

The Role of The Missionary Today

*Donald McGavran
Drake University
Des Moines, Iowa*

What do the tremendous changes of these times, of which we have been reminded here so often, mean for the role of the missionary in the next thirty years? What should be the relation of missionaries to younger churches? How far should missionaries be used in institutions? What does the persistent demand for identification mean for the missionary role? The subject is a broad one of vital concern to both the older and the younger churches. I start with seven introductory observations.

First, while Christian Americans employed abroad by government and corporations and while missionaries of the younger churches are important parts of the total missionary force; owing to limitations of time, we shall not discuss them. We shall confine ourselves to professional missionaries sent abroad by American churches.

Second, I read this paper in the midst of tremendous debate. The nature of the Church, the theology of mission, the relation of Christianity to non-Christian faiths, of ours to other cultures, methods of learning languages, means of communication, and even ends of mission today are all vigorously discussed. What seems to some "a consensus of enlightened opinion" seems to others "the veriest ivory towerism," Procedures into which Roman Catholics and the Assemblies of God pour millions of dollars appear to others out-moded and even reprehensible.

Professor Beaver, to whose William Carey Lectures delivered at Serampore College a year and a half ago we all owe so much, points out that while a new world mission is demanded today and many administrators are striving to find the machinery to implement it, they admittedly lack clear direction, for "no one knows just what world mission is." Consequently any

pronouncement I make on the role of the missionary may to others seem questionable. When we apply to specific situations the general principles we have been talking about, we shall get lively discussion and probably some clear dissent. That is all to the good.

Third, nevertheless, forecasts on the missionary role are timely. All boards are sending missionaries and intend to continue. When we consider what is expended on education, training, travel to the fields, language study, and period of apprenticeship, we clearly see that very large expenses hang on forecasts. Even more important, the future direction of the younger churches (and hence of the Church) is being influenced by what we think the role of the missionary should be.

Fourth, my convictions about missionaries have been born in thirty years as one in intimate association in the vernacular with the actual congregations and people of mid-India. My convictions have matured in a series of investigations as to the present state of both port-city and deep interior congregations in Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Thailand, India, and Africa, and an observation of missionaries at work there. The present dissatisfaction of many younger missionaries, the high rate of return to the homeland, despite elaborate devices for selection, and the segregation of missionaries on peripheral tasks, disturbs me. I have spent a good deal of time discussing their role with them and with leaders of the younger churches.

Fifth, while the topic assigned me is "The Role of the Missionary," we all recognize that the missionary has many roles, to fit many different situations. I cannot state emphatically enough that the world mission faces multitudinous situations each one different from the others. The tasks are essentially different in each situation. We must therefore speak in the plural of the roles of the missionary.

There are, to be sure, some general trends to which I shall come in due time; but if we are to see these correctly, we need to concentrate first on the diverse roles which today demands.

Sixth, the matter is urgent. We teach missions in the midst of a blaze of opportunity. No era in the history of the Church faced a greater responsiveness to the Gospel. The part of the world revolution most significant for world mission is just this responsiveness. While debate rages on the nature of the Church, ecumenical theology, koinonia, polarity of cultural developments, the ecclesiological relation of sectarian autonomy to the world Church, and other matters, responsive multitudes who can be won to Christ, live and die without Him. Half a billion have never even

heard His name. We believe that the theoretical questions need answering and will be answered, but the harvest must be reaped. We hope to be obedient in the underlying theory of mission but we must be obedient in the task at hand. There is no error greater than that of coming out of ripe fields empty handed.

Seventh, roles do not just happen. Administration creates roles in accordance with the ends of mission really sought. The Seventh Day Adventists and the Church of Rome create different roles in accordance with their basic goals. He would be a brash man who would affirm that their roles are quite wrong while ours are quite right. Roles are what we make them. Environmental factors have a bearing to be sure, but over-riding purposes play a determining part. The task of missionary administration beginning in seminaries and continuing through boards, missions, younger churches is not passively to chart immutable modern tendencies and describe what roles will fit these. It is rather to see what roles God wills, what roles our chief ends require, and what administration will create them. We are not helpless spectators watching a river in flood. We are engineers. We can divert the river, dam it, and put it to work. Administration creates the missionary roles it desires.

Eighth, and perhaps most important, the chief roles of the missionary must be seen today and tomorrow in the light of and under the judgment of the chief ends of mission. The tremendous changes of these times have not and indeed cannot change the divine ends of the Christian mission. H. D. Northfield, late warden of St. Andrews College, Selly Oak, has a fine statement on this in a recent *International Review*, He says:

We do not think it part of God's will for His Church that men and women who go to serve the Church overseas should be only theologians, teachers, medicals or farmers. They should all be 'missionaries' over and above their qualifications. Not only should the candidate have a heart of love and regard evangelism as his main duty and privilege, but he should have had experience as an evangelist and discovered in what particular way he can best lead people to Christ.

Consideration of the chief ends of mission brings us to theology. Mission rises out of the nature of God. The God revealed by Christ is a searching, saving God. He works for the salvation of all men to the ends of the world and at the cost of His Son. The cross demonstrates His passionate desire for the redemption of men. Missionaries are precisely those who

share this passionate concern which breaks through into exclamations like Paul's, "Oh for their salvation, brothers. That is my heart's desire and prayer to God."

The power of the Great Commission lies in just this: that it expresses so completely and inevitably what our God revealed in Christ and the Cross does and must command. Hence, there is no wider, deeper, and more lasting description of the chief ends of mission, unless possibly it should be Paul's great affirmation that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. In either case mission becomes the Church carrying out this redemptive reconciling function. The missionary, like Paul, entreats all men: "Be reconciled to God."

According to my theology, planting churches and upbuilding those planted, that they in turn may carry out the apostolate, is what mission essentially is. I doubt if mission can profitably be defined as "the total global thrust of the Church." The Church in this wide, needy and sinful world does and should do a great many good things, which are not mission. If these be all included, "mission" becomes so thin that the Church fails to reproduce and is found barren and without children in lands flowing with milk and honey. Please do not assume, however, that this theology is unconcerned with social welfare. This theology is intensely interested in social welfare, but believes the surest way to achieve it, in lands where Christians comprise a tiny minority, is to multiply sound, thoroughly Christian churches.

The roles of the missionary are inextricably bound up with theology and that in turn with the historic processes of missions in many different situations. Missions, facing many different situations and justifying their works in each one, often arrive at theological positions very different from those with which they started out. Often also, the theological position, which the distribution of their budget shouts aloud, differs radically from that which their official statement of purpose whispers. In the light of all this I feel that the roles -- so prone to wander -- must constantly be judged by the degree to which they do reconcile men to God.

So much for introductory considerations. Let us now examine four actual situations and the roles the missionary plays in each, in the light of the chief ends of mission. As soon as we come face to face with actual fields, a good many facile generalizations will be seen for what they are -- oversimplification.

First Fruits
THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

First: Jamaica

In Jamaica, a nominally Protestant land, full of highly winnable unchurched people, the Moravians started missions two hundred years ago. Today there is a mature church of 12,000, forty churches, five English missionary families, and twenty Jamaican ministers. It has grown little in the last thirty years.

It casts its five missionaries in the role of pastors of Moravian congregations. All have exactly the same status and duties as Jamaican ministers. One of them, a man on the point of retirement, is the bishop of the church, not because he is European, but because his Jamaican brethren thought he would make a good bishop. One successful pastor-missionary, in addition to his other duties, is principal of the Teacher's Training College. Since the five missionaries are paid from England, the contributions of their five Jamaican congregations go to the Jamaican Church Fund from which all pastors are paid.

In this Jamaican-Moravian situation, the missionary plays four roles: a continuing link with the parent church, a welcome indirect assistance in the payment of ministers' salaries, a demonstration of the inter-racial character of Christianity, and an affirmation that the primary purpose of mission is the welfare of the Church.

As we let the light of the Great Commission fall on these four good roles and gaze upon the million unchurched Jamaicans, we remember that this church has grown very little, and wonder whether she and her assisting missionaries are achieving as much "mission" as their Lord desires. Has "mission" been omitted from these missionary roles?

Second: the Philippines

In the Philippine Islands, a nominally Roman Catholic land full of winnable people, the United Church of Christ has approximately 100,000 communicants, 800 congregations, and 400 ministers. The United Church of Christ is holding its own but not growing significantly.

It is assisted by about one hundred missionaries, of whom eighty-one teach in Silliman University or theological seminaries, or do student, medical, agricultural, or administrative work. Nineteen do church work. Only two are pastors. None of the twenty-two moderators or the four bishops is a missionary. The United Church makes scant use of missionaries in the church field.

Two missionary roles are clearly seen: (1) church civil servants, not the bishop or the moderator, but the methodical civil servant who presents the Philippine heads of the departments or the bishops with the facts, records, routine decisions, and organizational planning which the church requires; (2) the specialist in student or agricultural work, or the teacher in Silliman University, theological seminary or Bible schools.

As we let the light of "mission" play on these roles, remembering both the tremendous opportunity for church growth and its necessity if the eight hundred churches are to become any kind of an Apostolate, what shall we say to the United Church? Let me tell you what I did say. My report, "Multiplying Churches in the Philippines," recommended that each of the twenty-two conferences be given two new missionary families; that these new missionaries be given eighteen months language study, instead of six; and then apprenticed to Filipino pastors under whose ministries churches were growing by conversion from the world. The new missionaries would then be located as pastors of promising but typical churches with a mandate to build and extend them.

On their return from their first furlough, the missionaries would be used throughout the churches as specialists in evangelism and church development, teachers in seminaries, pastors of churches, church administrators, student workers, college teachers, or in any other way the United Church of Christ in the Philippines desired. What I was saying, in short, was that the missionary must not be a detached specialist. First of all, he must be a successful churchman, intimately knowing the language, the churches, the peoples, and the ways in which men come to Christian faith there in the Philippines. After that, let specialization occur as it will.

Roles, I think, are not to be judged by expedience, popular fashion, or even by what the older or the younger churches desire; but by the degree to which the missionaries playing such roles do actually act in such a way that the Holy Spirit can through them build and extend the Church.

Third: Belgian Congo

In the Christian Church of Belgian Congo, we have a very different situation. With 80,000 communicant members and about 200,000 highly responsive pagans, the Church has recently almost stopped growing. In 1955 there were perhaps thirty experienced Congolese pastors whose training was that of an eighth grade graduate plus two years of Bible. The rest of the four hundred pastors were men to two to seven years of grade school education with some Bible training. No Congolese sat on the

mission executive committee, nor did the Church have an effective central organization of its own.

Although on the level of the bush churches, the four hundred African pastors were in almost full control, with visits from the station missionary only once in several months, nevertheless missionaries were without question the directors of the churches, schools, and hospitals. Steps are being taken, of course, to train Africans for church, school, and hospital leadership, making them first partners and then masters of the entire enterprise, but for the next twenty years, the role of the missionary is person in charge, turning over to Africans as fast as leaders can be developed.

What should we say to this role? I suggest two answers. First, that for this band of seventy missionaries, facing this particular church, the role of trainer of leaders and directors of church and school is probably largely correct. Roles are always partly dependent on the relation of resources in a particular field, to the size of the task there. For seventy missionaries in a new Christian population of 80,000 communicants, the perfecting, rather than the discipling role may be largely correct. Second, that for the Christian Churches of America and their United Christian Missionary Society, contentment with roles which leave winnable multitudes unwon or let them go to the Church of Rome is a tragic error. In addition to this band of missionaries, the Christian Churches of America should throw another band of perhaps forty missionaries into these responsive tribes -- missionaries whose role will be not that of conserving those already Christian, but of claiming responsive populations for Christ. How different the Congo is from the Philippines! What different roles each situation requires!

Fourth: India

We now examine the India mission of the Disciples of Christ and its younger church. This is my church and my mission, which I have served for over thirty years.

The younger church has about 4,000 communicants, eighteen congregations, twenty-four missionaries, and eight ordained nationals serving as ministers. Each year in addition to about a hundred young people cut of Christian families, it baptizes a few from "the world." The church had a small spurt of growth from one responsive caste fifteen years ago, but otherwise has exhibited very little growth from the world for the

last forty years. It has increased from 2,536 in 1927 to 4,037 today which is an increase of 17% per decade or slightly under two per cent a year.

Through all these years it has done much evangelistic work, maintaining a team of men and women evangelists in each of its stations. It has also emphasized educational work. It maintains 8 primary and 5 middle schools and has sent many students to Ewing, Hyslop, and Isabella Thoburn Christian Colleges. It has sent some to medical school and at least 25 to America for graduate work. It maintains two very large hospitals, one nationally famous nurses' training school, one well-known tuberculosis sanitorium, three smaller hospitals and four dispensaries.

Over 30 years ago it transferred to Indians complete control of the churches. During the last 30 years it has been turning over management of mission enterprises also. Thus at present out of 50 posts previously held by missionaries, 36 are in the hands of Indians; the committee of management has on it 9 Indians to 5 Americans.

This part of India resents conversions. The Niyogi Commission worked partly among us. The Gass Memorial was burned only 60 miles away. Christians fear to proclaim the Gospel lest they make themselves a target. In this situation, this and no other, what is the role of the missionary?

We might say, "This is a grand work. We should assign to these schools, hospitals, and churches assistants at the rate of one missionary to 150 Christians -- the present proportion. Missionaries should be institutionalists, teachers, doctors, and nurses. We cannot expect any growth for many years, but let us maintain multiple links with this fine little church and through it bear high the torch of Christianity in this part of the world."

On the other hand we might say, "This church has had tremendous assistance for over fifty years. National leaders on a great scale have been trained. Churches have been built. Property has been acquired. We cannot expect exterior growth. Further assistance now on a scale of one missionary to 150 Christians might damage self-direction. Let us turn over more and more of the enterprise to Indian management and have in effect a church which runs, with Indian and foreign money, a large institutional welfare program. Let us continue perhaps one missionary to a thousand Christians, considering the missionaries as inter-racial and international links."



First Fruits
THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

This situation is radically different from those in Jamaica, the Philippines, and Belgian Congo. The roles for mid-India missionaries must be determined in relation to the mid-India situation.

A number of you have seen Dr. Rycroft's analysis of the use of missionary personnel in his excellent statement "A Strategy for the Christian Mission." He points out that in 1952, 3000 Protestant missionaries in Latin America representing 84 different United States religious agencies, were being used as follows:

General church workers and evangelists 66%

Educators, doctors, nurses, agriculturists, etc. 34%

Dr. Rycroft believes this proportion is wrong and calls for more specialists. I am not here debating whether he is right or wrong, I am pointing out that with such inclusive figures (3000 missionaries, all Latin America) totally unchecked against the growth and welfare of particular churches, any claim for rightness or wrongness is wholly subjective thinking on the one hand and much too large generalization on the other. In short, churches carrying out world mission should in the light of the Great Commission define the task in each separate situation and prepare missionaries for these roles.

We are now ready to consider eleven general roles. They are my choice from among those most frequently mentioned in this era. Other roles are also needed tomorrow. The list does not include many roles such as "Champion of the Oppressed," "Saint," "Emancipator," or "Pioneer" which have been played by missionaries of all ages. It does, I hope, focus attention on some of the roles of greatest debate and concern.

ROLE 1: MULTI-RACIAL AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

Since before the Throne and the Lamb will stand "a great multitude which no man can number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples, and tongues," there is good Christian reason for missionaries from every race. Furthermore with the rise of the younger churches in almost every land, missionaries of every nation are going to be available in large numbers. American boards can use citizens of Japanese, Negro and Mexican backgrounds as regular parts of their multi-racial teams. If we use half the imagination and zeal that goes into recruiting basket-ball teams, we shall find abundant dedicated men and women.

Korean missionaries to India, Filipino missionaries to Thailand, and Puerto Rican missionaries to Argentina, though outside the scope of this paper, would advance this good role still further.

How should teams be composed so that missionaries from many races can be most effective in extending the Christian faith? (1) Each team might be composed of persons of several races, mother tongues, and standards of living. Each team would then demonstrate inter-racial brotherhood within itself. But its inner tensions would also consume much of its energy and militate against fullest effectiveness. Or (2) each team might be composed of persons of one nationality, mother tongue and standard of living. This has been the traditional mode -- teams of Englishmen, Scandinavians, and Americans. We would now add teams of Koreans, Filipinos and Nigerians. This system would have fewer inner tensions. Teams could devote more energy to "mission." Probably both systems in varying measure should be encouraged.

ROLE 2: THE MISSIONARY AS ECUMENICAL MESSENGER

Missions today have ceased to be one-way thrusts. It is no longer the Christian West carrying the Gospel to the non-Christian East. It is instead Christians, East and West, carrying the Gospel to non-Christians, West and East. The world mission is now seen to be the task of the world Church. An apostolic Church and all her congregations is constantly in mission to the whole world with a compelling concern for the unity that constitutionally belongs to the whole Church and with a compelling passion that the world may know God in Christ. Hence, missionaries inevitably play the role of ecumenical messengers.

All American missionaries, no matter what their specific tasks, will consequently think of themselves not as Americans at work in underprivileged Eastern lands, but as missionaries of the world-wide Church of Christ. They will proclaim primarily not American culture, standards of living, or technological advance. They will proclaim primarily Him Whom to know is Life Eternal. They will be multiplying not primarily some branch of the Church of Christ, but primarily the Church of Jesus Christ itself.

The extent to which any given missionary practices this role, will depend on his situation. Should he be sent out by some church which considers itself the only valid or real church or should his field of labor lie among hundreds of rural churches in, say, Nigeria or Sumatra, he can stress this role only very slightly. If he teaches at some Union Theological

Seminary or convenes some provincial Christian Council, this role should occupy a considerable portion of his time.

Yet the basic purpose of most missionaries cannot be considered that of harmonizing churches, building up in existing congregations adequate conceptions of what the world Church really is, or bringing about an ecumenical viewpoint, desirable as all these are. Mission is the Church spending itself in proclamation by word and deed, by life and witness. Every missionary entreats men to be reconciled to God. As ecumenical messenger he makes sure that, in the process of being reconciled, men have (as far as it is possible for those particular men to have) a sound understanding of the world Church.

ROLE 3: THE MISSIONARY AS SHORT-TERM SPECIALIST

Five hundred miles south of Manila at Silliman University I met Mr. Anderson. The University had been running in the red. Mr. Anderson, a specialist in university finance, was sent out for a few years as comptroller. He pulled the accounts back into the black. On the train below Leopoldville I met Father Lievens, a highly-placed Belgian Roman Catholic priest, who was in the Congo for a couple of years “coordinating the work of Catholic missions.” It is beyond question that in some situations such specialists are needed. Where American experience is immediately applicable to the younger church situation, they can be used profitably.

But the short-term specialist is not the role of the missionary. Conditions abroad are very different to those in the United States. American specialists can advise effectively in relatively few areas. The short-term specialist does not learn the language. He associates largely with the small, English-knowing section of the younger church. He often gets a distorted view of the Church’s real problems and communicates it to the sending Church on his return.

The sending churches should not count the short-term specialist as a common type of missionary. When a special need arises and an American to fit it is found, special arrangements can always be made.

ROLE 4: THE MISSIONARY AS INSTITUTIONAL WORKER, TEACHER, AND TECHNOLOGIST

This role brings us at once into the heart of a vast missionary effort concerned with lifting Christians and serving non-Christians

through education, medicine, and agriculture. Many writers on missions are saying, "The younger churches can handle church affairs such as worship, teaching, and evangelism, but in relieving suffering, increasing agricultural production, teaching special subjects like English literature and mathematics or launching some new emphasis like literacy, the older churches can make their greatest contribution." We have already seen that in the Philippines 81 out of a 100 missionaries were thus used. Missions which have large institutional commitments will continue to need doctors, nurses, teachers, and other institutionalists. And wherever mission becomes a kind of ecclesiastical Point Four, missionary technologists are necessary. A.H. Dammers in a recent IRM says, "It is just in these fields -- university work, teaching and research -- that the western missionary is most needed today," What shall we say to Mr. Dammers and his very common role?

In some younger church situations, I would heartily second Mr. Dammers dictum. In others I would heartily question it. In any case it seems to me we cannot naively determine roles solely on the basis of present needs or tendencies in younger and older churches. We must continually consult the chief ends of mission.

Dr. Stanley Rycroft, Secretary for Latin America for the Presbyterians, in a competent statement defines the supreme objective of the Christian mission:

... to make Christian disciples of all men everywhere, to seek that they accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord, that as baptized Christians they become active members of local congregations, seek to bring others to a knowledge of Christ, and by word and deed seek the Kingdom of God in personal and social relationships.

We must ask, "Do the roles of institutional worker, teacher, and technologist in actual situations secure this objective?" For those concerned with reconciling men to God this is the question.

Facing the tremendous revolution in missions and younger churches and the kaleidoscopic changes of the day, we must avoid generalization and ask of each specific situation: "Is this church handling worship, teaching, and proclamation so that healthy church growth occurs? In this specific church is it wise to train and manipulate missionaries so that they serve chiefly in institutions? Does such a policy advance mission? Or simply serve the existing vested interests? Is the great need of this younger church at the point of technology or victorious Christianity?"

There has been a drift in some quarters to institutional roles for missionaries, but has it been a right drift? Is it aiding these churches to vigorous, joyfully infectious, Christian life? If it is, it is right. If it isn't, must we not rule it wrong? If Protestant institutional missionaries as a matter of fact are creating fervent outreach in the churches, we should assist the swing to institutionalism. But when the institutional roles for us Protestants result in non-growing churches, spiritually impotent in the midst of multitudes of responsive men, then we should check the swing to institutionalism. I sum up my thinking about the institutional role in several propositions.

- a) We shall continue to need many missionaries in institutions.
- b) A great deal of nationalization of staff will and should go on. The institutions not only serve the churches but -- a highly practical consideration -- they employ Christians. Pressure will mount to put nationals into every possible post.
- c) Nevertheless, contributions of missionaries to the staff, as long as paid from abroad, will be welcome. There is always a financial problem.
- d) It would be a pity for the world Church to furnish the institutions just plain ordinary teachers or technologists at a cost including furlough travel of say \$5000 a year when the national church could furnish these at say \$1000 a year.

This is where Dr. Northfield's opinion is so pertinent. The missionary sent must not be just a "plain ordinary teacher," or "one who has a slightly higher training than the others," or "one with psychological or anthropological training." In addition to his professional requirements the missionary should "not only have a heart of love, but should have discovered in what particular way he can best lead people to Christ," The missionary on the staff should multiply redemptive passion there. That is what makes him a missionary.

ROLE 5: ASSISTANT TO A YOUNGER CHURCH

This is a widely-necessary role. Missionaries even in early stages of the establishment of churches are in reality their assistants. Today, when

THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

so many of the younger churches are in advanced stages in independent lands, the role becomes even more necessary. We do well in training and in practice to stress that the missionary is an assistant to the younger church.

However, I think two limitations of “assistantship” need to be made. First, that the missionary is an assistant to the younger church. He is not a permanent subordinate, to any and all nationals. Such an overstatement may have been necessary in the years just past when missionaries were in full control of the church-mission enterprise. But now that nationals are in full control, it is wasteful to continue to say it.

Of course, racial and national arrogance should be absent. Of course, younger missionaries will start in as assistants. But any missionary who has administrative ability, learns the language well, masters the pattern of thought of his adopted land, and really loves the people, will receive from the younger church itself abundant opportunities to manage men and churches. The very top Christian leaders in most lands will and should be nationals; but granting this, the missionary himself, as he gets into his second and third term will usually be given positions of responsibility. I look for the younger churches themselves to take vigorous action at this point. Where they do not take it, the IMC and other organizations can initiate fruitful conversations on the subject.

The second limitation to “assistantship” comes at the point of the “regions beyond.” There are innumerable “regions beyond” where the American missionary, as well as the missionary of the younger church, will be starting new churches. He will quite often be “under” the younger church in only a distant way. He will be on his own. There are many examples of this kind of mission work today. Their number may diminish, but again, where Christians constitute only a percent or two of the population there is still an enormous amount of unoccupied virgin territory. We must not become romantic about the younger churches. They are still very small and weak and have many “regions beyond.”

ROLE 6: THE MOBILE MISSIONARY

We live in a fast moving world. Speed is likely to increase. Doors open and shut. Evangelism is forbidden here and permitted there. Younger churches grow up and take command. The need for missionaries increases and diminishes.

All this means, I think, that a missionary must be mobile. Instead of missionaries, a few months after their arrival, being permanently

assigned to life-long tasks, most missionaries should expect to be shifted according to the needs of the field. This is already being done to a limited degree. Missionaries of the United Christian Missionary Society at work in Latin America, for example, have for many years been shifted from Paraguay to Argentina, to Mexico, to Puerto Rico. And all over the world one finds missionaries who have had experience elsewhere. Some of the most effective Baptist missionaries I found in Thailand had come from Assam. Ex-China missionaries are found in many places.

But such transfers are unfortunately considered exceptional. Many transferees never get over emotional attachment to their first field. Some even manifest resentment against the second field. A good many people think it is “asking too much” to expect a missionary to learn a second language. All of which is unfortunate.

Mobility, like the other roles, of course, is not an end in itself. There are missionaries who move about too much! Only if it aids the achievement of the chief ends of mission should mobility be emphasized. In order to achieve increased mobility, the following steps will be found useful: 1) Ability at languages should receive a somewhat higher rating in choice of missionaries. 2) Their training should prepare them for possible change of field, by stressing the relative ease with which second languages can be learned and the normality of such changes. 3) Missionaries should expect to establish churches and leave. The policy of permanent involvement of missions with younger churches should be modified. Only so can the missionary forces of both younger and older churches be directed to new church planting and multiplication. 4) Continuous reappraisal of the responsiveness of fields should become routine procedure in the world mission of the church. The task is not only to reach all men, but also to make sure that none who today seek to accept the Gospel are denied a hearing through the immobility of missionaries.

ROLE 7: THE MISSIONARY AS SEMINARY PROFESSOR

This good role is commonly advocated and many missionaries are used this way. The missionary is a choice gift of one church to another. He should often be used as a teacher of ministerial candidates. However, a word of caution is in place. Young missionaries fresh out of American seminaries, or German seminaries for that matter, should not ordinarily teach future church leaders. Younger churches should not deliver their most precious asset into the hands of dyed-in-the-wool Americans, who are inevitably and quite unblameably, full of American thought patterns,

American fashions, American church plans, and the latest American theology. They know what nourishes churches and multiplies them in generally Protestant, wonderfully free, scientifically-minded, ultra-modern America. They do not know what nourishes and multiplies churches in generally Roman Catholic or Hindu socially chained, pre-scientific minded, Brazil or Bombay. Training in sociology, anthropology, and supremely in the structure and growth patterns of the church to which he goes, will help to prepare a missionary to overcome this handicap. Yet any younger church which surrenders the training of its youth to foreigners or foreign-trained nationals, who have not demonstrated their ability to make local congregations flourish and actually reconcile men to God in their neighborhoods, is in danger of committing slow suicide. In the midst of winnable multitudes, such a church may stop growing and be absorbed into more virile churches.

ROLE 8: THE MISSIONARY AS CHURCH-GROWTH ACCOUNTANT

Mission boards commonly insist on full-time trained men handling incomes and expenditures. Even in this spiritual business of ours, interboard and mission treasurers are essential as far ahead as we can see.

In the same way churches in living communion with the Saviour, must keep accurately informed of how they are getting on with the Saviour's task. But such information is seldom available. For several years now, I have been making studies of church growth in Africa, India, Thailand, the Philippines, and the Caribbean. Everywhere the picture is the same: church statistics so inaccurate that as they stand they are largely meaningless. With the passage of authority to younger churches, statistics reported are increasingly of little use. Furthermore, careful accounting of church growth is specially necessary because we engage today in highly diversified missions. In the midst of the revolution, everything is being tried. All kinds of labors are advocated as "good missions." This diversification will probably increase.

Is each of these many pieces of mission work successful? It is impossible to measure some of the goals which each intends to achieve. But it is possible to measure the church growth which accompanies it. A missionary enterprise pouring thousands of lives and millions of dollars into the propagation of the Gospel needs to know what degree of propagation is occurring. Church growth is not the only end of mission, be

sure of that; but it is certainly one chief end. We keep track of money. We should also keep scrupulous account of the growth of churches.

What is required is perhaps one trained statistician to each fifty or one hundred thousand communicants in the younger churches. This man will supply reliable meaningful information on membership increase to both younger and older churches. He will assemble not merely "field totals" (those deceptive figures) but exactly what groups of churches are in fact prospering most, where church growth occurs by conservation of children from within the Christian community, where by transfer of Christians from other areas, and where by conversion. Rates of growth accompanying different methods of mission work would be most useful in mapping future plans for missions and churches.

ROLE 9: THE MISSIONARY AS RESEARCHER

Even a casual perusal of the advertisements in our magazines indicates the vast amount of research being carried out by industry. The United States Post Office expends millions to discover more effective ways of delivering mail.

The multi-million dollar missionary enterprise also needs to devote an appreciable portion of its income, possibly one per cent, at finding out what modes of mission best achieve the acknowledged chief ends of mission. In the business of our Master we should use at least as much wisdom as we do in manufacture or commerce. The areas of greatest response should be kept charted and prophesied. The best ways to develop stewardship can be determined and adopted by all. Population movements involving Christians can be studied so that churches can be conserved. Procedures which multiply churches can be known. Theories about the propagation of the gospel can be checked against achievements. The causes of ingrownness and static stalemate in churches can be discovered and avoided. In education it is now common place to set up evaluative devices so that the curriculum can be constantly appraised as it is being used. Such appraisal of the growth and welfare of the younger churches and the work of their supporting missions is tremendously needed.

All this calls for missionaries who are trained in and skillful at investigating these segments of the life of the younger churches; and for younger churches and missions accustomed to use the services of research specialists to help them do their Master's will.

ROLE 10: THE MISSIONARY AS EXPERT IN OTHER RELIGIONS

Dr. Kraemer says in *Religion and the Christian Faith* (p. 202):

The Christian Church is heading toward a spiritual encounter with the great non-Christian religions ... The fast growing interdependence of the whole world thrusts these religions upon us. The Church must, therefore, manifest in new terms its spiritual and intellectual integrity and value ... Till now only 'marginal remarks' have been made to the non-Christian religions. From now on confrontation with them has to become one of the main subjects. Everything is moving in that direction as a result of the development both of the younger churches and of the non-Christian religions themselves.

Most of us cordially agree with the importance of this role. Each missionary should know a great deal about the other religion in the land where he works. Some missionaries should be highly trained in these other religions, not that they may conduct detached, scientific, "as between us scholars" conversations with them; but rather that, immersed in non-Christian faiths, indeed in living communication with them, they will continually reconcile men out of those systems to Christ.

It is to be hoped that the schools of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Roman Catholicism, which are being established, will hold such intimate conversation with these other faiths on such a high level of scholarship, sympathy, and insight, that they will work out a kerygma as effective for them as Paul's kerygma was for the Jews and Greeks of his day. We missionaries follow in the steps of Paul. His greatness did not lie in being an authority on Judaism and possibly on Greek religion also, nor in his communication with Jewish and Gentile scholars. His greatness lay in using his intimate knowledge of those religions, in fully effective communication with them, to win disciples of Christ within and without the synagogues and to leave a trail of churches all over the Empire.

ROLE 11: THE MISSIONARY AS HARVESTER

Many feel that missionaries in combination with nationals are called to be harvesters. True, many populations are closed to missionary evangelists; but many more are open. The success which has attended the Lacour Missions in Japan is a case in point. More remarkable is the record of the Tent Teams of the Oriental Missionary Society in Japan into which

they have put half of their missionaries. Many responsive fields can be named where missionaries are being used of God to found solid churches; and there are many more populations where, were missionary-national teams to be sent, many more churches could be established. I think of the Lutheran field in Sarguja, India, the United Church of Christ field in the Philippines, the urban opportunities in Puerto Rico, the Amoy-speaking Chinese in Formosa, the Japanese in Hokkaido, great sections of the populations in Chile and Brazil, 100,000 Congolese in the one Baptist field of Vanga, the Kikuyu in Kenya, and many, many others.

“But,” someone exclaims, “isn’t the younger church going to take care of all these?” I wish it were, but it is rather romantic to think it will. Oh, it will aid. In some cases it will lead. In others it will simply add its blessing. In some, I fear, it will stand indifferently by. A great share of the load will fall on Western churches. God has called them into existence for just such a time as this.

The training of missionary harvesters, however, is woefully lacking. Few people know what makes younger churches grow where they are now actually growing. Very few have carefully analyzed the church growth now taking place in advanced cultures, primitive populations, among the literate, and the illiterate, and can teach churchmen the methods which God is currently blessing to the extension of His Kingdom in the very varying populations of mankind. Such teaching is greatly needed. It should receive high priority among courses in missionary training schools.

In summary and conclusion, may I say of missionary roles that the essential question is one of proportion, in each specific situation, under the judgment of the chief ends of mission. Today’s proportion in missionary roles is frequently determined by the accidents of history, the surges of fashion in mission, and the pull of powerful institutions and individuals. Today’s proportion is often unregulated by reference to reconciling men to God. Where this is so, it should be changed. In each of thousands of populations where the world mission is at work, the proportion of general missionaries, specialists, ecumenical messengers, teachers, harvesters or accountants should be constantly reviewed against the growth and welfare of churches in that population.

Not only should each church be an apostolate, by life and word, beseeching men to be reconciled to God, but it must know how men are answering the invitation, and then train missionaries for those roles which are measurably being blessed by God to the growth and development of His churches. The roles of the missionary we need to discover and emphasize

are those through which the Holy Spirit is actually converting men and upbuilding and multiplying churches.



First Fruits
THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY