting churches. In order that we

may develop a more adequate understanding of the urgent missionary task, we shall now note some of the weaknesses in the theory.

By 1950, events in each of the Asian areas had brought into focus the weaknesses of the nineteenth century theory. The Chinese Communists taking over the South Fukien in 1949, resulted in the Mission there holding its last meeting in that year. Some stayed on under the Communists, but by early 1951 the last Reformed Church missionaries had been forced out. Dr. Henry A. Poppen, one of the last to leave, had been subjected to a grueling mass trial and ordered deported. As the Reformed Church missionaries, along with the missionaries of all other churches, were expelled from China, the country which had been the cornerstone of the modern mission success story was closed. Because of a new set of political circumstances, doors which had been forced open by western traders and navies now were closed.

The Chinese church had to go underground. For three decades, all contact between the Chinese churches and the western churches was cut off. Only now, as this is being written, is it becoming possible to talk to individual Chinese Christians who have lived through the modern Communist period in China. Christianity has survived in that land. Many have been faithful through a time of great stress. Yet it is too early to have any idea of what may be in store for the Christian faith in China; what is clear is that western notions of superiority are no longer appropriate for any future presentation of the gospel in China. Missions cannot be a campaign; rather, Christians will be called upon to give a humble witness for Christ.¹⁰

The close relationship between the three-self theory and colonial theory became particularly evident through developments in India. In 1947, India became an independent nation, no longer a colony of England. The long, hard struggle for independence included much discussion about whether India was ready to govern itself. The British saw the problems of India, looked at its leadership, and decided that the nation was not yet ready for self-government. Indian leaders such as M. K. Gandhi and Nehru took the position that the only way a people can learn to govern themselves is through governing themselves. No nation may be allowed to keep another people in permanent colonial bondage.

A parallel discussion was taking place in the church. In 1947, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Congregational churches merged into one great Church of South India, with almost 1,500,000 members. It was divided into fifteen dioceses, each under its own bishop, and saw the propagation of the gospel throughout the south Indian peninsula as one of its great purposes. Its leadership was well-educated and experienced. Indian Christians believed that they were mature, having all the marks of the church as stated in Anderson's theory. Westerners were less certain. They saw that much remained to be done. They knew what life was like in Indian villages. They were not certain that the Christian churches were any more ready to be totally independ-

ent than was the nation. One of the problems inherent in Anderson's theory became apparent: the theory, rooted in a colonial attitude, assumed that the western statesmen and missionaries would recognize the moment when a nation and a church could be considered mature. Human nature is such, however, that the child always feels mature before the parent recognizes it. Westerners were far too sure of their own maturity to be trusted to make judgments about the maturity of others.

Fortunately, the differing opinions about the maturity of the Indian church were resolved without undue conflict or crisis. There were some tense moments between 1947 and 1965 as organizational changes took place. To an outsider, the issues appear complex. In India, the church had been technically independent for many years. In the Arcot Area, the Arcot Mission, consisting of the Reformed Church missionaries, had been in charge of various educational, medical, and social institutions, while the South India United Church had dealt with ecclesiastical matters. A large coordinating committee composed of missionaries and Indian leaders had provided the means for allowing the Arcot Mission and the church to work in close harmony. From the missionaries' point of view, this arrangement made possible mutual respect for each other's abilities and independence. However, from the Board's perspective in New York, the stronger financial base of the missionaries allowed the Mission to dominate the local church. A new theory was needed.



A Vellore Seminary graduate teaching in a dispensary.

The Search for a New Slogan

International missionary circles had set forth a new slogan, "church-to-church relationships." Overseas missions should no longer function as separate organizations, for if so the missionaries acting as a body would continue to exercise too much power in relation to the church overseas. Henceforth, according to the Board decision, relations between the Reformed Church in America would take place between the New York office and the church in India, the Mission cease to exist, and missionaries function organizationally only within the church structures. Most missionaries disagreed with this decision. Although they accepted "church-to-church relationships" in theory, they saw that the advice of the New York office could be as overpowering as was that of the Mission: western money and prestige in New York was no less powerful than when in the hands of a missionary. Moreover, because the staff in New York is so far from the scene, it may make less sensitive decisions than a group of missionaries intimately involved on the scene.

Then the real issue emerged: how Christians in the western nations, which in the 1960's were at the height of their powers, could work as equal partners with Asian and African "younger churches," churches where members had far less financial power and on the whole somewhat lower educational levels. It was always possible for subtle colonial and racial attitudes to emerge and when they did so, they gave the appearance that the younger churches were still immature. Everyone agreed that the ideal was equal partnership; however in practice such was difficult to achieve. Thus, a whole series of new slogans emerged. Seeing that "church-to-church" partnerships often allowed a North American church to dominate, many advocated that the churches operate in a way similar to the United Nations, in which international aid organizations would serve as intermediaries between nations. As early as 1947, missionary leaders in a conference at Whitby, Ontario, Canada had called for a "joint partnership in obedience," in which western churches would pool their resources and make these available to the younger churches. Under such arrangements, those who gave would have no direct relationship to the churches using the gifts, thereby guaranteeing the independent thinking of the younger churches. This solution was not without problems. On the one hand, Christian missions seemed to consist of impersonal giving to impersonal budgets. On the other hand, a new set of ecclesiastical bureaucrats administering budgets began to exercise a new kind of control.

And so, after an international conference in Mexico City, where people spoke of "mission on six continents," another approach was tried. In an attempt to get away from the superior/inferior overtones of thinking in terms of "sending/receiving," of "older/younger," of west and east, of "home base/foreign field," it was emphasized that in every continent there is much missionary work to be done. All of the churches of the world should make available to all other churches those gifts which are

needed to fulfill God's missionary purposes. When the whole world is to be evangelized in each generation, all six continents are mission fields. The slogan, "mission on six continents," had the advantage of breaking through all colonial tendencies present in the earlier attitudes. In practice, however, it was difficult to implement the envisioned international exchange of resources.

One can surmise that a reason for the latest slogan's lack of appreciation is that North Americans continue to believe that other nations rather than their own need foreign missionaries. However much we may bemoan the backsliding ways of North Americans, we continue to believe that we have the resources, ingenuity, and wisdom to solve our own problems. We need no assistance from others. We would feel insulted if persons from Asia and Africa would have to come here as missionaries. Any suggestion that persons from those nations help us deal with problems of evangelism, justice, and race are met with incredulity, if not open hostility.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century missionary work grew in a context where western education, economic standards, and technology were superior to those of other nations. In the last two decades, when Asian nations such as Japan have become affluent and technologically advanced, the urgency of missionary proclamation seems to have diminished. No longer is it acceptable to give to the poverty-stricken people of those lands. When Arabian oil began to flow, the mission hospital became outmoded as great new hospitals were built by the nation's own



The city of Kuwait.

governments. The three-self theory, designed to help us relate to less developed areas of the world, no longer serves adequately in lands that can compete economically and politically with our own.

At the end of the 1960's, one more event shook the confidence of the western world. The war in Viet Nam called into question the assumption that western morality was superior to the morality of others. In 1867, the Board of Foreign Missions could report that our responsibility was great because American Christianity was the most respected force in the world. By 1967, American Christianity was under attack as being imperialistic, racist, and reactionary. The reports coming out of Viet Nam and Cambodia caused many Americans to search their own souls and to draw back from the international scene. Cognizant of their own weakness and sin, they questioned whether they had any right to send American money, soldiers, politicians, or missionaries overseas. Perhaps the time had come for American missionaries to come home, to stay home, and to deal with American problems, for this nation appeared to be the chief of all sinners. American campaigns overseas were dangerous to the health of the human race. What was needed was a prophetic witness at home. Denominational budgets were adjusted to meet the North American problems. The inner cities of America received more attention; the numbers of missionaries overseas declined rapidly. It seemed as if Anderson's theory had led to a whole group of independent churches in other lands, and simultaneously to North American isolationism.

Not everyone agreed with the trends of the 1960's and 1970's. Attention was called to the almost three billion of our generation who have yet to hear the gospel. Many Christians refused to believe that the world had changed so much since the nineteenth century. They continued to feel that America is a great nation with the duty of evangelizing the world and resisting the advance of communism. They longed to hear from missionaries who would tell them about primitive tribes in jungles who had never heard the gospel. They supported the faith missionaries who worked with nineteenth century confidence and zeal in areas not yet overwhelmed by the advance of western technology. By sending the gospel to them, the urgent task of evangelism could be fulfilled even while one had the satisfaction of hearing the "Macedonian call" which came from those less fortunate than ourselves. Even while denominational missions suffered from the uncertainties brought about by the ambiguities of their own success, faith missions were booming as American Christians sought means of assuring themselves that they had not yet lost the vision.

Our chapter began with a portrait of confidence in ourselves and our mission, and with the songs that we have sung. It ends with much disagreement, conflict, and confusion. We have heard some telling us that missionaries must stay home; others are saying that we must redouble

our efforts to send as many missionaries as possible; the time is short. In the following chapters, we will examine several of the issues facing us today, in order that we may properly participate in the fulfillment of God's mission.

CHAPTER 4: MISSIONS MUTATING

"Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, 'The one who showed mercy on him.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.' " (Luke 10:36-37)

From Preaching to Service

From the beginning of its involvement in modern missions the Reformed Church in America has accepted Anderson's thesis: the heart of missions is evangelism through the simple preaching of the gospel to people who have not previously heard it. The Arcot Mission in India summed up this position in the first article of its Constitution:

Believing that the teeming populations of India can, without any educational or other preparative human instrumentality, be readily reached and affected by the direct preaching of the Gospel in their vernacular tongues, and persuaded that the way to the triumphs of Christianity could most effectually be prepared by its public proclamation, the missionaries of the Arcot Mission resolved to make it their paramount duty to go into the streets of the towns and villages throughout the district, and persistently and patiently preach Christ and Him Crucified, as the alone hope of lost sinners.¹

This constitutional statement's implication that the gospel was best disseminated by means of oral preaching and the distribution of literature, tracts, and the Scriptures is clearly illustrated by the Scudders' work during their first two years in India. Trained in both theology and medicine, they began their work in the Arcot District by opening several small roadside medical dispensaries near the towns of Arcot and Vellore. However, in the first official report of the Arcot Mission presented after the first two years, they state that they have closed the dispensaries because

the government opened two clinics, one at Chittoor and the other at Vellore. The government's taking over responsibility for the health of the people, relieved the missionaries of that responsibility and freed them to go back to their first priority—preaching and distributing literature. They sold the medical equipment, and put the proceeds in the book and tract fund.

By taking the position that preaching rather than medical or educational missions was central, the Scudders differed from the approach of the British missionaries in India, who followed Alexander Duff's theory that education should be primary. In Duff's opinion, western Christian education was the dynamite that would explode the ancient structures and practices of Hinduism and bring the Indian nation to Christianity. The British colonial forces permitted the Christian missionaries to establish Christian schools for educating Hindus and paid the teachers in those schools. The Scudders believed Duff wrong, saying so in the first article of the Constitution, and showing their convictions by refusing at first to establish schools and by ending their medical work.

In view of their clear position, the work of the Arcot Mission went through an ironic mutation. One hundred years later in Vellore, the great Christian Medical Hospital and College, established by Dr. Ida Scudder, was the greatest medical institution in India. It had over one thousand beds and was to India equivalent to what the Mayo clinic was to the United States. At Ranipet, three miles from Arcot, stood a two hundred bed hospital also begun by the Scudders. Located nine miles away and closely related to the Christian Medical College was the leading leprosy hospital in India. In addition, there was a hospital in Madanapalle and several smaller dispensaries nearby. The district contained four high schools, two teacher training schools, one college, and innumerable elementary and boarding schools along with an agricultural farm, a men's and a women's industrial institute, and a theological seminary. All were directed by the church or the Arcot Mission or both. An examination of how this happened can help us to understand what it means to be a missionary church and why missions so often go through such surprising mutations.

The missionaries in India and China discovered that they could not afford to ignore the needs of the convert. Those who entered the faith often faced the opposition of their own relatives and rejection by their own people. It was believed important that converts be able to read the Bible for themselves and that their children be taught to read it. Therefore, schools were established. At first these schools in India were restricted to the children of believers, with but few other children given permission to attend. The Mission in China followed a similar policy. Its 1859 report states:

These schools were established expressly for the benefit of the children of Christians. Yet we formerly received a number of others whose parents requested of us such privilege. By experience we found that the children of

heathen parents were usually an injury to our schools. At the beginning of this year we decided to reject all except those whose parents or other near relatives were members of the Church or attendants on public worship. By this course the character of our schools has been improved.²

As time went on, the mission schools evidenced a threefold purpose: to bring youth under the influence of the gospel; to provide Christian education; to prepare an educated leadership for the church.³ These three purposes at times led to conflict. Those who emphasized the first naturally viewed the schools as evangelizing and civilizing agencies open not only to the children of Christians but also to those of pagans. The second and the third purposes led people to attend primarily to theological and biblical matters, and to the needs of Christian children. Moreover, the missionaries at times did not fully agree with the local Christians concerning the curriculum. One can note reports of 1872 dealing with what happened when such conflicts arose, as missionaries in China tried to accommodate themselves to local feelings and yet felt satisfaction when their own instincts were vindicated.

The Second Church at Amoy, therefore, proposed to take the responsibility of the school on themselves, and employ an experienced teacher, though a heathen. They fancied their school would thus be made much more efficient than it could be by the young man partly paid and employed by us, who had only been taught in Christian schools, and was endeavoring to carry out our notions . . . we thought it would be better that they should try the experiment, than that we should ask them to yield to our views, while any considerable number of them were feeling dissatisfied. . . . The school degenerated so rapidly that long before the half year was up they paid off their heathen teacher, and requested us to restore to them the former one, and take the whole management of the school ourselves. We did so, and again it is our most efficient school.⁴

By 1870, schools for girls had been established in India, China, and Japan. These schools developed because the cultures of those lands did not favor placing boys and girls in the same school and the Woman's Board took an interest in female education. Yet, in this support for female education, there remained a certain male bias. As the 1872 report from China put it,

Another of the boarders is to be married soon to one of our helpers. This will probably be one of the most important advantages of the school. It will furnish suitable wives for future helpers.⁵

Despite the theory that evangelization was to consist largely of the preaching of the gospel and the distribution of literature, events in Asia were conspiring to force the missionaries to develop a multifaceted ministry. That the responsibility of those who preach the gospel includes a concern for the needs of those who hear it gladly and for the instruction in the faith of those who desire to learn more became apparent. Since God is sovereign over all of life, it became impossible to draw a clear line about where responsibility ends.

The Scudders, in spite of their sale of medical equipment in 1852, were by 1866 profoundly involved in again providing medical services. At Ranipet, they had purchased a large building, one hundred seventy-six feet long, and treated ninety-six in-patients and 1,652 out-patients in the first four and one-half months. The missionaries, though somewhat apologetic about the expense entailed by this institution, judged that

no one who could once see the woe-begone countenance, the wretched condition of the poor creatures when they are brought to us, and again their healthy condition, elastic step, and happy faces as they go forth to their homes they never again expected to visit, would for a moment judge the money ill spent . . .⁶

The Scudders, since they had a knowledge of medicine, found that in spite of their theory, they could not escape the responsibility of using their powers of healing on behalf of those who were suffering. Even at a time when they desperately needed more workers and more funds to carry out evangelistic work, they made a large commitment to healing in the area around Ranipet and thereby laid the foundation for the excellent hospital whose ministry and growth continues even in our own decade.

However, medical missions, in theory and often in practice, did remain subservient to evangelism and religious teaching. Soon, the hospital at Ranipet accepted three Indians as medical students, with the express object not only of training them to serve as doctors in other areas, but also to use their medical skills as a means of spreading the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to commend the truth we love.⁷ Those who came to the hospital were ministered to in soul as well as body. When the crowds gathered to await care, they were seated in rows and were read the Scriptures and preached the word. The tracts offered to them were seldom refused.

The importance of educational missions was even greater in Japan than in India and China. When missionaries first entered Japan, they were forbidden to carry out the kind of touring evangelism favored in other countries. As a result, they were forced to teach inconspicuously. By 1870, Ferris Seminary in Yokohama and Steele Academy in Nagasaki were in existence. Often their graduates were the first to bring the gospel to Japanese villages. Women's education played a major role, with the graduates taking their place as Christian wives and mothers, sometimes as the wife of a pastor or teacher. Even today these schools begun by missionaries continue to play an important role in Japanese educational circles.

Although the early missionaries to Arabia toured extensively through the Arabian Gulf areas, talking about Christ and distributing literature, the more abiding work was established in schools for boys and in medical work. There was often strong opposition to the gospel, but the need for medical services in the area opened the door to the missionaries in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. Doctors such as Harrison, Storm, Dame,

Thoms, and Mylrea must be listed among the most famous of Reformed Church missionaries. Doctors and clergymen, riding on donkeys or camels, went as teams into the interior of Central Arabia or Oman. At times rather spectacular operations created occasions for establishing rapport between the medical missionaries and the populace. For example, Dr. Wells Thoms found acceptance at Bahrain after he performed several successful operations on pearl-divers who had been bitten by sharks.⁸ Thus, in the words of one young clergyman, with "the Bible in one hand and a bottle of quinine in the other," the gospel came to Arabia.⁹

By 1948, when Wilma Kats and the Rev. Robert and Mrs. Morrell Swart with their two small children became missionaries at Akobo in the Sudan, it was recognized that to begin the work in a new area, one needed to deal with all aspects of life of the people in order to successfully evangelize in a primitive area. Thus among the Anuaks, Murleis, Nuers, and other tribes, mission work was implemented from the beginning with agricultural, medical, and educational missionaries working alongside the evangelistic missionaries.¹⁰

Robert Swart treating patient.



Although the people of those tribes were open to the gospel and the missionaries could hope that within fifteen years the entire tribe would be Christian, new converts were easily tempted to resume their old practices. The missionaries made the judgment that the converts

require constant spiritual nurture, for often the pull of harmful tribal customs and the immorality of their fellow tribesmen prove too great a temptation for them. This is true in every society, but particularly where Christians are in such a small minority. . . . But the glory of the Gospel is that these Nilotic tribesmen, living prescribed, restricted lives under witch doctors who have the power of life and death, become free men, clean-living men, witnessing men, with Christ in their hearts and praise on their lips.¹¹

Our brief survey of the development of evangelistic and institutional missions leads to the observation that over the years Anderson's theory underwent several mutations. Even when the task of evangelism remained central, areas existed where the cultural and legal situation was such that medical and educational personnel and institutions became the primary means of making an impact. However, more importantly, missionaries everywhere recognized that converts need considerable social and cultural support. When people change their gods, they also shift their cultures. Matters of birth, entrance into society, marriage, sickness, and death, all look different when one has become a Christian.

Conversion and Christianization

Even when missionaries emphasized the importance of respecting local cultures and of striving to live the faith in accordance with the culture of the local people, Christians developed new forms of cultural life. When in India churches were built according to the architectural patterns of Hindu temples, the Lord's Table stood where there had previously been an idol. On the pillars, Christian symbols replaced the carvings of Hindu mythology, and inverted sculptured lotus replaced the elaborately decorated *goparum* tower.

Although the Christian faith has no one culture of its own, it is culture-creating and culture-changing when it enters a new land. Christians in those lands sense a need for social structures and institutions which will allow them to develop new forms of life under the imperative of the gospel. It was this tension which was felt by both the missionaries and the Amoy Christians when the experiment of using the pagan teacher in the school was tried for the first time.

In missionary activity, not only must people be converted, but if people are going to know how to live in faith, the things of the culture must be "christianized." Just as Jesus in instituting the sacraments took water, bread, and wine, and turned these things to a new use, so believers in every land must learn for themselves and teach others how to use old things and old patterns of culture in a new way.

This happened so long ago in western countries that we have forgotten how things have changed. In the west, the pagan festival of the Sun celebrated on December 25 began to be celebrated as Christmas, the birthday of Jesus, the Son of God and the Light of the World. The pagan custom of the tree with lights became the Christmas tree of the Christian. The spring fertility festival of paganism was instead celebrated as Easter, the day of the resurrection and the new life.

While the educational, medical, agricultural, and technical institutions did at times function as evangelizing agencies, they were actually much more effective as "christianizing", culture-creating, culture-changing agencies. Not only was God establishing his church, but also his rule over many areas of life. As a result, the very life of the nation was being changed and other religions were feeling the impact of the gospel.

The relationship between evangelizing and christianizing was not very well understood by the missionaries and even less by those in the west who supported missionaries. As a result, the definition of evangelism tended to be broadened to include christianizing activities. For example, missionaries and the Mission Boards were at times almost apologetic about the amount of effort expended in managing large institutions. However, they justified the activity on the grounds that these were really evangelizing agencies. Thus the Arabian report for 1897 reads,

The medical work for the year at Busrah has, under the charge of Dr. Wor-rall, proved a very efficient adjunct to our work of evangelization. He has made such progress in the language that he is now able to converse with the Arabs without the need of an interpreter. . . . The dispensary at Busrah in the Mission house, was a daily pulpit where we enjoyed every freedom to preach Christ and plead with all who came to accept Him as their Saviour.¹²

Eventually hospitals, caught by their own publicity which gave primacy to evangelism, carried out methods of evangelizing even when they knew such means were no longer effective. For example, in the early years of her work, Dr. Ida Scudder, the founder of the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, India, conducted roadside clinics to help those who could not come to the hospital. She took an evangelist with her who would distribute literature and preach to the people while they waited. In the 1960's, small government rural clinics made medical services available in remote areas. Nevertheless, the hospital continued Ida Scudder's roadside clinic service complete with evangelist, even though the doctors in the hospital were no longer convinced that their medical assistance was necessary. Many suspected that to insist that preaching be carried out prior to medical assistance was condescending and counterproductive.

Educational, agricultural, and medical missionaries on furlough in North America often found it difficult to answer when those who supported their institutions asked, "How many converts did you have last year?"—an appropriate question to be asked when the institution was primarily an evangelistic strategy; it was less appropriate when the

primary work of the institution was that of "christianizing." As long as Anderson's theory prevailed, the missionary was forced to answer the question by pointing out that although there were not many direct converts, there were a few and that the institution was effective in supporting the church in its work of evangelism. That this answer was not always fully accepted is no surprise.

In the United States, the Board of Domestic Missions always had recognized that its work pointed toward the growth of new churches. Since most of its work was carried out among persons living on the new frontiers of the land, the Board was more involved in gathering together people who already knew the faith than in working among those who had never heard the gospel. Thus, on the domestic front, the work of ministering to Christians on the frontiers and to the needs of all the poor and weak was considered to be proper for mission outreach.

The integration of justice and evangelism was sensed especially by the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, who had been the first to attempt to minister to the needs of the poor and the children among the American Indians as well as to carry out evangelism among those who lived on the reservations. The women realized that the present sorry state of Indian life was caused by their being mistreated by unscrupulous whites. They believed that the combination of evangelism and social concern shown by the Reformed Churches was but a repayment of a debt owed to the Indians. Their 1902 report shows this feeling:

We glory in stating that we are doing our part, (though not our whole duty) in payment of the nation's debt to the Indian: not so much in temporal gifts as in the grander gift of missionaries who have gone, at our behest, 'to bring the Lord Christ down' to those from whom we have kept Him, all too long.¹³

In 1899, the Women's Board reported that it was opening new work among the mountaineers in Kentucky, work to be both evangelistic and humanitarian in scope. The mountaineers had come from Christian stock, so evangelism was more a revival of previous contacts with the Christian faith than pioneer evangelism. The aim of the work was said to be "to bring moral and spiritual uplift to these long neglected ones."¹⁴ The first workers in the fields were not evangelists, but a trained nurse and graduate of the Bible Institute of Chicago, Cora Smith, and a teacher, Nora Gaut. Their work soon ranged from the organization of Sunday Schools and worship services, to educational work, to training in agriculture and activities related to the home. Yet the picture presented to the church appealed to its humanitarian side.

As the year opens before with its larger needs, may we not plead for new friends, who have not yet turned their thoughts toward this needy people? A people who respond so readily to the truth when presented to them, and whose pitiable condition is due to the isolation of their mountain homes, and to the long neglect of those who bear the Master's name.¹⁵

1792—1979

WORLD EVENTS

1792 William Carey, beginning of modern missions

- 1812 War of 1812

- 1823 Monroe Doctrine

Queen Victoria 1837 •

Opium War 1839 •

1800

1825

1850

RCA MISSION EVENTS

1792 RCA independent from Netherlands

- 1800 Stryker urges western missions

- 1804 Livingston's missionary sermon

- 1810 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission

- 1819 Scudders to Ceylon

Abeel to China 1829 •

Boards of Domestic and Foreign Missions org. 1832 •

Missionaries to Borneo 1836 •

Scudders to India 1836 •

Abeel begins Amoy Mission 1842 •

WORLD EVENTS

- 1950 National Council of Churches org.
- 1950 Korean War begins
 - 1954 School segregation banned, USA
 - 1956 Israel invades Sinai
 - 1959 Castro assumes power
 - 1962 Glenn orbits earth
 - 1963 Washington civil rights march
 - 1964 Viet Nam police action
- Man's first walk on moon 1969 •
- UN seats Communist China 1971 •
- Viet Nam peace 1973 •
- U.S. Bicentennial 1976 •
- Revolutionary forces take over Iran 1979 •

1950

1975

2000

RCA MISSION EVENTS

- 1950 China missionaries reassigned
 - 1964 Missionaries expelled from Sudan
 - 1968 General Program Council org.
 - 1971 Milwaukee Mission Festival
 - Solivans to Venezuela 1977 •

- 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference
- 1914 World War I begins
 - 1917 Communist Revolution in Russia
 - 1920 League of Nations begun

World War II begins 1939 •

United Nations est. 1945 •

Philippine Independence 1946 •

World Council of Churches est. 1948 •

Communist take-over in China 1949 •

00

1925

1950

• 1900 RCA work in Kentucky begins

• 1919 RCA accepts Brewton, Ala. school

• 1925 Kempers to Chiapas, Mexico

Church of So. India founded 1947 •

Swarts and Kats to Sudan 1948 •

Missionaries forced to leave China 1949 •

WORLD EVENTS

- 1854 Admiral Perry enters Tokyo Bay
- 1858 Indian rebellion against English rule
- 1861 U.S. Civil War begins
- Geronimo surrenders 1886
- Boxer Rebellion 1889
- Spanish-American War 1898

1850

1875

1900

RCA MISSION EVENTS

- 1853 Arcot Mission org.
- 1857 Bd. of Foreign Missions accepts all RCA missionaries
- 1859 Browns and Verbecks to Japan
- 1864 General Synod allows autonomous Chinese church
- 1875 Woman's Board of Foreign Missions org.
- Woman's Executive Com. of Bd. Domestic Missions org. 1882
- Cantine to Arabian Gulf 1889
- Zwemer to Arabian Gulf 1890
- Wright to American Indians 1895
- Women's Board of Domestic Missions org. 1897

The humanitarian and educational side of missions came even more to the fore in 1919 when the Board of Domestic Missions accepted responsibility for the school at Brewton, Alabama. In 1911, a black school teacher named James Dooley had begun to implement his dream of a better life for the black people of a deep South community. He had begun his own school for the black children of Brewton, but periodically was forced to close it as his funds ran out. He traveled to Iowa and Michigan, where he interested members of the Reformed Church in his work. As a result, in 1919 the Board accepted responsibility for the school, naming Mr. Dooley as principal. While the statements of purpose went through several changes over the years, it was always the training of black leaders and meeting educational needs of a population which had no other opportunity for schooling that was central to the mission in Brewton. As Lucille Harvey, Director of Guidance Services at Brewton, put it in 1970:

It is a ministry dedicated to the proposition that Southern Normal's sons and daughters must be prepared to become fully functional men and women in a multi-colored, changing universe; a ministry which seeks ways to help alienated youth find the living God; a Christian ministry.³⁶

The Reformed Church found it comparatively easy to combine its emphasis upon evangelism with assistance in developing leadership and humanitarian efforts at Brewton. Reports came regularly to the churches stating that an entire senior class was composed of confessing Christians. The church was also encouraged by reports of the success of the annual religious emphasis week.

Missions in our Turbulent Times

By the 1960's, missions were again mutating. Missionary statesmen were searching for new ways of explaining what was happening. Broadly speaking, one can say that the poles of the debate were set by those who advocated "church growth," which gave priority to conversion and numerical growth of churches, on the one hand, and others who sought "kingdom growth," which gave priority to Christianization of culture and to social justice, on the other. Yet the situation was complicated by a number of other debates concerning the relation between "proclamation" and "dialogue," by the significance of nationalism and independence, by the development of experienced leadership and self-governing churches in Asia and Africa and by the turbulence of the political world.

After the Second World War and into the 1960's, missions went through a period of rapid growth. Many Japanese were ready to consider the claims of Christianity upon their lives. Africa was moving into the modern era, with the result that tribal people were turning to Islam or Christianity in great numbers. South and Central America were open to new missionary efforts. In lands affected by the War, it was necessary to rebuild the churches, the schools, the medical institutions, and to reha-

bilitate many persons. Christians in the United States and Canada saw their churches joining with their governments in great efforts of international aid. It was the time of great affluence in North America, coupled with an era of great need in the rest of the world. Modern missions had been built on the advanced western world's benevolence in Asia and Africa. With a favorable rate of foreign exchange for American and Canadian currency, for a time church growth and kingdom growth went hand in hand. Evangelistic missionaries, church institutions, and agencies of compassion such as Church World Service, all rejoiced that people were giving for missions as they had seldom given before. But then the world began to change.

The first shock was the communist takeover of China. People wondered what had gone wrong, for China had been one of the greatest of missionary success stories. Some maintained that Christian missions had linked themselves too closely with western colonialism; others said that in emphasizing institutional missions, the primary task of evangelism had been neglected. Some claimed that missions had to be more militant against communism, while others held that the basic problem was that in being so interested in converting Chinese, the churches had lost their sense of social justice. All of these debates were inconclusive, but their impact upon the leaders of those denominations which had carried on missions in China was enormous.

The second great shock was the conflict in Viet Nam. During the early 1960's the churches had accepted the idea of "partnership in mission," recognizing that in many countries where the Reformed Church had work, there were self-propagating, self-governing, self-supporting churches. Many in the west, acutely aware that, at times, western missions had displayed an attitude of benevolent colonialism, drew back from direct proselytizing activities. The overseas churches now bore the primary responsibility for evangelism, while the western churches had the role of aiding those churches in their task. Missionaries became "fraternal workers" with other churches, playing a supportive rather than leadership role. As a result of this shift in perspective, the mission activity of western churches began to focus much more on technical and social aid than on assistance for evangelism. Since, for example, the difference in economic standards between the United States and Canada, on the one hand, and India, on the other, was at an all-time high, North American churches busied themselves with providing agricultural and technical assistance to the churches in India, in an effort to "help them to help themselves." By strengthening the local churches financially, a broader base was being laid for the Asian churches' evangelistic efforts. So went the theory.

Viet Nam brought Americans to doubt the value of their technical and agricultural aid programs. It became apparent that one could be as much an "ugly American" in programs of aid as in programs of evangelism. No longer could one be sure that good intentions would save the world.

Moreover, many became aware that such programs of economic, medical, and social help often served to bolster whatever government was in power, even when that government was oppressive and racist. New voices began to be heard. In 1971, the Reformed Church held a great Mission Festival in Milwaukee, at which José Miguez-Bonino of Argentina told those present that missions could no longer be content simply to accept the political status quo and evangelize within that situation. Instead, evangelism itself was to be politically as well as personally liberating. The announcement-commandment of God in Scripture almost always takes the form of a call to create a new situation, to transform and correct present conditions; it is a summons to conversion and to justice.¹⁷ Missionaries from North America would be welcome to come to South America and, proclaiming Christ the Liberator, join the revolution against all oppression and injustice. Thus joining in this great call to the kingdom of God's rule was more than counting the numbers in a growing church. Those still under the impact of the China events felt the power of this "liberation theology's" demand for political discernment in the light of the gospel.

A third shock was that of the rising economic power of Arabia and Japan, coupled with a relative decline in the value of the American dollar. Those who had emphasized the importance of "kingdom growth" being evidenced by participation in development of other nations and by bringing an end to ignorance and poverty in underdeveloped areas had no program where the world was affluent. Japan began to develop educational resources beyond those once supplied by leading mission institutions. In the Arabian Gulf, where the medical missionaries had been in the vanguard of medical services, the Christian hospitals were dwarfed by the new hospitals developed by the government with money derived from oil revenue. The Christian hospital in Kuwait was closed. In Oman, the government took over the leadership in medical services. The missionaries offered their services to the government though they continued to be employed by the church. But where the Scudders had once rejoiced that they could dispose of their medical equipment in order to buy more tracts, the closing of the hospital in Kuwait caused deep soul searching in the missionary circles as well as in the hearts of those who had supported that work.¹⁸ No longer could missions depend on educational or medical work to enhance their evangelistic outreach in many areas of the world.

As a result of the events in China, Viet Nam, Japan, and the Arabian Gulf, people are being forced to come to a new understanding of missions. Opinion concerning the role of world missions is divided. Some emphasize the reign of God and the signs of God's coming kingdom as defined by the World Council of Churches and/or the Liberation theologians such as Miguez Bonino. Others are exponents of "church growth," following the leadership of the Fuller Church Growth Institute founded by Donald McGavran. McGavran, who has enjoyed great influence in Reformed Churches, maintains that although it is necessary to

consider the whole person, the task of missions and evangelism is one of preaching the gospel so that the church grows in numbers as well as in spirit. Missionaries must use the methods of the social sciences as well as the Scripture in searching out those locations where people are most ready to accept the gospel. Missionary resources must be concentrated in those places where numerical growth can take place.³⁹ At present this indicates that special missionary efforts should be concentrated in Central and South America, in Africa, and among any remaining primitive tribes—areas where people may be ready to come to a new faith.

McGavran's theory raises practical issues for the Reformed Church. If one accepts this theory, additional resources should be made available to Reformed Church missionaries in Mexico and Africa, the areas of greatest potential numerical growth. But it raises serious questions about the Arabian Gulf, where missionaries have worked out of a sense of a calling from God, even in the face of rejection. There missions is not a success story, but nevertheless a witness to the gospel. One does not know what the future may bring there. However, as that area modernizes rapidly the witness of these decades may be a factor in bringing new life and hope to the people there. Not always does the gospel spread steadily through a land; one cannot easily assess the impact of this work on the future. Yet, in the light of present developments in the Middle East, it would be difficult to plan Reformed Church missionary strategy only on the basis of church growth patterns.

The observations made by Ralph Winter, of the U. S. Center for World Mission at Pasadena, California, on the nature of evangelism have also begun to play a role in thinking about missions for the future. He points out that one flaw in the theory of Anderson about "self-propagating" churches in other continents is that it assumes that people in each country are more or less alike. Thus, when a missionary goes to India, he or she must do "cross-cultural" evangelism, while the indigenous Christians minister to their own people. Such, however, is not really the case. Within each country there are great differences among the people. The cultural differences between a person living in a tribal area and one living in a city in India may be much greater than that between an American urban dweller and an Indian urban person. Moreover, because the gospel is culture-creating, the Christians in other lands have developed a subculture of their own, one that differs appreciably from the majority culture. Anderson's theory had vastly oversimplified matters. The missionary does not leave the land when the local church meets the criteria of the three selfs, but the churches around the world have the joint responsibility to see that cross-cultural evangelism is adequately done among those three billion and more who do not have someone of their own culture to share the gospel with them. As a cross-cultural evangelist, the missionary may never "go home," though he or she may often have to "go elsewhere."

God constantly calls his people to carry out his mission in the world.

As circumstances change, missions will always be mutating. The work of the past is never sufficient for the demands of the present. Human goals are constantly being transformed by God's purposes, present theories of mission subverted by new possibilities. We would like to carry out missions as a means of justifying ourselves or of manifesting our own importance. Yet God's call will continue to bring us to new obedience, to a humble perception of our own frailty, and to a threatened sense of our own security. When we follow him in such obedience, we can trust that missions will bring forth a surprising harvest.

CHAPTER 5: MISSIONS REFLECTING BACK INTO THE MISSIONARY CHURCH

"But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' " (Acts 15:1)

FROM GOING OUT TO STAYING HOME

Modern missions were rooted in optimism: the power of God was seen at work in the world. There was the realization that those who accepted the call to support missionaries and those who accepted the call to be missionaries would work hard and make many personal sacrifices. Yet, those who responded to the Macedonian call of the heathen, "Come over and help us," would receive a reward for a work well done. Those who sang, "O Zion, Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling," sang of this reward:

Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious;
Give of thy wealth to speed them on their way;
Pour out thy soul for them in prayer victorious;
And all thou spendest Jesus will repay.¹

With such expectations, missionaries and their supporters looked toward the time when their work would be finished and the churches of Asia and Africa could fulfill the responsibilities in those lands which western churches carried out in their own. As people in other lands became both Christian and civilized, Jesus Christ would be known as the one who had made atonement for every sin. Head-hunting, caste discrimination, tribal warfare, corruption, ignorance and poverty would be overcome. A time of peace would be enjoyed. In the first half of the twentieth century, people began to sing of the completion of their task as the Heralds of Christ:

Lord, give us faith and strength the road to build,
To see the promise of the day fulfilled,
When war shall be no more and strife shall cease
Upon the highway of the Prince of Peace.²

By 1971, an outside observer would have concluded that many expectations of the nineteenth century pioneers had been more than fulfilled. In India, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and in a limited way in the Arabian Gulf and Mexico, there was an indigenous church with experienced leadership. By the test of Anderson, one would have expected the Reformed Church missionaries to have moved on to other fields or to have come home to enjoy their reward. However, such was not the case. The Reformed Church people continued to support missionaries in those countries. They came together in 1971 in a Mission Festival in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to be inspired to renew their efforts. Most of the speakers and workshop leaders at the Festival said exactly what was expected of them. One person who was neither a member of the Reformed Church nor even very familiar with the denomination's missions raised a dissident voice. His one voice preyed on the minds of those who were there. The speaker was John Gatu, a citizen of Africa. He said that it was time for missionaries to leave his land.



Dr. John Gatu

In this address I am going to argue that the time has come for the withdrawal of foreign missionaries from many parts of the Third World, that the churches of the Third World must be allowed to find their own identity, and that the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to the selfhood of the church.

The answer to our present problems can only be solved if all missionaries can be withdrawn in order to allow a period of not less than five years for each side to rethink and formulate what is going to be their future relationship.³

Dr. Gatu's words personally affronted many present and many others who later read his words. Those assembled found it difficult to believe

that after all of the hard work, sacrificial giving, and compassion through decades of missionary service, that one from the Third World rather than one from the West should make the decision that it was time for missionaries to leave the field to the churches of Asia and Africa. His statements sounded like a lack of gratitude. A deep sense of anxiety about missions in the hearts of many in the Reformed Church caused his words to be remembered and debated.

If we are to understand what happened in 1971, we must note carefully in what follows how much it costs when the task of missions begins reflecting back into the missionary church.

THE HIGH COST OF MISSIONS

Among those who were hurt by the words of Dr. Gatu were a number of Reformed Church missionaries. They had heard others say what he said, but this was the first time they had heard the "missionary, go home!" theme so clearly and forcefully stated in the presence of their own Reformed Church supporters. It appeared to them that the speaker was ignoring all their struggles to defend and argue for the independence and rights of national churches in other countries.

The missionary never had fit exactly into Reformed Church structures, for the Reformed Church order had been framed at the Synod of Dort in 1619, when people thought of the church as a settled community in a country such as The Netherlands. At that time, it had been the duty of the civil authorities to see that the gospel was preached everywhere in the realm or in the colonies. It had been assumed that there would always be elders, deacons, consistories, classes, and synods, and that churches begun by Reformed Church people would be Reformed Churches.

(a) The Ecumenical Cost

Very early in the history of the movement, missionaries had risked their careers for the autonomy of the Chinese church from the domination of the western church. In 1857, the Reformed Church Synod passed two resolutions:

1. That the Synod view with great pleasure the formation of Churches among the converts from heathenism, organized according to the established usages of our branch of Zion.
2. That the brethren at Amoy be directed to apply to the Particular Synod of Albany to organize them into a Classis so soon as they shall have formed Churches enough to render the permanency of such organization reasonably certain.

Contrary to the actions of the Scudders who had organized the Classis of Arcot in India, the missionaries in China refused to accept the Synod's decision saying that doing so would make the Chinese church permanently subservient to a church far away. For seven years the controversy existed, until, in 1864, all of the Amoy missionaries threatened

to resign. Only then did the Synod rescind its resolution and open the door to formal cooperation with other churches in China.⁴

(b) The Personal Cost

Others present remembered how missionaries had attempted to identify with the cultures in which they lived. In India, Charlotte Wykoff had left the town areas and gone where poor leprosy patients lived. She had lived as they did in a mud hut with a cow-dung floor. They remembered Lavina Honeggar, who had founded an Indian Ashram and had become a vegetarian. She never left India after 1937, continuing to live there after her retirement in 1951 until her death in Vellore in 1965. They had heard the stories of missionaries in China and Japan who were under house arrest in World War II. They knew Wilma Kats, the first missionary sent to the Sudan, who had returned with her health permanently impaired. Such was the identification which missionaries felt for their new lands. The new lands had become their homes, so that they had no other home to which to go.

Also present were those who remembered the struggles of missionary leaders for church union in Japan. There were Reformed Church ministers in the United States who had stood firm at the 1947 General Synod for the formation of the Church of South India. In that year, a great debate was beginning to rage in the Reformed Church in America about a proposed merger with the United Presbyterian Church. At considerable personal risk, some persons defended the right of Reformed Church missionaries in India to advocate union with a far greater diversity of Christians than one Presbyterian denomination. To those who had stood for the self-governance of Asian and African churches, it seemed as if Dr. Gatu ignored the price the Reformed Church had already paid for the autonomy of churches overseas.

(c) The Psychological Cost

In the debate about "missionary, go home!" both sides have attended too lightly to the heavy psychological price both western and eastern peoples have paid as the Word of God encountered their cultures and changed their lives. The great causes which western churches have supported overseas have come back to call the sending churches to new repentance and to revise their own practices. Even while Asians and Africans were feeling the condescension and domination of the westerners, the westerners themselves sensed implicit criticisms from those among whom they were working. The proclamation of the full gospel always reflects back into the life of the missionary church, which must cast out the beam in its own eye even as it is trying to locate the sliver in the eye of the other. This becomes clear when one sees what has happened regarding the role of women, the issues of caste and race, and the problems of justice, peace, and revolution.

(d) The Cost to Men and Women

When, from the very beginning, women were allowed to play an important role in the world mission of the Reformed Church, forces were set in motion which would change the life of the church in the United States as surely as it would allow the gospel to have greater impact overseas. Women were among the firm supporters of the work of David Abeel. When Dr. Anderson hesitated, women in New York City under the leadership of Mrs. Thomas Doremus organized meetings to promote Abeel's cause. Though divided on the wisdom of their cause, women heeded the call of Abeel in one of the most famous statements in Reformed Church mission history:

Some were for going on; others, out of respect for Dr. Anderson, were willing to wait; and Dr. Abeel, with tears rolling down his face exclaimed: "What is to become of the souls of those who are ignorant of the offers of mercy and of the Bible?"⁵

Abeel also stated the classic case for female missionaries:

The cooperation and influence of the ladies are also greatly needed in evangelizing the heathen. In many countries they alone have access to their own sex. . . . Ladies ought to accompany every mission family. The appeal to them is peculiarly affecting: it is the language of the oppressed and the miserable—the united voice of more than one-half their sex. The simple control of mothers over children is enough to shew how much the happiness and moral habits of a nation depend upon the elevation of females.⁶

"The elevation of females," so important to Abeel as a missionary and evangelizing theme, was in succeeding decades to be a matter of delicate adjustment, for while females were to be elevated, they were not expected to be elevated quite as high as their male counterparts. Until 1900, the "missionaries" listed in the reports of the Board of Foreign Missions were all men, while the women were listed as "assistant missionaries." Their work was particularly concerned with improving the lives of women through medical and health care, education, and visitation in the homes of women. Much was made of the pathetic situation of women in India and China. Child marriage, the plight of widows, the shame of the temple prostitutes, and the treatment of wives were vividly described to Americans.

Unwelcome at her birth, and regarded as a curse, the little daughter in India is never the cherished darling of the house as she is with us.⁷

In China, missionaries reported to their American sisters the horror of the custom of binding women's feet.

Parents in China . . . would be greatly mortified and distressed should the feet of their daughters grow to their natural size. A Christian mother supplies her child with shoes that will fit the feet. A Chinese mother binds and bandages the foot of her child that it may fit the shoe.⁸

Women in America responded to the challenge, demonstrating wifely and motherly concern. In 1875, they organized themselves into the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions. Thereby they became one of the major factors in developing interest in missions. Their role was subservient to the Synod's male leadership. In 1884, they wrote:

Unlike some of the other societies, we do not propose for ourselves separate work, but are auxiliary to the Synod's Board, taking as our share of the duty that of working in the schools already established for girls. We would have it distinctly understood that our work is that of women for women.⁹

In supporting foreign missions, American women recognized their blessing. The report of 1884 points out:

Girls in our Christian home-land cannot be too thankful that they were not born in a heathen country.¹⁰

When women played such an important role, however, it became impossible to keep them in a subordinate position. By the turn of the century one begins to read that while the work of the Woman's Board was deeply appreciated, the Board of Foreign Missions was somewhat concerned because the women were beginning to play a larger role than had been at first anticipated. New arrangements were made to ensure the continuing cooperation after June, 1901. According to the Board of Foreign Missions report:

It was natural, however, that certain questions should, from time to time, arise in regard to the relations existing between the two Boards, these relations not having been clearly defined. During the year a cordial agreement has been entered into between the two Boards in regard to the appointment of missionaries, the entrance upon new work, and the prosecution of that already existing, as well as the application of funds to its maintenance.¹¹

In the same year, 1901, the increasingly important role of women overseas became evident when four single women, Harriet M. Lansing, Anna K. Stryker, Anna B. Stout, and Sara M. Couch, were listed by the South Japan Mission as "missionaries." A couple years later, single women assigned to mission institutional work and leadership were given the privilege of voting as missionary members of the Arcot Mission in India. In spite of their theories, events had occurred to move American women into a position of equality with men in certain aspects of the missionary movement. In attacking injustices among women overseas and among the poor in the United States, American women were discovering for themselves a new role in the church.

Once set in motion, this increasingly important role of women in the missionary movement influenced the interpretation of Paul's New Testament references to the role of women, the possibility that women in the United States and Canada should have more opportunities in education and leadership roles in the church. When women missionaries and Board executives were permitted to address the General Synod and to negotiate

with the Synod's Boards of Missions concerning the appointment and work of missionaries, the day would not be far off when people would begin to ask whether it was not permissible to ordain women to the offices of deacon, elder, and minister. Such was the surprising harvest which came when Mrs. Doremus heard the call of Abeel to send forth reapers into the fields ripe for the harvest. Thus was laid one part of the groundwork for a painful struggle over the role of women, a struggle that engaged the thinking of the Reformed Church in America during much of the twentieth century.

(e) The Racial Cost

When, in the nineteenth century, the caste system of India became a favorite target of the American missionary movement, no one realized how that missionary concern would pierce the heart of the Reformed Church in the twentieth century. In its constitution, the Arcot Mission rejected all practices and acceptance of caste in India as contrary to the gospel and insisted upon stringent rules to "shut these pestilent enemies outside the precincts of the youthful mission." Even though in practice this meant that the Arcot Mission was to discover that the outcastes would find this provision more to their taste than would the high caste Brahmins, the missionaries in India stood firmly by their first resolution. Respect for all people was thereby declared a fundamental aspect of the gospel in India.

Throughout the history of the Reformed Church missions, racist theories have been rejected as a means of supporting missionary activity. It is to their credit that in the late nineteenth century, when many Americans were accepting Social Darwinist theories of population growth, the Reformed Church did not accept the theory's siren call. In the 1880's, a powerful voice in American evangelical protestantism was that of Josiah Strong, secretary of the Evangelical Alliance. Strong, with the Social Darwinists, accepted the Malthusian theory that the world's population will always exceed its food supply, that we are running out of land for the growing population, and thus there is necessarily a conflict among the world's peoples in which the "survival of the fittest" is the rule.

Strong, in analyzing the nineteenth century world in his book, *Our Country*, came to the conclusion that the Anglo-Saxon race was the most advanced physically and genetically, was the most civilized, and had the superior religion—protestant Christianity. Other races were composed of the teeming millions of poverty-stricken, pagan, superstitious barbarians. The advance of American civilization and democracy together with the protestant missionary movement was the only hope for the world. In his opinion, just enough time remained to proclaim the gospel, convert the heathen, and give them the advantages of Christianity and Western culture. Doing so would bring the inferior races up to Anglo-Saxon standards and thereby perhaps save the world.

Nothing can save the inferior race but a ready and pliant assimilation. Whether the feebler and more abject races are going to be regenerated and raised up, is already very much of a question. What if it should be God's plan to people the world with better and finer material? Certain it is, whatever expectations we may indulge, that there is a tremendous overbearing surge of power in the Christian nations, which, if the others are not speedily raised to some vastly higher capacity, will inevitably submerge and bury them forever. These great populations of Christendom—what are they doing, but throwing out their colonies on every side, and populating themselves, if I may so speak, into the possession of all countries and climes?¹²

Strong's theory was accepted by many in America, including Theodore Roosevelt and many leading businessmen. Within the Reformed Church, the Rev. J. H. Karsten, a leading clergyman in Wisconsin and western Michigan, translated the book into Dutch and was joined by six other leading ministers of the area in recommending it as the best American Christian statement of the reason for missionary activity.¹³

To the credit of the Reformed Church missionaries they apparently recognized immediately the racist theory underlying Strong's book and rejected his thesis. Although one can find some references in the publicity of domestic missions that may include aspects of Social Darwinism, it is practically impossible to find any such references in foreign missions statements. That American missionaries of the Reformed Church should so completely reject a leading theory within their own culture, even when it would have been a useful means of raising funds to support their cause, is a matter for some rejoicing among those of us who live a century later. What is more disconcerting, however, is that clergymen who were usually so clear in their definition and defense of orthodoxy were apparently, for a time at least, taken in by this racist theory, demonstrating that the Reformed Church in America has not been entirely free from racism.

In the 1950's and 1960's, the stand taken by the Arcot Mission and other missions reflected into the life of the denomination. Those in the cities of North America were confronted with the movement of blacks from the southern part of the country into the urban areas. By 1957, the issue of race became concrete in the matter of "open housing." In that year, the Reformed Church Synod voted a "Credo on Race Relations" as the church's official statement. Prior to and after acceptance of that Credo, missionaries spending time in the United States often spoke to the churches about the inconsistency of sending missionaries overseas to preach to people of other races while within the United States racial discrimination was being practiced by members of churches. A church that desired to rid India of caste could not expect to remain free from criticism of its own forms of caste discrimination.

NON-POLITICAL MISSIONS IN AN AGE OF POLITICS

Missionaries continued to remind the church in the United States that it had accepted the "Credo on Race Relations" as its official policy and that civil liberties were crucial to their witness in other parts of the world. In February, 1965, at the meeting of the Arabian Mission, the missionaries expressed their appreciation for the stand of the Board of World Missions and the General Synod.

Further, that the Arabian Mission, although outside of the American shore and thus, away from the immediate situations and activities, nevertheless record itself as completely committed to the implementation and fulfillment of the 1957 General Synod Credo on Human Rights.

Further, we believe that it is daily becoming clearer that the Church's total mission is wider and more comprehensive than has been realized hitherto. To go into the world proclaiming the Lordship and saving power of Christ is to go deeply into every area of life as well. The problems of society, the meaning of history, the nature of the secular, the predicament of man in his perilous mastery of power—all these themes constitute fields in which the total mission of the Church has to be understood and fulfilled.¹⁴

Yet the Board of World Missions recognized that in the concern for human rights and welfare, one might substitute general good will for the solid meat of the gospel. In the 1965 report, across the page from the Arabian statement, one sees the problem as it was being faced in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, where the need for social development and educational facilities are so obvious, the church of Jesus Christ at work in this colony is constantly faced with the temptation to improve these human situations at the expense of soft pedaling the need of men for the gospel.¹⁵

There are even wider issues. However, before considering them, let us look at the speech of Gatu noted at the beginning of this chapter. We have heard the views of Dr. Strong, and we have seen how many Americans accepted his theories. We have noted the racist statements made over the last two hundred years by members of the Reformed Church. Little wonder that a voice is asking that we go home. And even though they resisted the siren song of Social Darwinism, missionaries constantly pointed out the weaknesses and superstitions of the people among whom they worked. One can read volumes of missionary literature and never learn that in Asia and Africa they encountered great civilizations with great traditions, equal to those of the western world before the modern age of exploration began. Even among missionaries of best intentions there was a sense of cultural superiority that profoundly hurt the Asian and African, watching their ancient cultures crumble under the combined military, political, and commercial power of the west. Too often, westerners less cultured than the natives ridiculed what they did not understand. Perhaps our own sensitivities have not been offended as we

have been reading the quotations in which thoughtless western feelings of superiority have been expressed in the words of missionaries and mission board reports. Most missionaries denied that they presented any political message. Yet during times of national humiliation such as the Opium War in China, the opening of the ports in Japan, the subjugation of the African continent, and the British occupation of India, the missionaries and western churches, even while expressing some ambivalence about political and economic western imperialism, had seen these developments as being in the plan of God to open the door to the gospel. To that extent, at the very least, missionaries and western churches showed their compliance with western oppression and imperialism. In the minds of the Asian and the African no missionary was non-political.

When Dr. Gatu spoke, the pain of one hundred fifty years surfaced. The missionaries and members of the Reformed Church recalled their sacrifice and recognized how the gospel had reflected back into their own churches causing them to change their own ways for the sake of missions. Dr. Gatu spoke out of one hundred fifty years of shame, ridicule, and paternalistic benevolence lavished upon an "inferior" race. His call was a plea to disengage for a time in order to begin anew with mutual respect and profound love. The cost of missions was greater than either side could fathom. It was almost more than the human spirit can bear. Those of us who today see the vision and hear the call cannot escape the agony of this missionary burden, cannot avoid repenting of all the ways we have hurt each other, even when seeking each other's salvation. If the call to the evangelization of the world in this generation is to be fulfilled our plea must be the Psalmist's:

Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting! (Ps. 139:23-24)

However, even though the cost of missionary obedience has become ever greater and the problems more complex, for those who have heard the gospel there arise new possibilities, hopes, and dreams. Sometimes these conflict with the interests of the dominating powers in the western world. The statement of the Arabian Mission points the way to the depths and heights of the gospel under the sovereignty of God. To proclaim the gospel is to speak it in all of its fulness. Such speaking has a liberating effect on the oppressed, an effect that Jesus emphasized in his first sermon at Nazareth:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19).

In no place has this message of liberation occasioned more soul searching than in Africa. In 1956, the statesman, Chester Bowles, sensed the problem.

. . . the implications of this record are far flung. Christian missionaries first brought a modern revolution to Africa, going there to lead the fight against the slave trade, ill health and illiteracy. It was they who planted in Africa such explosive ideas as individual liberty, potential dignity and capability of all men, and self-government. . . . If any of us are tempted to feel that the African demand for social justice is premature, let us remember that in the last 300 years the most politically explosive force in Africa has been the Bible. . . . Why should we be terrified by our own ideas? Is it they that are generating the African Revolution!¹⁶

Yet, at our point in history it is difficult to know how to respond to all that is happening in Africa. Under the impact of the Cold War, the loss of China, and the atheistic rhetoric of Russian Communism, missions after 1950 was referred to often as a force to oppose the atheistic thrust of communism. Communists in turn have assaulted missionaries and churches all over the world. Many North Americans have believed that the economic system closest to that of the Christian faith is capitalism, while in northern Europe some have believed that socialism of a more Christian variety is the better choice. But in recent years, using the analytical tools of Marxism, members of churches in Central and South America as well as in Africa have begun to set forth the gospel of liberation.

In the dispute over the remarks of Dr. Gatu, the speech of Dr. José Miguez-Bonino given on Wednesday evening was scarcely heard; yet his was the more penetrating of the two. Dr. Gatu gave no choice: go home! Dr. Miguez-Bonino's call was to take up the cross and join the revolution in South America. While insisting upon the need for individual conversion and person-to-person witnessing, he emphasized the impossibility of taking a politically neutral stance.

An area free of political and ideological commitment is a false paradise which does not exist. Certainly we are now conscious of the fact that the church always plays a role in society; it has always done so, in favor of one group or another. . . . We can now see that we will either support the continuation of oppression or the struggle for liberation. . . . At the Judgment . . . we will have to give an account for our decision.¹⁷

He further stated that in South America a choice must be made. ". . . you cannot be neutral. Your church, your money, your people, will either reinforce the pattern of domination and exploitation, or participate in this struggle for liberation."

. . . the cost for the American churches is very heavy. I wish I could spare myself and you the harshness of what I am going to say, but I don't think I can. The struggle which we are called to join, which I am calling you to join, pitches us against the policies and interests of this country . . . it is an entire system that concerns local tyranny in our own Third World in foreign interests. . . . Many of you and many of us are knowingly or unknowingly part of that system.¹⁸

The Jesus who loves you is the Jesus who threw the merchants from the

temple, who rebuked the Pharisees, and who hanged on the cross as a subversive.

This is the only Jesus there is. Preaching another Christ, preaching another God, is preaching and worshipping an idol.¹⁹

The Reformed Church in the 1970's has not been able to escape the call of Miguez-Bonino. In the 1979 General Synod, one of the most explosive issues concerned a gift of food and other materials from the World Council of Churches to the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), a group claiming a relationship to the Christian faith even while speaking in Marxist language and using violent tactics in opposition to the elected government. The Reformed Church found it impossible to remain uninvolved. The General Synod spent long hours debating the Christian attitude concerning revolution, humanitarian assistance, the nature of evangelism, the relation of Zimbabwe to South Africa, and the nature of the World Council of Churches. Some maintained that the situation in Rhodesia was a political matter beyond the understanding of the church and outside the purview of its evangelistic task; others held that evangelization that does not take account of racial injustice is like salt that has lost its taste and is fit for nothing. Even if one asks what all this has to do with the gospel, one feels the truth of Miguez-Bonino's statement: one cannot remain neutral. Mission involvement reflects back into the missionary churches, calling them to make concrete decisions in obedience to God.²⁰

There was a time when missionaries gave up much to go to foreign lands. They left loved ones and the comforts of home. They faced the possibility of disease and even death. Today, however, the cost may be even greater. For while they had to give up house and home, they felt they could take their education, their culture, their democracy, and their economic systems. But now there are people in Asia and Africa who say that we have not sacrificed enough. All that we have must be offered up as a gift to God—even our culture, our economic systems, our educational structures, and our own sense of national security. In the face of such claims, we feel an impulse to reject the radical Christian. We are tempted to lash back and call them unfit for the kingdom. Yet we know that they ask no more of us than God demands. Though the songs we have sung proclaim peace, Jesus did not promise peace to a missionary people.

Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother . . . and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matt. 10:34-35a, 38-39)

The missionary call is with us. It cannot be resisted. The missionary can never go home again, for God has a mission in the world he loves and among the people whom he desires to save. We sing now a more

disturbing song, one sung where the crowded ways of life cross on the continents:

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
On shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
From paths where hide the lures of greed,
We catch the vision of Thy tears.²¹

CHAPTER 6: MISSIONS BEYOND COMPREHENSION

"The LORD says:

*It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob*

and to restore the preserved of Israel;

I will give you as a light to the nations,

that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.' " (Is. 49:6)

One should not be surprised that most members of the Reformed Church in America were bewildered by the speeches in Milwaukee. By 1971, the world of missions had come a long way from those romantic, exciting but simple days when David Abeel and John Scudder were the only two international missionaries supported by the Reformed Church in America. Anderson's theory had assumed that international missions would change very little over the years. It presented mission as fields to be occupied, to be developed into churches, and then in their maturity to be left as the missionaries went on to new fields. In many places in the world, this theory still described what was happening. But its weakness was its failure to take into account what was actually going on after World War II. After 1947, so much needed to be done; there was little time to listen to, much less think about, speeches.

FROM MISSIONS TO INTER-CHURCH AID

Those who lived by Anderson's theory discovered that the missionary task in any area never ends. There is always a new generation to be evangelized. As churches come into being, more financial resources and increased personnel, rather than less, can be faithfully used. Churches

composed of large numbers of individuals become complex institutions. And the more aware they become of the need for pastoral care, community service, and continuing outreach, the more work needed to be done. Missionaries, trained to see and seize opportunities, discover new tasks for the church they love. Evangelistic missions thereby mutate into inter-church aid. At the end of World War II, more non-Christians lived in India and China than when Scudder heard the call of the six hundred million. Thus, even when great churches had been planted, the call still went out immediately after World War II for more missionaries for India, China and Japan.

Throughout the 1950's and early 1960's, North American Christians were thrilled by the accounts of the work they were doing in India and Japan. America in those years was confident of its role in the world. It had emerged from World War II as the undisputed leader in power, goodness, and benevolence. It busied itself in rebuilding the world, giving aid to Europe, sending food to India, and helping Japan revitalize its bombed out cities. As the Marshall Plan redeveloped Europe, North American Christians intended to use Church World Service and the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee World Service, WCC to save those areas of Asia and Africa in which missionaries were working. For example, after 1954, evangelistic missions and Church World Service worked hand in hand in Taiwan. Early in 1963, a typhoon had struck the island. Through cooperative effort churches could respond immediately.

A tropical typhoon struck the northern half of Taiwan in the fall of 1963, wreaking an unprecedented toll of death and destruction through high flooding and landslides. A relief fund was raised through Church World Service. The Canadian and English Presbyterians responded generously. The Board of World Missions of the Reformed Church in America responded immediately with \$5,000.¹

Through the experiences of the war, North American Christians had gained a new understanding of the changed world. No longer were citizens of other nations looked upon as primitive and benighted. Chiang-Kai-Chek and his wife in China, Kagawa of Japan, Mahatma Gandhi of India occupied positions of world authority, and displayed moral character and leadership equal to any of the leaders of the west. Many North Americans, having been overseas during the war, had seen foreign cultures for themselves. They now responded not so much to stories of primitives living in mud huts as to pictures of war-torn countries, with orphans and poverty caused by international disruption. Some men and women themselves had participated in the destruction of those areas. They still longed to see salvation come to those lands, but they understood salvation more in reference to this world than to the next.

Famine came to India in 1953-4, and Church World Service was there, sending twenty-two or more pounds of American wheat for every dollar contributed. Reformed Church farmers understood the meaning of wheat. Corn too was needed, so they organized CROP and gave truck-

loads of corn to be shipped overseas. Patriotism, Christian benevolence, and the opportunity to expand one's markets all pointed in the same direction. The Reformed Churches responded generously.

All over the world there were emergencies and needs: electric pumps for wells, new breeds of cattle, chickens, and pigs on the farms, and technical training to assist young minds and hands to enter the modern age. Johnson's Great Society in the '60's was also the ideal for inter-church aid. Missions boomed all over the world. New forms of missions emerged and new opportunities for lay missionaries arose. Not only evangelists and educators, but also builders, electricians, engineers, agriculturalists and occupational therapists were needed. Medical missionaries cooperated with emerging nations and national cultures, training local citizens to become skilled medical personnel.

Missions became institutionalized. The glamor surrounding the missionary was replaced by the pressures of the budget, carefully developed according to priority lists and the combined wisdom of indigenous churches, missionaries, and Board secretaries. One could scarcely keep track of all of the work. A great network of people and churches around the world managed a remarkable program of inter-church aid. The Reformed Church was able to respond as never before to the needs of the churches in other areas of the world.

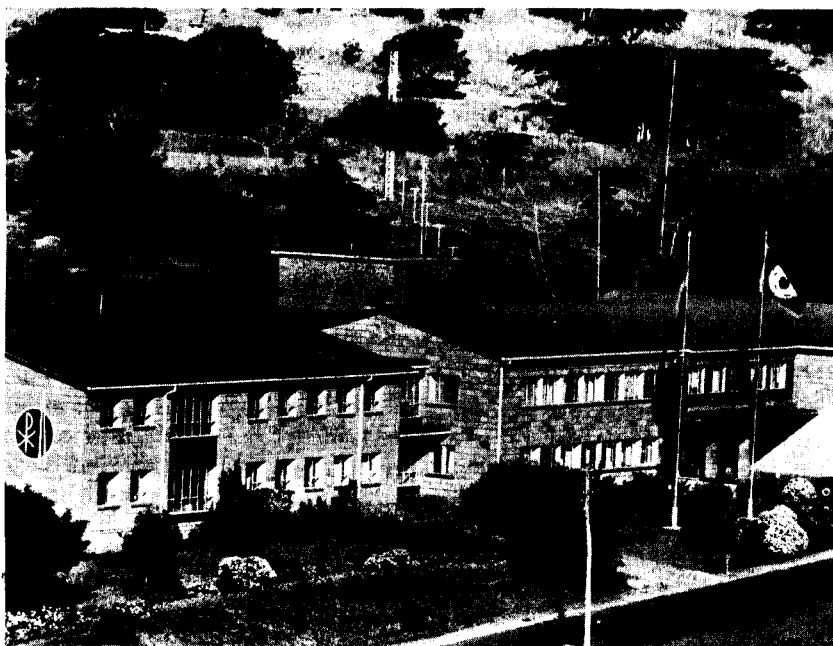
The system after World War II was perhaps more efficient than international missions had ever been. In a rapidly changing world, its usefulness was apparent. In 1951, the Reformed Church in America was shocked when the last Reformed Church missionary was forced out of China. However, within five years this loss had been turned into an opportunity: in cooperation with churches in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and the Philippines, the old Amoy Mission was now dispersed into a much wider geographical area, with the churches aiding each other to meet the new challenges. Exciting reports about the new work came to our land. In 1956, one heard the news:

Although language may separate some people in Hong Kong, the various denominations are working together in relief and educational work. Not only do the missionaries assist in the church work, but calls come from all areas for Bible classes and Christian education. One invitation came from a large private school to conduct an English Bible class for students and faculty. Twenty-four were expected but forty-five came to study the Gospel of Mark on each Saturday afternoon. There are undreamed of opportunities to work with the Chinese in Hong Kong.

The Church in Formosa is working on a plan to double its membership in the next ten years. In 1955 twenty new congregations were organized . . .²

Rev. and Mrs. Joseph R. Esther have given us a picture of the opportunities that face us in the Philippine Islands: broadcasting to the Chinese in the Islands; visiting people in neglected areas; teaching the Chinese boys and girls in Manila; giving medical and spiritual aid to those who are ill; tirelessly working in the churches where, because of misunderstanding and loneliness, there are many problems.³

Unparalleled progress in the Middle East was being reported. In 1961, a draft of a constitution for the organization of "The Church of Christ in the Arabian Gulf" was being studied. In Aden, after thirty years of work, the church was organized in 1961. The Kuwait hospital was meeting the needs of a record number of people. A new radio station in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia was being built, so powerful that its voice would meet the needs of the entire Middle East and even reach into India. The mission asked for seventeen new missionaries.



Studio and Headquarters of Radio Voice of the Gospel

It was becoming apparent that the Board of Foreign Missions in 1857 had been built on solid foundations when in its statement of purpose it had indicated its first goal as the establishment of indigenous, self-supporting churches, and that Reformed Church missionaries would work in relation to those churches. That statement of purpose included the words:

It shall be the steady aim of the Board to establish indigenous, self-supporting churches of sound Christian faith and practice. Full recognition shall be given to such church bodies and in the appointment of missionaries consideration shall be given to their wishes. Missionaries shall associate themselves in their work with the churches on the field in such ways as may be mutually acceptable.⁴

Those who knew the history of Reformed Church missions and still worked among the Arabs, the Indians, the Chinese, and the Japanese had now a new appreciation of these words, for everywhere the old boundaries were being surpassed as missionaries worked with the indigenous churches. In India, with the coming of the Church of South India in 1947, the influence of the Reformed Church missionaries began to have an impact in geographical areas beyond the boundaries of the Arcot Mission as they worked in the context of the wider church. Between 1960 and 1970, the Madras Diocese grew in membership from approximately 80,000 to 120,000, while the number of ordained ministers increased from 75 to 115. Even though the number of missionaries from overseas declined during that period, the church was showing a surprising harvest.

However, in the United States people often still thought in the old categories. They judged progress in numerical terms: the number of missionaries, the number of new fields. But even in this respect, inter-church cooperation was serving well. In 1949, the Reformed Church had responded to the request of Don McClure of the United Presbyterian Church to send fifteen missionaries for fifteen years to the Sudan. Thus, for the first time in its history, the Reformed Church engaged in major work in Africa where a total approach to mission was planned among the tribes of the south Sudan. Agriculturalists, medical staff, evangelists and pastors, educators, and even such support services as missionary aviation were sent into the area.

The magnitude of the new venture in Africa can be better understood when one sees it in the context of the Reformed Church's previous hesitation toward opening new fields. During the nineteenth century, the Reformed Church had developed only three fields—China, India, and Japan. The church had often been under pressure to open more. Briefly, in 1836, there had been a mission in Borneo. In 1858, there had been strong pressure to begin work in South Africa. By 1870, there was deep interest in Mexico. In 1884, a graduate of New Brunswick, Horace B. Underwood, offered to go to Korea. Eventually he did, but under the Presbyterian Board. In 1891, a gentleman from New York offered \$5,000 to open work in Korea. However, the Board of Foreign Missions had to decline every one of these opportunities because it was already overextended in its older fields and heavily in debt. Henry Cobb, secretary of the Board during that period had to report:

But, aside from the fact that other churches already had flourishing missions in that country, the claims of its existing missions were too great, and were too scantily met, to admit of its undertaking this new opportunity. The proposition was therefore necessarily though reluctantly declined.⁵

Even Arabia had at first been rejected as a field. But in 1889, under heavy pressure from Prof. J. G. Lansing of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, the Board held a special meeting prior to the meeting of the Synod in order to hear the offer from Cantine, Zwemer, and Phelps to

establish a mission among the Arabic-speaking people. Yet the offer had to be refused. The Board could not responsibly make the additional commitment when already it was resisting the older missions' demands for more support. So, Lansing, assisted by the young men, established a separate Arabian Mission, raised funds, and with the two young graduates, went to Arabia. Each year the new field was offered to the Board and Synod. Then in 1893 sentiment for the Arabian work built to a point that the Synod not only advised, but actually *directed* the Board to accept responsibility for the new Mission. In this case, the Synod's committee presented a classic argument often used by the missionaries and enthusiasts for missionary work:

It is a child of the church, wholly so. It was born of the church, all its Missionaries are members of the church. . . . To be assured in advance of the ability to support it would be what no father and mother were ever yet assured of since babies began to be born. To keep it and ourselves waiting for that impossible assurance is to deprive it of the parental care it needs, and, as a matter of still greater importance, of the incentive to nobler exertion which new children when thankfully owned as such by their fathers and mothers always bring into worthy homes.⁶

Cobb knew it was easier to begin new work than to sustain interest in it. Because he could not abdicate other pressing responsibilities, it was his duty to be cautious. Therefore, the vision of others made possible the beginning of the Arabian work. Arabia would not be the only occasion when the Board, which had to worry about paying the bills, found itself in tension with enthusiasts who had visions of new fields white unto harvest. However, it may be that through such tensions God makes it possible for human beings to be both venturesome and responsible in mission.

In any case, the fact that the Board as a part of its own decision-making processes could in 1949 open a new field in Africa was a tribute to the efficiency and vision embodied in the new patterns of interchurch cooperation in mission after World War II. The new mission was an immediate success, for the quality of missionaries sent to Africa was outstanding. New methods of preparing missionaries for overseas had been developed by mission boards. The new missionaries had a much better knowledge of anthropology and cross-cultural communication. And the time was right. Soon the Sudanese tribes were turning to Christ. And so, by the time the missionaries were expelled following the revolution in the North Sudan after 1962, seven congregations had been established.

Moreover, the cooperation with the Presbyterians proved fruitful in relocating the missionaries who had been in the Sudan. The Presbyterians invited the Hostetters to begin a literary project in Pakistan. Good relationships with Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, had been developed over the years by the Presbyterians, thus opening the doors to Reformed Church missionaries to locate on the Ethiopian side of the Pibor River and continue to minister in an area contiguous to Ethiopia. Later,

in the 1970's, during the Ethiopian revolution, it was possible for missionaries such as the Swarts to relocate in nearby Kenya. Such possibilities open to us when we establish a network of interchurch communication and cooperation.

MISSIONS DEPERSONALIZED

Yet, despite all the success and efficiency, by the end of the 1960's many in the Reformed Church were disturbed and uncertain. They felt that there was less excitement about and interest in international missions. Many reasons could be presented. International missions were competing with their own success. No longer were overseas churches perceived as "daughter churches"; the sister metaphor had replaced the older paternalistic idiom. Asian churches were now self-governing. As a result, North Americans, conscious of the problems within their own land, turned their attention and finances toward increasing the impact of the gospel on their own continent.

More important, however, was that in becoming a vast enterprise, international missions had been depersonalized. Previously opportunities and needs had been presented concretely: the need for one missionary family for a particular place; the opportunity to assist a certain village in India to build a chapel. Now these people, whose names had been known, whose pictures had been available, were being replaced by great issues to be fought over and decided upon. Terms replaced images in publicizing missionary opportunities: "poverty" rather than the poor villager, "education" rather than a wistful third grader, "technical aid" rather than a young girl needing a sewing machine. Even when people appeared in the photographs and individuals were named, they were illustrative cases rather than specific persons in need at the moment. The assumption was that there were many others beside the one in the picture. The person in the picture became a person without a name in a village without location.

The structure of international mission finance was rapidly changing. As the dollar declined in value and the cost of supporting a missionary family rose, not only for salary but also for pensions, health care, transportation, education, and housing, the role of the missionary changed. It became more economical as well as effective to assist the overseas churches to employ persons of their own countries to do the actual evangelistic, clerical, pastoral, and social service work than to supply an expensive North American missionary family. Still missionaries were needed in tasks that required highly developed skills. They were also important as administrative personnel, helping to supervise and enable others in ministry. Thus, as the role of the missionary changed, the Reformed Church budget shifted from an emphasis on missionaries to an increasing responsibility for assisting other churches in carrying out what was once done by missionaries, but was now done by the local citizenry.

Thus, in India, the leadership on an agricultural farm shifted from the missionary J. J. DeValois to the Indian, Dr. M. J. John. Galen Scudder, missionary superintendent of the hospital in Ranipet, was replaced by Dr. Julius Savarirayan. John Piet, missionary in charge of Bible Cor-



Agricultural Institute, Katpadi

respondence Course evangelism was eventually succeeded by the Indian pastor, Rev. Rufus Jeyakaran. Harry Pofahl, manager of the Industrial School at Katpadi, was succeeded in turn by James Balraj and Sanjivi Savarirayan. In each case, the budgetary emphasis shifted from the missionary to the work, resulting in lowering the feeling of personal involvement on the part of Reformed Church people. However, this change in the financial structure of international missions was poorly understood by people in the western world, and unwanted by them.

Missions had become so complex that even those involved in it could not comprehend it. So vast was the work, so diverse was its geographical and ecumenical spread, so rapidly changing were the specific activities that no one could keep all its ramifications in mind. Previously, publicity could focus on missionaries in three or four fields; now, because of the diversity of needs, the depersonalization of the budget, and the administrative changes from a Board of World Missions to a General Program Council, Reformed Church mission publicity could no longer keep up with the emerging story. The church still thought in terms of Anderson's theory. It continued to focus on the role of the missionary. But the cause of missions was now presented in the context of contemporary issues,

issues which dealt with international missions in more abstract terms. Missionaries were mere illustrations.

Not only had missions become abstract, but by the end of the 1960's people were less interested in the institution of the church. Reformed Church missions had always focused on the planting of churches, but by 1970, the North American Christian world was dividing into two camps: One insisted upon the need of the individual for Christ; the other maintained that the church had become too isolated from the needs of the world and from the struggle for human rights and justice. Those who had been overwhelmed, confused, and in a measure disappointed by the increasing complexity of modern international missions felt called once again to make personal decisions affecting the lives of people on the other side of the world. Instead of merely supporting the denominational budget, the appeals sent out by "faith missionaries," by specialized missionary service agencies, and by imaginative new approaches to missionary communication appeared more urgent and more personal. Whether or not one contributed did seem to make a difference. On the other hand, in a world where injustice, oppression, and violence thrived, few seemed on the side of peace, disarmament, resistance to oppression. There were rallies to attend, letters to write, and marches to walk. In order to raise public awareness, one had to be personally involved, willing to suffer some ridicule and to do some personal confronting. Whether one joined one side or the other, one felt the issues were once again personal, and there were demons to be exorcised rather than budgets to be met. Modern thought concerning missions was again undergoing mutation. Special interests, faith missionaries, and liberal causes were replacing Reformed Church missionaries and its General Program Council.

In each generation, the call of God to evangelize the world is so powerful that it is the message such as that of Dr. Miguez-Bonino rather than that of Dr. Gatú which prevails today. A revolution is taking place in the world; what is not yet clear is what the nature of that revolution should be and how Christians of the west should respond to it. It may be that in particular circumstances missionaries will have to go home, but the missionary task in all of its complexity cannot be avoided; the international missionary task is with us to stay. But, as always, the problem today is that the task is far greater and more complex than any human being can fathom. Thus missions are always mutating and the harvest is always surprising, for God is doing more than human beings can plan or prioritize. Human beings must somehow reduce God's dreams to human dimensions. The simplest way to make missions manageable again is to focus on one aspect and to reject the visions held by others.

MISSIONS IN A POLITICAL WHIRLPOOL

Miguez-Bonino has correctly observed that missions never takes place in a political vacuum, that missionary activity always has a political dimen-

sion. The missionaries of the Reformed Church serving in the Sudan, Ethiopia, and now Kenya have had the advantage that the present revolution can blend the need for the revolutionary change of faith in the heart with the possibilities of cultural changes that are compatible with mainstream Reformed Church thought. Conversion and social uplift are joined together. In those areas of Africa, church growth is combined with kingdom growth, evangelizing with Christianizing. People in the Sudan had always worshiped a god and lesser deities. When the missionaries came, the Sudanese recognized that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ was the God for whom they had been waiting. A change came into their hearts as they accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. Moreover, the lifestyle represented by the missionaries also met their immediate needs, for the missionaries worked hard, favored literacy, and developed medical services. The missionaries also understood agriculture, new ways of cultivating land, windmills, and the use of other implements that helped the Sudanese obtain those things Americans believed everyone had a right to have. To Americans, the picture of a native farmer in his mud hut not only upgrading his agriculture, but also learning to read the Bible and come to Christ, was both revolutionary and heartwarming. In 1962, the report came of Koko who taught himself to read:

He took home the primers; those at the mission prayed that somehow they would find a way to teach Koko to read. One day he appeared and he *could* read! He had taught himself. They sent a notebook and a pencil to him and twice received notes from him written in Arabic script. This was a direct answer to prayer and what followed was, too. Koko and his wife and child were baptized. He has Scripture portions and some Bible stories in his hands; because he can read, these will become a part of him.⁷

Reformed Church missionaries in Africa became living examples of the importance of allowing the gospel itself to work in the hearts of local Christians rather than using political action of the missionaries to effect the changes which God would bring to an area. In the south Sudan, like the early missionaries, they had entered the land under the benevolent gaze of colonial authorities, but unlike nineteenth century missionaries they soon found themselves under the rule of Muslim leaders. Anything savored with political activity or advice on the part of the missionary could become cause for charges and expulsion from the country. By 1964, all missionaries were expelled from the Sudan.

The government held the foreign missionaries responsible for the unrest in the south and claimed that their efforts contributed to disunity of the Sudanese nation. . . .

Our missionaries, of course, were careful not to become involved in the political differences. But one of the problems was that some of the tribes' leaders involved in the unrest had been educated by Western missionaries. . . .⁸

A little over a decade later, the history of the expulsion was repeated when some of the same missionaries were sent out of Ethiopia as a revo-

lution took place in that land. Now, however the political role of the missionaries was reversed. In the Sudan, they had been a threat to the northerners who feared they were protecting the interest of the southern tribesmen. Now, in Ethiopia, missionaries had cultivated good relationships with the Christian emperor and therefore were suspect when Marxist forces took over the land. It was apparent to African Christians caught in a political whirlpool that one must develop an understanding of long-term movements and changes, allowing the gospel to work like yeast, slowly and surely, rather than allowing oneself to get caught up in the eddy of political parties and movements which quickly come and go. The mainstream people of the Reformed Church agreed. They praised the missionaries for remaining true to the gospel and its evangelical tradition of church growth, rather than becoming enamored with political schemes of liberation.

In areas other than Africa and Mexico, Reformed Church missions continued to work in partnership with the local churches. However, many suspected that as the churches of Asia settled down, they had become so concerned with their own internal lives that they were no longer reaching out with the gospel either evangelistically or socially. Those churches, like American churches, were all too ready to place their own security and institutional need first and mission second. A shift began to occur in the language used in international mission circles. In the World Council of Churches, people spoke of the goal of mission as the "kingdom of God" and of "humanization" rather than the church and individual salvation. Others said the world should set the agenda for the church. The goal therefore was not simply to help people become Christians, but to so fill them with God's search for justice that life in this dehumanized, depersonalized world would become human.

Many pointed a finger at the irrelevancy of the churches to the changes in the world. Where Marxists were strong, people often had to defend themselves against the charge that religion was the opiate of the people. After 1964, the World Council of Churches drew to itself many brilliant persons from around the world, but who were depressed by the ineffectiveness of the churches in their lands. Seeking to prove the relevance of the gospel, they often by-passed the churches in favor of direct dialogue with society. In some cases, particularly those of racial equality and national development, they favored direct political action, sometimes in concert with local persons with Marxist leanings. In their eyes, one must get beyond one's focus on the other-worldly church in order that the world under God may become human again. Salvation was now interpreted in a this-worldly rather than other-worldly sense. Those who took this position did not ask missionaries to go home. What they did ask was for a redefinition of the missionary task. The task, however, remained urgent, for each generation is entitled to the opportunity to respond to the freedom of the gospel which God intends for this world.

Missions, now at the end of the twentieth century, are not what our

forebears expected. They foresaw a time of peace and Christian kinship, with churches united around the world. They foresaw a time of victory and joy, with denominational differences overcome as Christ's reign was established on earth. They taught us to sing:

In Christ there is no East or West, In Him no South or North;
But one great fellowship of love Throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord Close binding all mankind.⁹

That Christ makes us one cannot be denied, but that unity is filled with conflict rather than harmony. Christians today do not agree on the definition of the task, a precise statement of the purpose, or even the nature of the mission before us. Conflict among Christians is one of the surprising harvests of the missionary movement. Yet we cannot let this conflict discourage us, for what swirls around us is the conflict of life not the serenity of death. God calls us still and all who listen sense the completing of the task, the overwhelming needs of the peoples of a lost world, and the weaknesses of our own lives.

But in the midst of our conflicts about the precise nature of the missionary task, we have a vision. We cannot ignore the call for laborers in fields white unto harvest. In our last chapter, we shall look ahead, for everywhere before us is the harvest.

CHAPTER 7: THE HARVEST IS EVERYWHERE BEFORE US

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' " (Romans 10:14, 15 NIV)

The missionary task of the church is unfinished. John Livingstone thought it would come to completion about 2000 A.D. Anderson anticipated that the self-propagating, self-supporting, self-governing church would soon replace missions. Yet, in our times, we know that the task has just begun. The breadth and depth of our calling into mission overwhelms us. Conscious of our inadequate resources and unable to integrate the extensive elements of the task, Christians around the world easily become frustrated with one another and uncertain of themselves. One calls for evangelism, another for social action, and a third for political action. Each church claims independence even while recognizing that it cannot stand alone. Even while urging each other on to greater efforts, many sense a lack of zeal and a loss of morale. In this chapter, we will explore the vision of the future utilizing the lessons of the past, in order that we with the whole church of Jesus Christ may be faithful in the evangelization of the whole world in our own generation.

THE VISION OF EVERY PERSON CONFESSING CHRIST

In the vision of the future which God has given us, we remember the words of Paul who looked for the day when "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every

tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11). This universal hope that human beings may have the joy of confessing Jesus as Lord and so glorifying the Father is the great vision of our faith, the goal of our mission. Scudder's vision for the six hundred million has in our time become the prayer for the three billion who live without knowing Christ. These people scattered all over the earth, eighty million in the United States, almost one billion in China, hundreds of millions in Africa, the South Sea Islands and India, and seven hundred fifty million Muslims in various lands, live outside the church. Pioneer work once had meant going to exotic lands where the "heathen" lived. Now pioneer work is everywhere, among civilizations large and small on the six continents and their neighboring islands. Missions means going to the people next door as well as to those on the other side of the earth.

Recently, the churches have become aware that we are in danger of being deluded by our successful establishment of churches in every land. In the early stages of the modern missionary movement, western Christians lived with a consciousness of a big map of the world on which only a few areas of North America and Europe could be colored in as places where the church was present. Through the years, missionaries reported the growth of the church in country after country, coloring in space after space. After the Second World War, especially as the churches became conscious of their ecumenical relationships with each other, one could discover churches in almost every country. Many concluded that the international missionary task was nearly completed. However, such "map-drawing" is both dangerous and misleading, for those engaged in the churches' missionary tasks sensed the extraordinary effort going into maintaining the pastoral care and administration of the churches themselves. Conversions continued within one's own family and among close friends, but in every land, many had little or no contact with the Christian population. Such persons were often as far from believers as the people in China had once been separated from England.

To help Christians become aware of what was happening, a new term had to be coined. Now "friendship evangelism" among one's own relatives and friends was spoken of in contrast to "cross-cultural evangelism" which touched people very different from the evangelist. This distinction forced the church to recognize that even while it faithfully witnessed to those who belonged to its own social grouping, it could easily lose sight of the unfinished task. Thus, the churches in India, China, and Japan could produce statistics showing growth even while many areas within their own lands were being left without the witness of the gospel. There were so many things to be done—so many priority matters before the church, so many people to help—that billions of people could be forgotten and left without Christ. "Church to church relationships" could become so mutually interesting that the world's needy could be easily ignored.

In April, 1979, Bishop Sam Ponniah, at his inaugural address as

bishop in the Diocese of Vellore, Church of South India, where the Arcot Mission had worked for so many years, sensed the nature of the unfinished task and called upon his people to give first priority to the work of evangelism:

In 1977 Rev. Herman Luben our friend from the R.C.A. interviewed me for *The Church Herald* when I shared my great vision God gave me of doubling the membership of believers in the Lordship of Christ in our new Diocesan Area. It was like a big burden placed on me by our Saviour. To my great surprise I found the Holy Spirit already working in the hearts of many of His children in our Area. . . . Thank God many accepted Christ as their Lord of life and have received baptism. Many are coming forward to accept the Lord.¹

Bishop Ponniah was not misled by maps showing that a church existed in a certain area. He knew that the number of Christians in India continued to be relatively small. In spite of the needs of its own area, the Vellore Diocese decided to make a missionary available to north India where the percentage of Christians was even lower than that in the south. In his speech he reported,

I am contacting a Bishop of the Church of North India. I expect a theologically qualified man preferably married to come forward for the Missionary work. As soon as a person is available in our Diocese, we would commission him for the work.²

In making these statements, Bishop Ponniah was accepting a viewpoint stated a decade earlier in Taiwan. There the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan had made a conscious decision to reach out into the mountain areas of that land and hoped to double the number of tribal persons in the church while developing lay leadership among the people in the mountains. In that same year, it emphasized the importance of its evangelistic work among students on the university campuses in the land.³ His sentiments were echoed in the Sudan, where in 1979 it was reported that 1700 persons were baptized within the past twelve months, and where a Reformed Church missionary family was once again working after receiving the invitation of the Sudanese church to join in its task of evangelism and mission.⁴ In each of these lands, as in Ethiopia, Mexico, and the Philippines, Anderson's priority of the pure preaching of the gospel to those who have not heard it remained the center of the missionary burden. The moderator of the United Church of Christ (Kyodan) in Japan, Masahisa Suzuki, summarized this attitude of churches around the world when he wrote:

In connection with Advance, the Kyodan should open evangelistic work and construct meeting places in areas where the Gospel is not yet preached, and where new types of preaching should be embarked upon. Yet we must always ponder the fact that evangelism is not a business enterprise but the performance of individual duty in the Name of the Holy Spirit. We must

pray constantly with all energy, and keep seeking new areas for cultivation.⁵

The vision of developing new areas of cooperation in evangelism with other churches encouraged the Reformed Church in 1977 to begin work in Venezuela for the first time. Sam and Irene Solivan became the first Reformed Church missionaries in South America, working in cooperation with the Union Evangelica Pentecostal Venezolana. The Solivans soon found themselves laboring on a broad front, but were asked to concentrate on training leadership through a program of lay and pastoral theological education. Within three years, 36 people were enrolled in a program of education under their leadership.

In early 1980, the Solivans reported the story of one of their students, a 19-year-old man named Marcos, who took up work on the highest mountain in the state of Portuguesa. He was instrumental in organizing a new congregation of 125 adults. Their report includes a vivid statement of their night in the village:

After the service, since there is no electricity or running water in this small community of a few mud huts, we sat in the dark in the kitchen of one until 2:00 a.m. drinking coffee and answering questions about Christian life and different points of the Scriptures. There was a great hunger for knowledge in this place. . . . We also had a baptismal service in a natural waterfall area and 19 new members of the congregation who were formally incorporated the following night. . . . One Sunday morning, we had Sunday School. The little chapel was overflowing. People were standing in the windows and outside.⁶

THE VISION OF FREEDOM TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Since 1800, Reformed Church missions have depended on the civil authorities for permission to preach the gospel. As a result, in order that the gospel continue to be proclaimed, they have constantly been tempted to support or at least not to oppose the colonial power or the party in control. Yet political authorities are feeble reeds on which to lean. When conditions changed, missionaries were forced to leave. They had to leave Japan during World War II, China after the communists gained control, and the Sudan after 1964. Several families were denied permission to return to Taiwan. Missionaries are being refused visas to enter India and others live in danger of being expelled from their countries. In the United States, protestant missions among the Indians flourished between 1787 and 1862 when there was an alliance between the government and mission agencies. The missionaries paid a price for the alliance: the approval of Indian removal to the western plains and ultimately the alienation of the majority of Indians.

Missions must be free from depending on civil authorities for the right to preach the gospel. Therefore, churches around the world should accept three points as axiomatic. First, civil rights, including the freedom of speech and worship, should not be compromised anywhere. Second,

missions are a matter of international partnership among churches and therefore differing economic and political theories should be accepted by Christians who have a common evangelistic mission. Though missions at times may have to oppose capitalists, communists, and/or socialists, they may not necessarily have to do so. Third, missions should welcome the coming of a world in which there is social and economic equality, where other nations are as wealthy as the United States and are able to challenge the United States in the markets of the world. In such a world, charity will be replaced by medical, economic, and political structures guaranteeing that the needs of the poor will be met. Christian charity will be replaced by tax-paying in order to support necessary social structures around the world. On the one hand, people will no longer be tempted to become "rice Christians," or, on the other hand, to compromise their Christian faith because they are poor.

Bishop Ponniah, in his inaugural address, recognized the relationship which exists between civil rights and evangelism. He stated that the fundamental rights of Indian citizens and the freedom to preach the gospel cannot be separated. Before he spoke, a "freedom of religion bill" had been introduced into the Indian Parliament. The Hindu sponsors intended that this bill insure peoples' freedom to practice their own religion but not to carry out effective evangelism among persons of other faiths. It provided that "no person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from one religious faith to another by the use of force, or deceit, or by any fraudulent means, nor shall any person abet such conversion." As interpreted by some of the states of India, at least, even the giving or selling of a Bible could be interpreted as a fraudulent means for enticing conversion. Immediately, the Christians in India recognized that the issue of human and civil rights could not be separated from that of evangelism. Ponniah reported,

Already our fellow Christians in Arunachala Pradesh are facing persecution. Many of them have lost their property and Church buildings. Some of them have lost their lives. Fundamental rights guaranteed in the Indian Constitution is not strictly followed. Freedom to preach, propagate, and to practise is denied in Arunachala Pradesh.⁷

The churches of England and North America have been slow to recognize the intimate relationship between evangelism and the struggle for civil rights and freedom. By the nineteenth century, Christians in those lands had already gained for themselves the rights they needed to practice their religion. As citizens of nations of power, and enjoying the privileges that colonial powers could give to Christian missionaries, western Christians shared with their countrymen the fear of "barbarism." In their eyes the need to "civilize" the world took precedence over granting full civil liberties and freedom to others.

The policy of giving precedence to evangelizing and civilizing over basic liberties was nowhere more openly and, on the part of the govern-

ment at least, more cynically implemented than among the American Indians. From the very beginning of the Republic in 1789, President Washington agreed with his secretary of war, Henry Knox, that

the civilization of the Indians was difficult but not impossible; that it would be costly but still the highest economy in contrast to any system of coercion. Presents and military commissions might be bestowed and all manner of expedients used to attach the aborigines to the nation, but the fundamental program would be the employment of missionaries. . . . The object of this establishment would be the happiness of the Indians, teaching them the great duties of religion and morality, and to inculcate a friendship and attachment to the United States.⁸

The results of this policy were soon felt by the Indians. The Cherokees proved to be one of the most cooperative tribes, with the result that by 1825 even the War Department recognized that "the Christian religion is the religion of the (Cherokee) nation." However, the United States government did not grant the Cherokees the civil rights which belonged to American citizens. Instead, the government forced them, under terrible circumstance, to move from Georgia to more western areas. In an appeal to Congress, the chiefs declared:

The Cherokees have turned their attention to the pursuits of the civilized man: agriculture, manufactures, and the mechanic arts and education are all in successful operation in the nation at this time; and while the Cherokees are peacefully endeavouring to enjoy the blessings of civilization and Christianity on the soil of their rightful inheritance, and while the exertions and labors of various religious societies of the United States are successfully engaged in promulgating to them the words of truth and life from the sacred volume of Holy Writ, and under the patronage of the General Government, they are threatened with removal or extinction.⁹

We have already seen one result of this Indian policy that used missionaries as instruments of government while ignoring the rights of the Indians. In our first chapter we heard the call of the Indian to the Reformed Church: "We do not need the Bible. We and our fathers have been Christians for many years. We do not need the Bible; we need justice." The net result is that today's Native American often looks more to his own roots for true "civilization" than to the white man's culture. In a 1978 statement of the General Program Council regarding Native American Christian leadership, one finds the tragic statement:

It was a general pattern of paternalism and the mission was considered to be the church of the white man. The Indian did not identify the church as his.

There was the recruitment of several Indian leaders who went into the ministry of the Reformed Church. However, three of them left, one died, and one retired. This first generation was unable to duplicate itself, nor did we want it to.

Out of this we find ourselves today in a desperate need for leadership. In 499 Native American Churches representing 22 denominations . . . there

are presently 68 Native American pastors . . . there are four persons studying for church careers.¹⁰

Such are the results when basic human rights are ignored by those who allow governments to exploit them as they preach the gospel.

The events of the last four decades have made us fully aware of how vulnerable missionaries and church are where basic civil rights are not respected. In all of those countries where missionaries entered under the canopy of western military or colonial power, they have at times been refused admission by succeeding national independent governments. Local Christians in each of those countries live in fear that even those rights which they still enjoy may in the near future be taken away, either directly or indirectly. In 1961, out of the Chol country of Mexico came the report about some Chols who had become Christians:

Some Chols paid heavy fines rather than hopelessly fight a biased judge. Three innocent young men spent four years in the state penitentiary. The Indian had always been persecuted, and the new faith was something for which he willingly suffered persecution.¹¹

As human beings, we struggle always with the tendency to reduce God's great visions into our narrow focus. In the field of missions, some Christians have centered their attention on evangelism; others have promoted human rights. Yet God wills that human beings be free to choose Jesus Christ, not under coercion either from the right or from the left. This was recognized by the Scudders from the beginning, yet they were less conscious of the importance of civil rights than of the simple preaching of the gospel. If the urgent task of evangelism in the whole world is to be completed in each generation, then it is imperative that Christians become zealous for human rights. Only then can the gospel be freely preached and the choice be freely made by the billions who live on this planet.

THE VISION OF SENSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS

In the vision of the future which God is giving us, sensitive partnerships of Christians and Christian churches all around the world make it possible to continue to proclaim the gospel even when political events hamper the work of missionaries.

When the flow of missionaries begins to reverse itself, with Asians and Africans making their gifts available in the United States, the world will see that missionary work is not a form of imperialism. Asians and Africans in the United States are as free to speak as are American missionaries elsewhere. With this vision, Rev. Ka Tong Gaw, in 1972, wrote an article entitled, "Why I Am in Missions Overseas in the USA." He showed that while living in southern California, he had learned that missions involves learning where the Christian can best exercise the gifts God has given.

That's why I'm doing my mission overseas in the United States. It involves ministering to the many thousands of international students and professionals here in America. Practically every nation of the world is now at America's doorstep. Providing services for them, showing care towards them, and interacting with them about Christ is a real challenge. We need to say and show the same "we care" to them that traditional missions had always intended. . . .

I maintain that in this age of Coca-Cola and computers, the importance of mission overseas to the U.S.A. should become increasingly recognized by Americans.¹²

Substituting "international missions" for the older designations of "foreign," or "domestic," or "world" missions should not be dismissed as a nice ideal or distant vision. Using such a concept is ultimately the only way to make obsolete the attitude of "missionary, go home!" expressed by Dr. Gatu. So long as American Christians feel that they have much to offer others while these others have little or nothing to offer in return, peoples around the world will perceive American Christians as having a superior attitude.

During the early 1970's, the North American world was suddenly made aware of the reversal of the religious flow of life in this world when Asian religions began offering their spiritual gifts to North Americans. Hindus and Buddhists ministered to millions of North Americans by teaching them the lost art of meditation. The churches of the American world scarcely knew how to cope with this new situation. Protestants and post-Vatican II Roman Catholics alike had become so engrossed in living the faith in a secular world that few in the churches could help those desirous of more adequate means for meditating upon the Lord. It did not occur to North American Christians that many Asian Christians had gifts in the Christian practice of meditation. Now the churches of North America needed the missionaries, both for their own spiritual life and for helping the "pagans" of American's secularized society discover again the faith in Jesus Christ they longed for.

Only when the churches learn to receive as well as to give will it be possible to fulfill the call to evangelize the world in each generation.

THE VISION OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY AND CIVIL TAX-PAYING

In the vision of the harvest that God has given us, we see a time when people of every nation will have justice and life's necessities. As the prophet Micah said:

For out of Zion shall go forth the Law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall decide for strong nations from afar off;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,

and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,
and none of them shall be afraid. (Micah 4:3-4)

Modern missions began during the colonial era; their expansion was made possible by the political and economic power of the western nations. The tactics of the mission often were built upon the very poverty the missionaries fought. Now we are faced with the possibility of living in a world where the relationships between the economic and political powers of nations will be radically altered. Already Japan and the nations around the Arabian Gulf have become great economic powers. Mexico's oil may bring her to the verge of becoming an affluent nation. In this rise to affluence, God is giving those nations what the missionaries and western churches have worked and prayed for. The elimination of poverty will bring the emergence of new possibilities for comfort, cultural life, and spiritual discernment. No longer will it be necessary for missionaries to risk their health, even their lives, among the poor; they will now be able to minister to the people's spiritual needs without having to expend energy providing services and food necessary to meet basic human needs.¹³

Yet this present situation has not been welcomed by every missions supporter. Some, once ready to give their old eye-glasses to the Arabs and to roll bandages for the missionary hospitals, now resent the Arabs having the oil to enable them to enjoy a standard of living perhaps equal to that of North Americans. Those who once enjoyed cheap toys "made in Japan" and who sent money to educate the Japanese now not only resent the Japanese's ability to produce sophisticated machinery,¹⁴ but also do not want to relate to educated Japanese tourists in our land. In spite of their pride in capitalism, they prefer being charitable to competing, and benevolence to international trade agreements.

When God gave us the vision of a world in which every nation would have its own fig tree and its own vine, where each country would be economically independent and relatively affluent, we did not realize that tax-paying and trade would supplant Christian charity. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, North Americans became a charitable people, sharing their blessings with a needy world. Yet one of the problems inherent in charitable work is that it is always the giver who decides how much can be given. Usually, the donor gives as much as possible without limiting in any profound way what he or she believes necessary to live a satisfying life. Charity can at any moment be cut off. In the 1960's, Americans were generous with their wheat and corn—so long as the harvests were plentiful. However, as soon as harvests were less bountiful, Americans decreased the amount of food they had made available to other lands, while they kept approximately the same quantity.

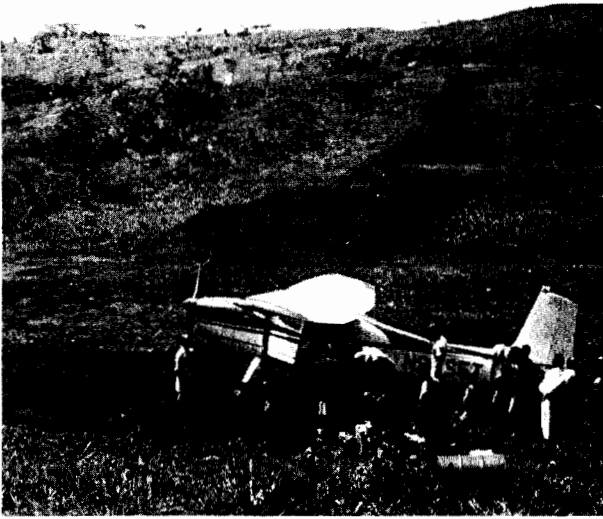
In our times, governments all over the world have accepted in theory

what the missionaries of the nineteenth century were trying to teach—that God “shows no partialty” (Acts 10:34) and that every person, whatever sex, race, or caste, has the right to food, shelter, medical care, and education. As a result, what was in the nineteenth century Christian charity for some has now become governmental provision for all. The church as a charitable institution is being replaced by social agencies of the civil authorities. Christian charity is being replaced by tax-paying. This development is not to be regreted; it is actually another episode of the success story of modern missions. To see something of Micah’s vision fulfilled before one’s own eyes is one of God’s great gifts. It is what the Scudders rejoiced over when they sold their medical instruments in 1852. Nevertheless, it takes time for us to become accustomed to the surprising harvest of the missionary movement. We never expected that the sowing of Christian charity would bring a harvest of tax-paying, as Christians join with others seeking the best means to give dignity, growth, and joy to all who in their own society need assistance. How Christians respond to this new form of mission often indicates whether they support missionaries in order to promote their own interests or in order for God’s salvation and justice to be made available to all peoples.

THE VISION OF OBEDIENT PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER

The modern missionary movement has expended a great deal of energy developing grand strategies and establishing proper priorities. Yet our study of missions has shown that even the best of human plans are inadequate and that the resulting harvest very often differs from what was at first anticipated. We therefore conclude that missions is not so much a matter of strategy as it is one of obedience to God, not so much the execution of a plan as the fulfillment of a calling. Missions needs both the vision of individuals as well as the coordinating planning of churches, even though it has always had to deal with the tension between the two. We have noted how individuals such as Zwemer, Cantine, and Lansing opened the Arabian Mission against the wishes of the church. In fact, the history of missions overseas is filled with stories of individual missionaries, who, against the wishes of their fellow-missionaries and the mission board in America, opened hospitals, began evangelistic work, and developed educational institutions. Though many of these individual dreams soon passed out of existence, some were recognized as having great value and were incorporated into the church’s regular budget.

In recent years, as members of the Reformed Church have become more aware of the variety of opportunities in international missions and as people from around the world have developed means of communicating their dreams to others, a wide variety of missionary activities have come into being. The world-wide radio broadcast called Words of Hope, The World Home Bible League, Portable Recordings, Missionary Avia-



tion Fellowship, and many other smaller organizations have developed alongside the work of the General Program Council of the Reformed Church in America. All enjoy the support of many people in the Reformed Church.

The denomination's missions have always been ecumenical in nature, with the denomination presently cooperating with the great councils of churches and with other denominations. In addition, members of the Reformed churches have simultaneously developed their own grass-roots ecumenicity in local missions with other churches by contributing to innumerable American evangelistic and social agencies, and by personally volunteering to work under the auspices of the Reformed Church in America or other mission agencies.

We have reached a stage in international missions where God is pouring out his gifts with such generosity and variety that no one can fathom all that is going on. Therefore, today's need is for "charismatic planning" whereby the gifts and dreams of individuals and small groups are integrated with the broad outlook of church leaders knowledgeable about international relations and the sweep of mission history. Those who have a sense of calling and a measure of the gifts of the Spirit must seek out the wisdom of those who have the gift of administrating and a sense of priorities. The old must not be neglected for the glamor of the new; the new must not be rejected because the task of the old is unfinished.

With the vision of the harvest everywhere before us, we continue our missionary task of evangelizing the whole world in each generation, singing one of the newer missionary hymns because we know that "God is Working His Purpose Out:"

All we can do is nothing worth Unless God blesses the deed;
Vainly we hope for the harvest-tide Till God gives life to the seed;

Yet nearer and nearer draws the time, The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.¹⁴

Yet even the hymnwriters cannot catch the full vision of the full harvest.
Therefore, we return again to the Scriptures and, with the missionary
Paul, sing:

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
‘For who has known the mind of the Lord
or who has been his counselor?’
‘Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?’
For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

FOOTNOTES

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