

**Protestant  
Mission Societies:  
The American Experience**



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## Protestant Mission Societies: The American Experience

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Annual Meeting, 1978

When outgoing ASM president Ralph D. Winter was asked to tailor his address to the special circumstances of a joint meeting between the ASM and a sister organization, the International Association of Mission Studies, he decided to present a large canvas interpreting the overall phenomenon of Protestant missions in American experience. The special focus of this address, now in the form of an article, is characteristic of a recurring emphasis in his writings: a comparison between Protestant and Catholic structural mechanisms of mission. His historical summary attempts to explain both how and why the number of overseas missionaries sent out by member denominations of the NCCCUA is now less than 7½% of the U.S. Protestant total.

**A**S A FAIRLY narrow *Presbyterian* seminary student, one of the first shocks the writer experienced was to encounter *Baptist* Kenneth Scott Latourette's statement that, for all intents and purposes, the early band of highly evangelistic *Methodist* circuit riders adhered to characteristically *Roman Catholic* vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This disturbing thought germinated and, along with other broadening influences, eventually wreaked havoc upon my typically Protestant limitations.

It was the beginning of an intellectual pilgrimage in which the writer would eventually come to see the emergence of the Protestant mission society as a parallel to the Roman Catholic order despite the fact that within the Protestant stream of history it is still viewed as a major yet somehow "foreign" structure. He would come to see the Protestant mission society as

unintentionally and unfortunately the basis of a veritable Protestant "schism" not often confronted and analyzed structurally, yet clearly an internal strain between church and para-church organizations which profoundly frustrates the contemporary tasks of renewal and unity as well as mission.

### Protestantism Revisited

The undoing of a mindset takes years. The writer has not easily or happily yielded to the eventual and inevitable conclusion that the major Protestant traditions (Reformed, Lutheran, and Anglican — if we can stretch the word *Protestant* that far) became in their state-church postures every bit as Constantinian as they had ever imagined the Roman Catholic tradition which they spurned. Many a seminary student passionately seeking the renewal of the church tends early to side with the so-called "radical reformers" who, though they existed long before the Reformation, were still protesting Protestant Constantinianism long after the Reformation. What dismay that many of these once radical traditions today bear many of the traits of the state-church syndrome.

In other words, from the particular bias of many Americans, state-churches of any kind may appear to have been a "mistake." Constantine's patronage is seen by many of Anabaptist lineage as having caused more harm than good, provoking the "fall of the church." But in seminary studies, new disappointments greet even "believer's church" or "gathered church" enthusiasts. Gradually they realize that once on the free soil of America these formerly elite and sectarian traditions, now totally untrammled, have apparently descended over the decades to a nominalism — an in-name-only membership not strikingly different from that of the state church, whether Protestant or Catholic. Eliteness and vitality, it is discovered, are not very durable in any tradition. It seems almost a rule that *every Christian tradition, whether Protestant, Mennonite or Roman, insofar as it depends heavily upon a family inheritance — or, shall we say, a biological mechanism for its perpetuation over a period of time, will gradually lose the spiritual vitality with which it may have begun.*

Such a loss of vitality occurs simply because biological and spiritual types of reproduction are fundamentally dissimilar. No exception, Protestantism as a movement has to a considerable extent survived both *in spite of* and curiously *because of* the

constant *emergence* and re-emergence of *new groups* — the fissiparous tendency which Latourette highlights. Thus each new religious body represents and maintains a somewhat elite selection out of the general population only in its first or second generation. To the Roman Catholic, but also to the Protestant ecumenist, this type of constant rebirth, when it keeps on creating separate new churches, may seem to be an apparently fragmenting and therefore horrifying tendency, such that whatever recovery of zeal it may embody is commonly and with some justification disparaged.

Is there "a more excellent way"? The writer is convinced that the *Roman Catholic* tradition, in its much longer experience with the phenomenon of the "order," embodies a *superior structural approach to both renewal and mission*. He thus believes that Protestants must begin to see their para-church structures in a similar light. That is, they can better understand how best to fulfill their own profound obligation to unity, renewal and mission if they see their own forms in cooperative reference to those of the Roman Catholic tradition.

### **The Envidable Roman Catholic Synthesis**

Personal reactions to certain of the inadequacies of the Protestant tradition no doubt give the writer a particular slant on the history of the Roman Catholic Church. For example, I tend to interpret the very survival of the Roman Church into the high medieval period as being to a considerable extent the result of the sheer durability and spiritual and Biblical vitality of the earlier monastic tradition. (Thus it seems perfectly proper to me that the monastic and religious orders should be called "regular," while the diocesan tradition is labeled "secular.") As a Protestant deeply concerned about the inherent limitations of Protestantism's typical pair of alternatives — state-church nominalism or sectarian disunity — the writer is quite likely to be over-reacting in favor of that fascinating middle way constituted by the relationship between the diocesan tradition and the religious communities of the Roman tradition. I try not to be blind to several periods of long-drawn-out competition between orders of friars or the recurrent seesaw of power between bishop and abbot. I have not totally forgotten the typical Protestant stereotype of the ascetic anchorite fleeing the world instead of endeavoring to save it. But I know that Protestants in their own

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ways have also achieved most of these excesses, and on balance I am irretrievably convinced that the inherent *decentralization, mobility and eliteness* of the Roman religious communities *must urgently be recovered by the Protestants*. To a considerable extent, in fact, I believe Protestants do now possess in various para-church structures functional analogues, if only Protestants could somehow see them in a new light and develop a new relationship to them that will be both supportive but also help them to be accountable. (This theme is developed later on.)

### **The Warp and the Woof**

In order better to deal evenhandedly with parallel structural forms in Catholic, Protestant and secular traditions alike, the writer has found it helpful to employ a pair of neutral terms: "modality" and "sodality." It would appear that every human society, whether secular or religious, needs both *modalities* (that is, overall, given, *governmental structures*) and also *sodalities* (that is, other structured, decentralized and especially *voluntary initiatives*). Even primitive tribes, for example, possess in addition to a tribal governmental system other structures long called *sodalities* by anthropologists, borrowing and modifying the Catholic term. These are sub-structures within the community that have an autonomy within and under the tribal government. Many are voluntary and are therefore not biologically perpetuated. American life itself is to a staggering degree the result of the work of thousands of organized, voluntary initiatives — business, social and cultural — which are *watched and regulated but not administered* by the government. It is fair to say that most Americans are friendly to this type of "private enterprise" and often tend to fear creeping "big government." On the other hand, many Protestants who avidly support voluntarism and pluralism on a secular level at the same time deplore the fact that within the Christian movement there are hundreds of organizations that are for the most part not directly administered by the denominations. Their misgivings are mostly rooted in the absence within Protestantism of a responsible relationship between churches and many para-church organizations.

Thus, just as the word *church* is used sometimes to refer to the entire Christian movement, sometimes to denominations and sometimes only to a local organization within that movement, I

have coined the term *modality* to refer to the overall governmental structure of a human community (or communal-like group) that is biologically complete and biologically sustained, whether city, state, church, denomination, synagogue, etc. The word *sodality* then refers to those structures more likely to be voluntary, contractual and purposive, that are not deriving in the main from biological momentum, where membership is not as likely to be automatic nor presumed nor pressured and where for example whole families as such are not generally admitted. In the way I am using the term, examples of sodalities include everything from commercial enterprises to what Catholics call *orders* and *religious societies* and Protestant historians have called *voluntary societies*.<sup>1</sup>

Why am I so concerned to recognize the legitimacy of both structures? Because I believe the Reformation tragically abandoned the second of these two structures and unwittingly produced another, less-noticed internal "schism" between them, creating monumental problems for Protestants to this day. I recognize and value both the synagogue (modality) and the Pharisaic missionary band (sodality) in the Jewish community before Christ. Both the New Testament "church" (modality) and the Pauline missionary band (sodality) are reasonable and helpful borrowings of those two earlier structures. The diocese (modality) and the monastery (sodality) are later functional equivalents. As already mentioned, we can apply this distinction to the contrast between bishop and abbot, secular and regular priests, and fairly recently in Protestantism to the uneasy distinction between *denomination* or *congregation* (modality) and *Christian movement, society* or *para-church structure* (sodality).

The common use of the phrase *para-church organization* for the second structure, the sodality, may even be questioned if neither structure is any more normative, any more *church*, than the other. (Why not call churches *para-missions*?) Thus, just as it is impossible to make cloth without threads going both crosswise and lengthwise, it is crucially important to regard these two structures working together *as the warp and the woof* of the fabric, the fabric being the Christian movement — the people of God, the *ecclesia* of the New Testament, the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, to make either of the two structures central and the other secondary, as the term *para-church* seems to do, is probably unwise. The two are indeed interdependent and the evidences

of history do not allow us to understand either of them as complete without the other. As in the Roman tradition, their relationship is at least potentially a beneficial symbiosis. The problem is that within Protestantism today the tension between the two is as great as or greater than ever before.

Thus, for well over half of the brief history of Protestantism, the Reformation tradition has to a great extent been engrossed in the attempt to establish a *middle* ground between what the Reformers viewed as the nominalism of the Catholic masses and the heroic asceticism of the Catholic monastery. Again and again sects have started out from within Protestantism, often with a vital fellowship during the first or second generation, but have soon and inevitably swung from vitality to nominalism once they have become dependent upon family perpetuation for survival. The vitality of the sects has always been made possible by their newness and the opportunity this gave them to be selective in their early membership. All attempts to impose stricter standards on a *given* (rather than a *gathered* or attracted) group have backfired: thus Oliver Cromwell's ill-fated attempt to clamp all of England in a Puritan vise, Calvin's attempt to turn Geneva into a Protestant-style monastery and Jonathan Edwards' failure successfully to resist the compromises of the "Half-way Covenant." Yet Protestantism in general has made no serious attempt to recover the voluntary tradition of the Catholic orders. As a result, while the Protestant tradition at many points attempted very desperately to be healthier, by cutting off the orders the Protestant body gave up arms and legs and virtually put unity, renewal and mission out of reach.

The uniquely American experience with post-Revolution ecclesiastical disestablishment produced briefly what was hailed as the "voluntary church." In the early days of the new republic, when church membership was less than ten percent of the population, there was more reason than now to place great hope upon a much more elite and selective approach to membership than that of the state-church tradition. But the phrase *voluntary church* has turned out to be virtually a contradiction in terms. In both connectional and congregational denominational experience, social pressures on the younger generation have in the long run substituted for voluntary mechanisms and produced results not easily distinguishable from the state church. Both connectional and congregational traditions rely



mainly on familial perpetuation. Thus Kelley's *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (really, "why non-selective churches are not attracting select people") chronicles the "inevitable" trend to nominalism, and it remains clear that the voluntary principle lies mainly in the sodality (not modality) structures (Kelley 1972).

This does not at all mean that the modality, the biologically perpetuated communal body, is inferior to the sodality, the contractual group. It means that the continuing life and work of the Christian movement ideally requires both (1) a mainly non-voluntary, inherited structure and (2) a whole array of optional, voluntary structures for deeper community and effective service. The two types of structures, the one with a benefit-of-the-doubt membership and the other with ideally a strict and voluntary one, are together the warp and the woof of the fabric. Thus, when the voluntary structure is not valued and employed effectively, as is the case within Protestantism, the very fabric of the Christian movement is accordingly weakened.

### **William Carey's Discovery**

Thus it was very important when an unlikely village schoolmaster-preacher-cobbler fought his way out of this impasse and bequeathed to succeeding Protestant Christendom what was, in effect, the reinvention of the Catholic-originated "wheel." I refer to the brilliant and awesomely determined young man named William Carey. It may some day be acknowledged that his tightly reasoned essay, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, has been the most influential single piece of literature in the worldwide expansion of Protestantism since the Reformers.<sup>2</sup> His essay is at minimum the *literary* basis for the reemergence in Protestantism of a whole rash of what he called "means" — religious societies and voluntary societies. Thus, at the crucial point of modern history when the French Revolution cut the European roots of the global network of Catholic missions, Protestants suddenly discovered how to sprout the same kind of organizational arms and legs that were not only to carry them around the *world* in the extension of their faith but also potentially to rebuild and renew their home traditions from *within*.

Beginnings were slow and humble, but twelve significant mechanisms for missionary extension were forged along these

lines in the twenty-five years following the appearance of Carey's book. These mission societies in great measure were influenced by William Carey's genius, example and insistent spirit as mediated foundationally by his *Enquiry*. That remarkable document (1) systematically reviewed past efforts to extend the faith, (2) summarized statistically the actual religious status quo of every continent and country and (3) pleaded forthrightly that Christians without embarrassment employ the kind of *organizational means* that were so well known in the Protestant commercial world and had by then reached out in such commercial "callings" to the furthest corners of the world (e.g., the East India Company). His knowledge and appreciation of the existence of Catholic missions, however, was embarrassingly scant and negative. It would be a few years yet before those who followed in his steps would have sufficient contact with Catholic missionaries for there to be any possible revision of Protestant stereotypes of the latter. But reinvent the wheel they did.

The impact for unity and mission of this sudden acquisition of arms and legs by the body of the Protestant tradition is not often fully appreciated, but it is widely recognized that Protestant efforts for unity have gained impulse from the field contacts between different missionaries, and mission executives back home have simultaneously grown in awareness of their oneness via pursuing a single international task. Both the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches in the United States came into being by this route. That is, the WCC owes a great deal to the 1910 World Missionary Convention in Edinburgh, to the International Missionary Council, and indeed to four other sodalities — the worldwide Young Men's Christian Association, the World's Christian Student Federation, the Student Volunteer Movement, and the national and international activities of the amazing Christian Endeavor movement. Who knows whether, without these transdenominational sodalities, the present degree of fellowship between Protestant church traditions would have been possible? In the case of the National Council of Churches in the United States, the principal forerunner was the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, which actually brought a wider variety of Christians together than the present NCC, including as it did Southern Baptists, denominational societies and interdenominational societies.

The Protestant reinvention of the mission sodality in particular and the para-church organization in general did not merely affect mission and unity. One of the most fascinating phenomena in the history of Christianity in the United States was the almost unbounded creativity of new Christian sodalities in the Carey era — the first third of the nineteenth century. Literally hundreds of reforming, renewing, campaigning, evangelizing, reviving and missionizing societies burst into existence. Not merely did the famous visitor from France, Alexis de Toqueville, remark on this bursting forth of voluntary activity from the civil body politic. The proliferation of activist voluntary societies was so great that William Carey himself, had he been present, might easily have been horrified, even though all these societies, whether or not *foreign mission* societies, were indeed organized “means” of the very kind he had proposed. However, there was no “pope” in Protestantism to moderate their growth. Denominational leaders inevitably reacted as they saw so many of their key laymen and so much of their members’ money flowing into these novel channels. No wonder, then, that Episcopal Bishop Hobart (quoted in Smith *et al.* 1963:77) inveighed against the societies, but we do wonder about his assumption that the denomination was a divinely instituted structure while the societies were merely human creations. A growing literature<sup>3</sup> has described the development of the American “denominations” as a religious form that is neither church nor sect. In this literature there is also the persistent issue of what to do with the amazing growth and novel structure of the voluntary societies. A temporary and inadequate answer came gradually as it became prevalent in America for the various *denominations to establish their own boards for overseas mission operation* — a new pattern we have called the *American pattern* (e.g., Winter 1971), which did not characterize either the approach of Roman Catholics or European Protestants. For the latter the emergence of missionary societies was far too limited a phenomenon to demand total capture by the churchly structures. However, the influence in Europe of the American concept of *organizational centralization of church and mission* has been evident for many years.

Following the Civil War, however, a whole new plethora of voluntary, interdenominational mission societies sprang up, a breed now termed “faith missions.” These were to a considerable

extent inspired by the example of a second "William Carey," J. Hudson Taylor, who also plotted statistics of unreached people and urgently proposed a means. By 1910, the immense stake of American Protestants in organizations of this type working all over the world was so significant that in the United States even Roman Catholic foreign mission initiatives were for once (in a unique switch) spurred on by Protestants. Another vast new boost in American Protestant involvement in missions resulted from the Second World War, which among its other functions dramatically familiarized American citizens with the rest of the world as no other event in American history, setting the stage for another 150 voluntary foreign mission societies to burst forth.

Looking back, however, it is only fair to say that William Carey, working as he did within the Protestant tradition, could not have exactly reproduced the Catholic orders even if he had consciously tried. Unlike Catholics, Protestants have always tended to *overlook the usefulness of unmarried people*. Yet Carey did not deem it necessary for his wife to accompany him to India when he first ventured forth, and Hudson Taylor's followers often lived as though they were single men, leaving their wives back in coastal cities as they probed China's interior for a year at a time. Having to provide schooling and care for the missionaries' children inevitably focused on another significant contrast between Protestant and Catholic mission societies, involving both advantages and disadvantages.

Nevertheless, the comparison between the two traditions is still feasible and useful. What about poverty, chastity, obedience? The acceptance of "poverty" as a lifestyle has characterized virtually every Protestant mission society. "Functional chastity" of a sort we have just mentioned. But chastity is as much an attitude as anything else. Obedience? Until recent times, becoming a Protestant missionary was as permanent a call as any solemn vow in the Roman tradition. The biggest difference between Protestant and Catholic in regard to this matter of disciplined, additional-commitment communities is not so much the difference between the *internal* functions of Protestant and Catholic missions as the difference in the *external* relationships of these sodalities to their respective parent denominational traditions. Yes, in this respect Protestants are indeed very different from Catholics. Note, for example, that Vatican II assumed the existence, the value and permanence of

the orders, while the Bangkok meeting of the World Council of Churches' Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in 1973-1974 virtually assumed the *passing* of the Protestant mission societies. This leads us to look more closely at what we may call the "other Protestant schism."

### **The Other Protestant Schism**

Generally, Protestants are committed to the principle of cultural self-determination and are therefore not offended by the idea of a worldwide fellowship of separate autonomous national (cultural, ethnic) or nation-oriented churches. This holds as long as every possible continuing effort is made for these legally independent churches to develop a sharing relationship between themselves. But while the Reformers conceived of the legitimacy of such autonomy for *their own cultural spheres*, they did not successfully understand and apply this insight as a *general principle*. In fact, it was not until their own missions belatedly arose that Protestant minds encountered full-blown cultural traditions in the non-Western world where for them the shoe was now on the other foot and the issue of those "non-Western degraded cultures" being self-determining really arose to test the Protestants' untried general principle. Today, of course, the need for "indigenization" (or "contextualization") is commonly discussed and widely accepted among both Protestants and Catholics (although seriously unresolved dimensions remain).

Thus the Reformation — that well-known schism between the Mediterranean, Romanized and the Northern European, non-Romanized populations — was both inevitable and in some senses beneficial. Scholars have sometimes termed the Reformation the "Protestant Revolt," but in one sense this "revolt" may have misfired since the sons of the Reformation have not generally understood the point that was made: the schism was a *cultural decentralization*. In any case, Protestants unwittingly created another and even more significant *internal* "schism" deriving from and resulting in a truncated view of the church. This other organizational schism was the result insofar as *the Reformers conceived of an overall church structure getting along nicely without any voluntary sub-communities worthy of being part of the church*. In one respect the resulting situation constitutes to this day Protestantism's own still unresolved "investiture

controversy." But, alas, without a pope the Catholic solution at Cluny (of orders becoming free from local control) is not directly applicable. It is as though the Protestants are still living prior to Cluny and cannot proceed because they have no higher power (other than the secular state) to which an elite community in a given locality can be subordinated and by which defended from the provincial and local goals that characterize the democratic church tradition.

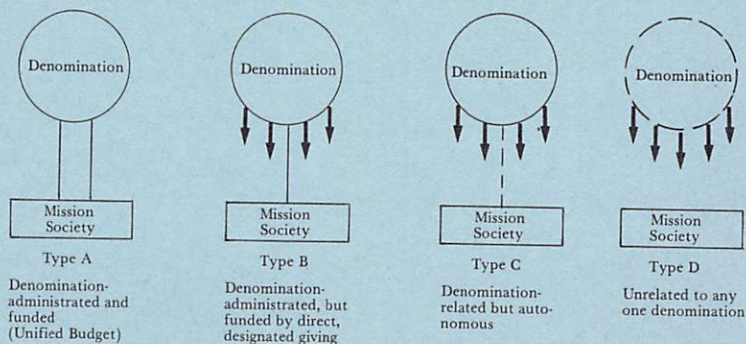
As a result, although Protestant foreign mission societies finally surfaced — and there are by now more than 600 in North America, raising more than \$700 million annually — nevertheless Protestant church structures in America have somehow not yet fully resolved their relationship to such structures. As a result, they either *ignore* their existence or *try to make them into an ecclesiastical type of "government agency"* that results in a complex inflexible situation.

1. About half of all North American Protestant missionaries are sent out by mission offices owing no allegiance to any denomination by name. These suffer from imperfect accountability.

2. The other half are sent out by offices that function basically at the initiative of denominational governments. These are often frustrated in the outworking of their highly specific, especially "prophetic" goals by being ultimately required to seek majority approval from the denominational constituency.<sup>4</sup>

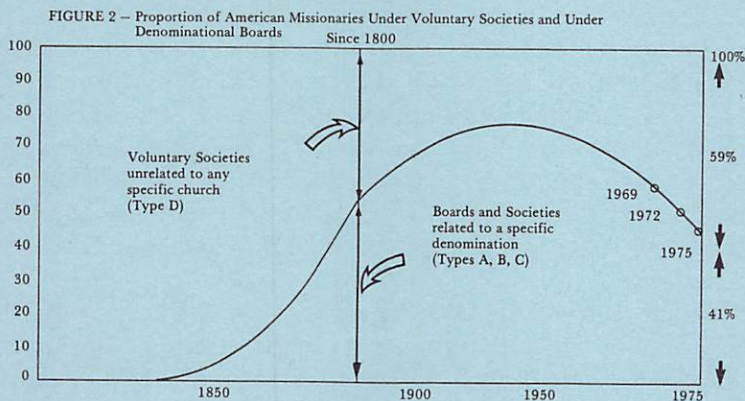
Figure 1 shows two extreme (A and D) and two intermediate (B and C) models of relationship.

FIGURE 1 — Relationships Between Church and Para-Church Organizations



Back in William Carey's era, the new initiatives were mainly *outside the church governments* (i.e., Type D), although Carey himself finally secured the limp backing of a local Baptist conference of churches, so that his society was really Type C. In America this pattern of mere church recognition and/or tacit approval of virtually autonomous mission structures went much further. Thus, in reaction, we see the development of a pattern almost unique to America (already referred to as the "American Pattern") whereby the U.S. denominations, which were pretty elite in the voluntary sense, in the early 1800's one by one began gradually to coopt or create their own *internal* voluntary societies for mission, such that by 1865 most of the Type C or D societies had become B or C. Even though the "faith mission" movement, following 1865, resulted in a whole new crop of unrelated Type D societies, and still another new set of Type D societies emerged following World War II, nevertheless by 1950 most of the older societies or boards with C and B relationships had finally moved to Type A (unified budget) relationships. Meanwhile also, newer or younger denominations generally followed this latter, American pattern from the time it became well known.

Figure 2 impressionistically portrays a long-standing trend *away from* the nearly universal use of voluntary societies as a means of active service *toward* the use of denominational boards, and then a more recent *reversal* of that trend.



The three most reliable points — 1969, 1972 and 1975 — are a substantial indication of the present trend.<sup>5</sup> This is partly the result of a general trend within the denominations toward

greater internal diversity and thus away from expectations of a majority consensus in regard to social and missionary interests, especially in mainline U.S. denominations. That is, with a democratic polity very little initiative can be taken without a numerical majority.

From the perspective of this article, the trend to the A and D extremes of relationship between mission structures and churches — call it the Bear-Hug-or-Abandonment Syndrome — is further evidence of the continuing internal schism or uneasy tension between the denominations and the voluntary societies. We need to ponder today why all Catholic orders and nearly all European Protestant societies fall into Type C while American Protestant missions nearly all fall into the A and D extremes. In the terminology of church historians, this phenomenon is also described as a tension between (1) the model of a church government being directly *responsible for* only its *internal* life and discipline and depending upon external voluntary societies as its arms and legs in social and missionary activism; and (2) the model, historically advanced in opposition to the interdenominational voluntary societies, that each *denomination*, being itself a voluntary society of sorts, *should* also function as its own “missionary organization.” A recent essay by a church historian, Fred J. Hood, describes these two concepts nicely (although extended treatments are only available in unpublished dissertation form) (Hood 1968; MacCormac 1960; Rubert 1974). Today the bulk of all U.S. Protestant denominational leaders would readily affirm the second model in keeping with the activist mood of our time and the by now well developed “theology of the church in mission.” Nevertheless, as seen in Figure 2, the tide seems to be flowing in the opposite direction in the last few years if we judge by the number of North American Protestant missionaries sent out by denominationally related structures as compared to the number sent out by Type D structures.

This curious reversal is due in part to the rapid increase of new independent, Type D voluntary societies. It is also due to the phasing out by older boards of mission work in places overseas where churches are by now well established. The fact, however, is that *new work* has always been begun mostly by *independent voluntary societies*. One example will suffice: the Reformed Church in America as a “church in mission” directly sponsors



mission work in 24 countries. *In not a single case* were these locations pioneered by denominational board initiatives. In every case, *informal* initiative spearheaded the initial activity and the denominational board later shouldered ongoing responsibility. This is not to be considered ominous but does underscore the crucial importance of allowing breathing space for initiatives too small to gain a 51% approval in a democratic church body. Figures 3 and 4 show more of the details of the expansion of independent voluntary societies and the simultaneous contraction by denominational boards of the number of overseas workers.

FIGURE 3 – Growth of Different Types and Categories of Mission Societies

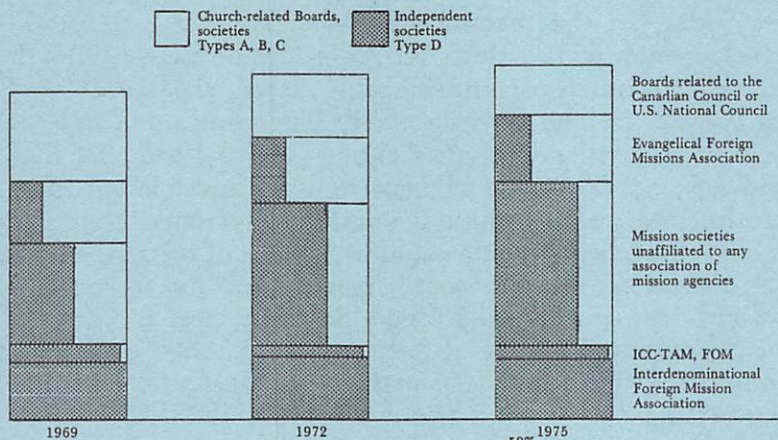


FIGURE 4 – The Overall Size of Church-related versus Independent Societies

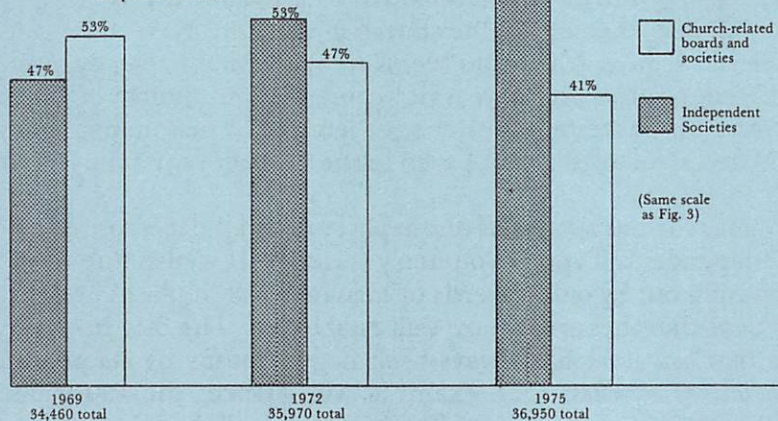


Figure 4, on the same scale as Figure 3, concentrates the shaded and white areas to show the actual percentages plotted as the three final points in Figure 2. It is not our purpose to make predictions, much less to take sides in this struggle, but we may contrast this tension in America with the Roman Catholic (and European-Protestant) pattern, almost entirely Type C, which seems to gain a great deal by being *neither* totally *independent* of nor totally *dominated* by the churches. The most significant example in America today of the Type C pattern is the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society, which sustains a close fellowship with the Conservative Baptist Association of some 1300 local churches. The CBFMS not only antedated the Conservative Baptist Association, to which it still loyally and faithfully relates itself, but is still legally autonomous and is not actually governed by any of the overt ecclesiastical processes of the CBA. Furthermore, it receives support from 700 *other churches* that are not part of the Conservative Baptist Association; many belong to other Baptist groups, but some are Presbyterian, Episcopal, etc. The Type B relationship may also be preferable to either A or D (most Type A "unified budget" boards were once Type B in their relationship to their respective denominations). Thus, although the Type A relationship (not Type B) is the dominant pattern today among denominational boards, the impersonal processes of the unified budget system are now no longer defended as unqualifiedly as they once were by denominational leaders (Hutcheson 1977). As a concession to human weakness, as some put it, most denominations are now beginning to make greater allowance for the "designated giving" pattern of the earlier Type B relationship.

It must be observed that the tension between church governments controlled by a majority and the pressures of a minority for activism on foreign or home mission frontiers is clearly a general phenomenon and not merely a problem arising from mission work. John R. Fry in his recent book, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church* (1975), gives the poignant and eloquent outcry of an activist deeply concerned about a whole array of social concerns. He takes great satisfaction in the fact that, for a relatively brief period in the 1960's, top leadership in the United Presbyterian Church was able to gain widespread consensus (or so it seemed) for official church involvement in political, social and economic issues of all

kinds. In that period, nearly every regional presbytery developed a "church and society" committee, and even many local congregations followed suit. This did not last, however, and he terms his denomination's reverting to internal concerns a "trivialization."

The problem with trying to move whole denominations to take a specific policy stance on programs (e.g., the table grape boycott) was anticipated clear back in the early 1800's. At that time the proposal that the churches should officially promote "missions" was generally considered improper. There was also less than complete agreement that voluntary societies were the proper way to go. This difference of opinion contributed significantly to one of the more spectacular church splits in U.S. history, when in 1847 the slightly more than 2,400 Presbyterian ministers were divided almost exactly in two equal parts by the "New School/Old School" schism. As always there were a variety of issues; but by 1847 the leaders of the Old School branch decisively settled for themselves the matter of structure by declaring *their half* of the denomination to be itself a "missionary organization." The schism in attitude toward the external voluntary societies remained for a time as the New School continued to express its activism through voluntary societies not under the direct control of the church.

But the tide was toward doctrinal purity and thus toward denomination-controlled boards. The New School was anxious to provide proof to the "triumphant" Old School that it was equally Presbyterian (and not Congregational). Other groups participating in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions gradually withdrew for similar reasons. Thus, at the time of the reunion of the New and Old Schools a generation later, the various overseas fields of the ABCFM, the oldest ecumenical foreign mission organization in America, were simply divided between the Congregational and Presbyterian traditions; and the office of the ABCFM became simply the office of the denominational board of the Congregationalists. The same thing happened to the British older sister of the ABCFM — the London Missionary Society.

Thus the various churchly traditions pulled up their skirts from contacts that would muddy or compromise their distinctives. The New School was subjected to unblinking doctrinal rigidities in the reunion, and in such a climate it was

naturally unthinkable to mix doctrine and polity either in home mission or foreign mission endeavors. It was such exclusiveness that put the cooperative voluntary societies in a bad light back in 1847. By *exclusiveness* we mean the setting aside of the earlier idea of a denomination being only *one* of a set of jointly embattled and equally legitimate church enterprises working together to try to redeem an overwhelmingly non-Christian world. The very success in church growth of the cooperative period ironically ushered in an era of greater confidence about the future of Christianity and a resulting sense of competition between denominations. This further heightened tendencies to separation and a sense of superiority. Thus there arose a new concept of *denominations* which conceives of the development of internal action groups as the essential characteristic (Hood 1968).

It is highly crucial to note, however, that through deciding against cooperation between denominations nothing at all was stated or settled regarding the relative merits of the various structural options of *internal* voluntary societies (e.g., Types A,B,C). In the New School/Old School reunion there were in effect five Type B societies that carried forward the outreach of the church but recruited personnel and funds on a semi-autonomous basis. It would take another hundred years for the work of all the internal boards to be merged completely in a single Type A structure whereby it would be very difficult for people to give specifically to any one of the various causes (home, foreign, women's work, etc.).

The irony of this story is seen in the fact that at a time — say 1865 — when a virtual consensus among the denominations had come to pass (to the effect that each one should sponsor its *own* denominational outreach), a whole new uncontrollable host of other forces were already actively at work — the YMCA, the Student Volunteer Movement, and Christian Endeavor. *These powerfully united people all across the denominational boundaries*. One example was the flourishing of the new breed of “faith missions” that were not exclusively related to any specific denomination or congregation.

Similarly, by 1950, when the “unified budget” approach had gained widespread consensus among the denominations as a further step toward centralization, another vast new crop of powerful voluntary societies was being born, the money from

individual church members somehow constantly gravitating to the specific. These new societies account for much of the growth trends noted in Figures 3, 4 and 5. Thus the peculiar proclivity of American Protestants to support causes and channels of action other than just denominations and denomination-administered good works is strikingly illustrated by the mounting number and power of independent voluntary societies. At the same time, the continuation and increase of the Type D category is continuing evidence of the Protestant schism between the modality and sodality, that is, church and para-church organizations. But before we go on to ask how there can ever be a healing of the breach constituted by this other Protestant, internal, structural "schism," we need to take a good look at the facts, noting both differences and similarities among Protestant mission structures today.

### **Protestant Mission Structures Today: Their Differences**

There are five useful general questions that can be asked of any particular structure, and each question brings additional dimensions of distinctiveness. The possible answers mentioned here are merely illustrative.

A. *How closely is an agency related to the organized church?* (We have already covered four types of relationships — Types A, B, C, D, as in Figure 1.) The various relationships give rise to three common distinctions:

1. Church-related/independent (ABC vs. D)
2. Denominational/interdenominational (ABC vs. D)
3. Intradenominational/interdenominational (C vs. D)

B. *How is the agency related to churches that exist in the field of its mission efforts?* Two more distinctions:

4. Church planting agencies/service agencies

While there is no reason a so-called service agency could not be dedicated to planting churches as a service to various denominations, most such agencies offer other specialized services, such as in medicine (Medical Assistance Programs), aviation (Missionary Aviation Fellowship), mass communications (Far East Broadcasting Company), literature (World Literature Crusade), etc., and operate alongside the churches in their areas of ministry.

5. International church/national church

Here is an interesting distinction rarely used. By "international churches" we mean those U.S. churches whose overseas work has not produced autonomous national churches. They are fairly numerous, examples being the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and in some ways even the Church of the Nazarene and the Christian and Missionary Alliance. The "international church" approach alters the church-to-church relationship somewhat and may soften or at least postpone mission/church tensions since members everywhere are part of a *single* church. It may tend to limit the full autonomy of the newer subdivisions, however.

C. *How is the agency related to other agencies?*

6. Affiliated/unaffiliated

The Foreign Missions Conference of North America was founded in 1893 and eventually embraced most U.S. mission societies. However, by the time this structure was subsumed under the National Council of Churches in 1952 (as what is now called the Division of Overseas Ministries or the DOM), the interdenominational agencies had long withdrawn, some of them now belonging *instead* rather than *in addition*) to the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA). The Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) came later and has both church-related and independent agencies as members. Many agencies, however, have no affiliations with others.

D. *How is the agency structured internally?*

7. Board-governed/member-governed/donor-governed

8. Centralized/decentralized administration

9. Polynational/mononational

10. "Home office" in one country/"home offices" in many countries.

11. Formal/non-formal

A jungle of complexities faces us if we try to give the details of the internal structure of the various agencies. Most are board-governed. Some (e.g., Wycliffe) are member-governed. Some, e.g., the Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), are essentially donor-governed. Whatever the ultimate source of governing power, however, the actual day-to-day administration may be in the hands of a fairly influential, nearly permanent staff. Differences in fund raising may affect the degree of

centralization of power. The Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF), for example, theoretically raises money for the *society*, not for individuals, while the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) requires each missionary to raise his *own* support. The result is that, in some ways, the OMF has greater centralized control than the SIM.

Some organizations draw their members from many countries (e.g., Wycliffe Bible Translators, Andes Evangelical Mission). Most express the missionary concern of a single nation (distinction 9, above). Some agencies have "home offices" for support and even governing purposes in more than one country. Such agencies are sometimes called *international* but could also be called *multinational*.

One large, virile tradition stemming from the Disciples or Restorationist tradition does not approve of agencies as such, and yet without the help of any formal mission agency (distinction 11) several thousand missionaries are sent out by individual local congregations belonging to either of two "brotherhoods." This is an explicit rejection of William Carey's proposal to use "means." Nevertheless, the non-formal coordination of teams of such missionaries to specific fields does in fact provide the functional equivalent of a mission agency. The very absence of formal cohesion sometimes elicits greater teamwork than in cases where a formal relation is prescribed or inherited. The record thus far, however, is unclear.

E. *For what function is the agency designed?*

12. Home missions/foreign missions
13. Sending/non-sending
14. Church planting/service (same as 4)
15. Evangelistic/Christian presence
16. Institutional/non-institutional
17. Cross-cultural/mono-cultural
18. E-1/E-2/E-3
19. First Stage Missions/Second Stage Missions/  
Consolidation Missions

These distinctions are mainly self-evident. Number 13 refers to the sending of people to live and work in a different place. Literature missions may send mainly literature, not people. The same is true of agencies mainly sending funds to support overseas (national) workers, projects helping orphans or relief efforts in cases of disaster. Number 16 refers to the fact that

some agencies do not found any schools, hospitals, industries, but perhaps focus only on the establishment of new congregations. Numbers 17 and 18 are very significant. They refer not to geographical or political distance, as in Number 12, but to cultural distance. E-1 means evangelism where the only barrier is the "stained glass barrier" — the special culture of the church. E-2 means there is an additional, serious culture barrier, but at least some significant common denominator. E-3 means the work is being done in a totally different culture. For example, reaching Navajo tribal people in the U.S. may be for Anglo-Americans far more difficult than working among Spanish-speaking people in the U.S. (or Argentina) since Spanish is a sister language and Navajo is not. Thus, to an Anglo-American, the Navajos (and Zulus and Chinese) are at an E-3 distance — that is, totally different. Spanish speakers to him are at an E-2 distance only. But non-church-going Anglos who live next door (or Anglos among the G.I.'s in Spain or in Tokyo) are closest of all. They are a mere E-1 distance away.

Furthermore, agencies working cross-culturally (e.g., E-2 or E-3) must organize their internal training programs properly to take into account the linguistic and cultural barriers. E-2 agencies, for example, typically "fumble" an E-3 opportunity that happens to be in the same area of their work. This is why most U.S. missions working predominantly among the Spanish-speaking people of Latin America (an E-2 task) fail miserably to reach the American Indians (who are at an E-3 distance). It usually takes a specialized E-3 mission, such as Wycliffe, to traverse that extra cultural distance.

A most important distinction is Number 19: First Stage Missions/Second Stage Missions/Consolidation Missions. It is awesomely true that well over 90% of all American missionary effort is now concentrated on churches established yesterday rather than upon the penetration of totally non-Christian groups where there is not yet any well-established, truly indigenous church (Winter 1979). Most mission observers are so intent upon the development of the so-called *national churches* that the fact is easily overlooked that 5 out of 6 non-Christians (2.5 billion out of 3 billion, in 1978) require First Stage Missions originating from somewhere — either from within the same country or from some other country. *First Stage Missions* is not to



be confused with people evangelizing within their own cultural tradition. That, aided by missions, is *Second Stage Missions*.

Table 1 lists the mission agencies having an annual income of \$5 million or more in 1975. These 29 entities took in more than half of the total of \$656 million given in 1975 by North American Protestants to overseas ministries. These are not all sending agencies, and in some cases work in the U.S. may be included. The purpose here is to display the relative strength of the larger organizations, and to show the varying relationships they sustain to church organizations, as per Figure 1. Two of them (Restoration Churches and Brethren Assemblies) operate with the non-formal structure commented on earlier (distinction 11).

**Table 1 — Overseas Ministries Annual Income (1975, in millions)**

Denomination	Structural Type			
	Type A	Type B	Type C	Type D
Southern Baptist Convention		48.30		
Campus Crusade for Christ				27.33
World Vision International				27.00
Seventh Day Adventist	25.00			
Church World Service		23.50		
Assemblies of God		21.79		
United Methodist Church	19.06			
Wycliffe Bible Translators				16.90
American Bible Society				13.24
Church of the Nazarene	12.40			
Restoration Churches		12.00		
Christian & Missionary Alliance	11.39			
Sudan Interior Mission				9.95
Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod	9.59			
Evangelical Alliance Mission				9.07
United Church of Christ	7.61			
Baptist Bible Fellowship				7.04
Mennonite Central Committee		6.96		
Protestant Episcopal Church (USA)	6.56			
Navigators				6.25
Conservative Baptist Foreign Miss. Soc.			5.98	
OMS International				5.92
Lutheran Church in America	5.84			
Presbyterian Church in U.S.	5.75			
American Baptist Church in USA	5.69			
Baptist Mid Missions				5.63
Brethren Assemblies		5.50		
American Lutheran Church	5.49			
United Presbyterian Church in USA	5.08			
<i>Totals</i>	<i>119.46</i>	<i>118.05</i>	<i>5.98</i>	<i>128.33</i>
				<i>371.8</i>

Note that about one-third of these organizations, drawing about one-third the funds, are of Type D — totally unaligned to any specific denomination. Note that there is only one Type C agency.

### **Protestant Mission Structures Today: Their Similarities**

If the American experience has proven anything, it has demonstrated that disestablishment was no disaster to the Christian movement. Since establishment could sometimes ignore the grass roots and pastors were paid whether or not people attended, disestablishment altered things irretrievably. Clearly, despite the wide diversity of types of organizations, virtually all U.S. Protestant denominations today are coalitions or federations of local congregations of mainly married people who own (or act as though they own) the local church plant. They sense the fact that they are needed to support its leadership and exercise a great deal of (or total) control over the very choice of that leadership. Even the Anglican tradition in America underwent this kind of democratization as the post-Revolution, restructured Episcopal church emerged. The reason for this leveling is a conscious or unconscious parallel between church government and the accepted pattern of democratically controlled civil government — and vice versa.

In a similar sense, despite wide diversity in organizational details, there are certain sweeping *common denominators* which hold true for virtually *all mission structures*. In the latter case, unlike the structure of the denominations, however, these owe nothing to democracy. Why? Because the conscious and unconscious *parallel is not to civil government but to the Catholic orders, the military, and the structure of private enterprise*, in that order. In a way, similarities are more difficult to describe than differences. But our task is easier due to the valuable check list Gannon (1977) gives for Catholic orders. The parallels are striking (giving our own titles to the enumeration of characteristics he describes):

1. Voluntary, deeper commitment
2. Response to a challenge
3. Stress on both devotion and active involvement
4. Task forces ready for any good work

5. An organizational esprit de corps
6. Both come-structures and go-structures
7. Amazing durability (of purpose and existence)
8. Stress on Christian basics
9. A normative pattern of discipline, for example:
  - a. community of members
  - b. related to a church but semi-autonomous (E.g., Type C, see Table 1)
  - c. a structure of authority — “quasi-familial”
  - d. common property
  - e. celibate chastity, mono-sexual membership in any one order
  - f. & g. elite commitment beyond that of ordinary church members

As we have already noted, there is a congenital reticence among Protestants to acknowledge the wealth of their inheritance from the Roman tradition. This reticence alone may account for the fact that the obvious parallels between practically every item in Gannon's trait list and the Protestant mission movement have not been more often acknowledged. American Protestants in particular generally recoil from any whiff of one group being “holier than thou” and especially from the concept of celibacy. But virtually every other trait holds substantially true for the Protestant mission societies and even for some of the Protestant renewing societies. The practice of holding all property in common is not widespread. Yet for a Salvation Army officer, for example, house, automobile, even uniforms are owned in common, and it is impossible for such officers to earn anything independently or even inherit money that does not become the property of the group. On the other hand, the concept of poverty may by now by many Protestant structures be taken as seriously as (or perhaps even more seriously than) by many Catholic orders. Neither poverty nor simplicity of lifestyle is mentioned in Gannon's list of traits, even though these traits do not appear to be automatic correlates of the renunciation of personal property, which he does mention.

*However, Protestant missions do plan for poverty, so to speak. It is almost universal among Protestant missions for all field personnel under any given agency, whether medical doctors, teachers or whoever, to receive modest and identical allotments once*

the cost-of-living and national exchange-rate adjustments have been made. The actual amount may vary significantly from one agency to another. For example, United Presbyterian overseas personnel have more recently been paid on a standard related to the average U.S. United Presbyterian pastor's salary, while workers under the Wycliffe Bible Translators receive more nearly half that amount. On the other hand, among Protestants little thought is given to "poverty" as a specific spiritual virtue. The actual parity and comparative austerity of allotment is more likely the result of pragmatic, situational considerations — "making the money go further." Recently, however, the idea of simplicity of lifestyle has gained considerable interest even in secular circles, partially due to the ecological crisis, and there is at least one Christian organization pledged to promoting "simple lifestyle" as an ideal.<sup>6</sup> The plan is to extend to the families of *donors* the same pattern of comparative austerity and simplicity of lifestyle the field missionary follows and in turn to ask missionary personnel to accept lifestyle simplicity not as a nuisance (to be endured only as long as field service continues) but as a permanent way of life. In any case, it may be that *poverty* rather than the former hardships involved in living overseas may *perform for Protestants* much the *same function as celibacy does for Roman Catholics* — that is, serve as a barrier to the faint-hearted or the uncommitted.

As an extended illustration let us consider three independent Protestant mission enterprises which in some respects may be viewed as Protestant counterparts of religious orders. Table 2 shows the rapid growth of these three associations. Even though all three work in the United States, they involve varying degrees of controlled income per worker just as the standard mission societies do. All three are heavily involved overseas as well, although the overseas affiliations of Inter-Varsity are not included in these figures. Various factors operate in the flourishing of these three groups. All three are heavily involved in ministries on college campuses, where they function almost as "surrogate denominations" but, despite good intentions, do not really try very hard to sustain or nourish the denominational relations or backgrounds or foregrounds of the students they touch.

**Table 2 — Growth of Three Protestant "Orders"  
Income in \$Millions**

Year	Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship	The Navigators	Campus Crusade
1970	1.1	2.5	8.6
1971	1.2	2.8	12.6
1972	1.4	3.1	17.3
1973	1.8	3.5	22.5
1974	2.5	4.0	23.6
1975	3.2	6.3	27.3
1976	4.0	11.0	34.8
1977	4.9	15.3	43.2
Percent Increase 1970-77	445%	612%	502%

None of them, for example, produces or routinely employs any literature that would explain the different denominational traditions to students or acquaint them with present-day denominational problems, successes, or personalities, even though all three are active publishers (Inter-Varsity Press being a major religious publisher today). On the other hand, all three make a rather unusual contribution to the development of Christian leadership among college youth and are justly proud of the literally thousands of traditional ministerial vocations that have resulted from their work. Campus Crusade is especially careful to require its staff to be loyal and supportive to local churches.

Similarities between these organizations can be highlighted by certain fascinating differences. Inter-Varsity, expressive originally of the Plymouth Brethren tradition much more than now, came to the U.S. from England via Canada and retains a British flavor — a certain reserve and cautiousness, a slight de-emphasis upon the role of married women but a healthy recognition of the vocation of the unmarried. In sharp contrast to the other two, Inter-Varsity's style of ministry is characterized by exceedingly loose and informal relationships with campus groups, many of which often don't know or sense whether they are or are not "an Inter-Varsity group." The Navigators and Campus Crusade take their style of ministry from the U.S. Navy and the business world, respectively, the former being primarily

a fellowship within the Navy in its early years, the latter being founded by a businessman and its current top administrator being a Harvard Business School graduate.

All three, in regard to their internal staff, are highly disciplined organizations and follow a system of an equivalent or parity of consumption-level, each member (as with "faith missions") raising his or her own support. By now each has a meticulously developed "manual" comparable in function to the *regula* of a Roman Catholic order.

Curiously all three, while heavily involved in *campus* ministries, spurn *worldly* knowledge in favor of constant, daily study of the Bible; and none of them very extensively encourages its staff to work toward higher degrees. In this, they resemble the Franciscans more than the Jesuits. Nevertheless, Inter-Varsity, in particular, which has a far greater intellectual emphasis than the other two, counts hundreds of faculty in American universities who have come through its local student fellowships. The emphasis of all three on disciplined Christian life tends to prepare their people for challenge and/or disappointment once they graduate and depend more heavily upon church traditions for their nurture and continued ministry. But the very fact that graduation provides a major transition from college, usually to a new place as well as a new set of relationships, means probably that these three agencies are not likely to lose their para-church status and become denominations. The same cannot be said for some organizations that perform ministries that are not localized to a specific age-span; and because celibacy is not inherent in their scheme, any of the three at any time could quite successfully decide to move from order status to church status. Here an important similarity encompasses many Protestant para-church groups.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance is an example of a para-church organization that became a denomination against its own will. To some extent derived from what is now the United Presbyterian Church, it is less than 1/30th as large in membership but sends twice as many missionaries as the United Presbyterian Church. Now in its third and fourth generation, it is uneasy about its nearly exclusive emphasis upon overseas missions, and it is already tending to broaden its range of involvement in Christian ministry. However, it began as an alliance of congregations seeking to focus attention upon home

and foreign missions and for its first 60 or 70 years simply made missions its primary concern, in effect expecting those families or members of families not so disposed to go to other churches. In this sense, until recently it has presumed the existence of "ordinary" local churches concerned with the ordinary spectrum of Christian ministries.

A similar case is that of the Salvation Army, to which we have already made reference. Family members not drawn to the rigorous inner-city ministry characterizing this group have simply fled and attached themselves to other churches. If it were not for such a reverse selection process it is doubtful that the durable focus of this group could have been maintained for 100 years. Interestingly enough, at present profound changes are taking place in both the Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Salvation Army, both of which are about 100 years old and have about 100,000 communicant members. The latter in 1976 dramatically outstripped almost all other denominations in the United States in its percentage increase in membership. This was primarily the result of its recent decision to reverse a long-standing policy of not welcoming new people into its fellowship unless and until such people were ready to become involved in the rigorous, active ministry of the Salvation Army. (In India, where they could not expect converts simply to go to "other" churches and thus the organization has long been forced to be a *church* rather than an *order*, there are four times as many Salvation Army churches as there are in the U.S.)

The durability of the specific goals of these two organizations is thus brought into question by the recent tendency of each to accede to the general pattern of American church life and to foster growth in membership, whether or not this sustains the rigorous task-oriented emphasis of the past. Both began as auxiliaries to existing church patterns: the Christian and Missionary Alliance largely to the Presbyterian, and the Salvation Army largely to the Anglican. In both cases the church tradition balked at allowing this type of specialization in its membership, although in neither case was there any significant antagonism on the part of the internal sodality. Just as a Roman Catholic pope balked at Peter Waldo's lack of upper class credentials (and another pope reluctantly made up for that omission by allowing Francis of Assisi to go forward with a similar lack of credentials), so the Anglican authorities in

England decided that William Booth's Salvation Army could not properly belong within that church, but then later the (Anglican) "Church Army" was begun in its place.

All of this leads us to the very threshold of a concluding discussion about the healing of the "breach" in Protestantism between church and order, denomination and voluntary society, democratic rule and minority initiative — between modality and sodality.

### **The Healing of the Breach**

One of the hardest things for Protestants to deal with has been the matter of a mechanism for perpetuation — the inevitable divergence between products of normal population increase and spiritual reproduction. Elite, ascetic perfection was not in fact rejected by the Reformers. They merely rejected the *celibate mechanism* that transcended normal biological perpetuation. In what remains perhaps the most brilliant essay ever written on the medieval period, Lynn White, Jr. (1945:87-115), observes:

In both intent and practice Protestants were ascetic. . . . When the Venetian ambassador called Cromwell's Ironsides "an army of monks," he was close to the truth. For if the Puritans rejected the distinction between a religious and a secular life, it was to monasticize the laity; if they destroyed abbeys, it was to make an abbey of the whole world. Only so can one understand Calvin's Geneva, Knox's Scotland, or colonial New England.

But whether we look closely at Calvin's Geneva or today's Salvation Army, we see that all Protestant attempts to combine elite commitment with a genetic mechanism of perpetuation have resulted in repeated cycles of failure.

Yet the Protestant mentality is not likely soon to embrace celibacy as the only solution. Neither do modern sensitivities about family life encourage the thought that family-based church traditions like the Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Salvation Army can long practice either (1) the effective exclusion of their own children who do not wish to sustain their particular ministry emphasis or (2) the shunning of "mediocre" outsiders in order to maintain pristine goals of specialized service. While Protestant mission societies have not found it impossible to allow the children of missionaries to choose some other form of Christian service than overseas missions, nevertheless the remaining problem of how to allow the children to grow up in two worlds — and thus be able to choose *not* to be



missionaries — is becoming more and more serious as sensitivities about quality in family life are heightened. Clearly the Protestant missionary family has brought a valuable new touch to the history of missions, yet there is no doubt that in many circumstances the missionary family is a clumsy and inefficient instrument of ministry.

But if Protestants will not give up children, neither can we expect their denominational leadership soon to be reconciled to the existence of external voluntary societies *that are accountable only to donors uninformed about technicalities and IRS agents unconcerned about goals.*

This leaves us with a Protestantism plagued on the one hand by denominations that by themselves won't stay elite and on the other hand by associations that, if rejected by the denominations, are no longer accountable to them. Thus for Protestants certain important principles seem to emerge:

1. There must be renewed commitment to a denominationalism that acknowledges both the incompleteness and yet the authenticity of each denomination as part of the *una sancta.*

2. At the same time, there must be recognition of the very real dependence of the modalities upon the sodalities. The family based, mainly genetically perpetuated structures called congregations or denominations (modalities) need to work with and appreciate the more selective, second commitment, purposive voluntary structures of fellowship and service (sodalities). Perhaps if the sodalities were more accountable to the modalities, they would not tend to be ignored or fought against. In this same light, American denominational leaders must reevaluate the assumptions which have led to the abandonment of the Young Men's Christian Association, the absorption of the Student Volunteer Movement, the destruction of the Society of Christian Endeavor, and the resistance to the Christian and Missionary Alliance in its early stage as a constructive auxiliary to the churches.

3. Equally, there must be a reciprocal renewal of respect and responsibility toward the denominational traditions on the part of the interdenominational voluntary societies. This means that the Protestant order-like enterprises, especially those of the Type D variety, which are not related to any denomination as such (e.g., Youth for Christ, Young Life, Youth with a Mission,

Operation Mobilization, Inter-Varsity, Navigators, and Campus Crusade), must be willing — intentionally and not just accidentally — to reinforce the non-elite, benefit-of-the-doubt structures (e.g., the congregations and denominations) which all too often they now abide with subconscious condescension. These organizations are in greater and greater measure custodians of the young and as such must prepare them for post-college congregational life. (David C. Cook Publishing Company has provided an example in its production of several popular books on specific denominational traditions.) Moreover, staff membership in such a Protestant “order,” be it Navigators or Wycliffe Bible Translators, should not obscure that person’s relationship to his/her own denominational affiliation. Indeed, there is, for example, nothing preventing those staff members of the Navigators who are simultaneously members of the United Presbyterian denomination from drawing a dotted line around themselves and their work and sending a formal annual report of what could be called “the Presbyterian Navigators Fellowship” to the United Presbyterian General Assembly.

4. The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. has constitutional provision for mission initiatives of all sorts to develop in decency and order, subject to the review and control of its General Assembly. But it does not yet have an effective mechanism for that review. Just the reverse, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (South) has an Office of Review and Evaluation but no constitutional definition of the process whereby a decentralized initiative can effectively take on form and substance. In both cases there is visible reticence among some officials in regard to free enterprise Christian structures wearing the denominational label, yet neither denomination has ever in fact prevented its individual members or its particular churches (i.e., congregations) from participating in a plethora of Christian organizations that are not at all subject to the “review and control” of the denomination. It is as though the U.S. government would frown on the very existence of organizations such as, say, U.S. Steel, which report to and are certainly “reviewed and controlled” by more than one state and federal regulatory agency, but at the same time would make no overt objection to agencies like the Mafia that do not report to any government agency at all.

5. Finally, Protestants must accept the example of the Roman Catholic achievement of equivalent training programs ("priestly formation") for the leadership of the two functional arms of the Catholic tradition — diocese and order. This means that the voluntary societies must come to terms with what has become the near-universal standard of a graduate theological seminary education as basic for a good proportion of their leaders. This pattern of education not only has considerable intrinsic value but, as it is adopted more extensively by the para-church agencies, will expand the foundation upon which respect and communication between church and order can be built. At the same time, the seminaries must modify both their course structure and their very perspective of the history of the Christian movement in order that the role of the Protestant orders may emerge and gain proper visibility in academic currency.

### **The Hardening of the Breach**

Despite the potential we have noted in American circles for the healing of the breach, events are unfolding on a world level that threaten to widen the gulf even further and thus in effect harden the breach. For most of American experience there has been, as we have noted, a divergence between the denominational mission board and the non-denominational mission society. But there has never been any acrimonious debate on this subject except in rare instances. And in no case has the existence of either of these two types of mission structures been threatened.

Now, however, an entirely new force has emerged from an unexpected quarter that does not debate the degree of relationship of a mission structure to a church but questions the very existence of the mission structure. In a recent article (1978) analyzing the Ghana meeting of the IMC, I have described how the missions themselves gradually became an anomaly as the leaders of the churches planted by mission agencies eloquently articulated their need for a new type of equal partnership with sister churches rather than a continued spoon-feeding relationship via the mission structures, so essential when the "younger" churches were first born. This is so familiar a phenomenon that it hardly needs to be described except to relate it to the problem we are discussing. The transition involved

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underlies the distinction made earlier — First Stage Missions/Second Stage Missions.

Quite naturally, once a church is born and becomes established, the whole relationship of any expatriate missionaries to that church must adjust to the new circumstances. This is not a new idea. The famous phrase of Henry Venn, "the euthanasia of the mission," has had scholarly currency for over a century.

However, an over-generalization takes place when the further conclusion is drawn that no missions from outside any culture or country are any longer necessary and that the age of missions is past. Granted that mission structures employing pioneer strategies are totally inappropriate in any society where the church is well established, to go on to assume that such structures are now of *no use at all in any other place* is to assume that there are no frontiers yet to be penetrated. This is the most disastrous assumption characterizing the American church in our time. In America this assumption tends further to tear down the intellectual justification for the mission structure, which already has weak foundations in theological circles, and has devastated the financial base for overseas work of almost any kind.

This is not the place to lay out the evidence which defines the extensive frontiers that still remain to the gospel of Christ. I have done this in several other places (1975, 1977a, 1979). We Americans, long wedded to the melting pot theory, are more sensitive to minorities and cultural distinctives than ever before. Employing sociological and anthropological perspectives, we discover massive numbers of frontier populations which still remain and which require sophisticated missionary methods. As many have pointed out, these frontiers are no longer geographical frontiers. But frontiers they are! In conference with other researchers, I have made estimates that lead to the conclusion that there are 2.5 billion people in this category, representing 16,750 cultural sub-groups that must patiently be penetrated by the Pauline missionary strategy which allows and encourages a new indigenous church tradition (1978). The shocking fact is that in America today there is very little awareness of this. Why? Because mission agencies, both denominational and non-denominational, have been successful across the years in planting churches. As a result both types have tended to become preoccupied with the jungle of new

relationships to yesterday's converts or concerned primarily with outreach into the same cultural beachheads that have long since possessed well established churches. This is the new era.

The resulting Second Stage Mission can be a very, very different type of activity from the kind which does the initial spadework in a completely new situation. It has been called "interchurch aid," which is to some extent demeaning insofar as it is a one-way street. Most important for our subject here: the prominence of Second Stage mission activity allows the significance of the distinctive mission structure to be questioned for the wrong reasons. Max Warren, on this matter, was quoted in a paper presented to the Ghana Assembly as saying,

Today the gravest embarrassment of the mission societies lies in the actual unwillingness of the younger churches to set them free to perform the tasks for which they properly exist — the pioneering of those new frontiers, not necessarily geographical, which have not yet been marked with a cross (van Randwijk, 1957).

All this further hardens the breach which we have decried.

There are certain things that can be done to avoid this further hardening process:

1) It is a desperate mistake to weigh the merits and virtues of Second Stage mission against the First Stage Mission. Each, where it applies, is crucially significant. First State or pioneer missions is inappropriate *only* where it has already been effectively employed. The Second State Mission, or "interchurch partnership in mission," is impossible unless it can build upon First Stage Mission.

2) We must avoid the thought that social concerns belong to Second Stage Mission but not to First Stage Mission. Successful frontier missions in the past have almost always literally depended upon the physical demonstration of the love of God.

3) We must recognize that the idea that First Stage Mission activity should continue is quite naturally dependent upon a vivid awareness of the unpenetrated frontiers which may well be hidden from the eyes of most people. Class, caste and social barriers are ultimately bridged by the gospel of Christ, but history shows that they are first penetrated one at a time by a gentle contextualized approach or the result is nothing but a superficial foundation and nothing from which a truly international Christian family can draw strength. One wonders out loud if every country of the world does not need to have a

specialized center of research and missionary education focused exclusively on the existence and the challenge of these frontiers. The writer's efforts at the U.S. Center for World Mission are meant only to represent U.S. initiative, already paralleled by similar centers in Scotland, Hong Kong and Korea. We have enquiries from South India, Nigeria, Guatemala and a number of other countries. Why cannot every country and every region of large countries possess such a center?

4) We must recognize that Westerners are not the only ones who can and must be involved in First Stage Mission activity. But it is equally obvious that there is no substitute for the elite, committed mission order for most of those efforts that require people to leave their own family and friends and accustomed social habitat behind them in order to plant the church across frontiers in societies and pockets of humanity where there is no church. It is absurd to think that non-Western believers are unable or unwilling to employ the mission structure. Yet younger-church leaders are by now experts on the undesirable ways missions can operate in the period where they deal with growing churches. Only a few of the older leaders recall the great effectiveness of the missions in the First Stage. Nevertheless here and there we see appearing marvelous evidences that the so-called younger churches are sprouting mission structures of their own, capable of cross-cultural activity, reaching out to people different from themselves.

The "breach" is nowhere more obvious than in the non-Western (Protestant) world where the new indigenous missions are looked upon often as some strange animal. Most of them are recognized by neither Western "missionaries" nor overseas churches. They stand as an ecclesiastical anomaly.

5) Only if the mission structures of East and West can meet together as equals from time to time will both their structural category and their frontier mandate be safeguarded. Thus it is notable that a 1974 "Call" for a 1980 world-level meeting of mission structures focused on frontiers has already gathered considerable steam. I do not refer to the CWME meeting in May 1980 nor the Lausanne meeting in June 1980, but to the earlier proposed August 1980 meeting in Edinburgh as defined by the 1974 "Call." This proposal, originated in 1972, was discussed primarily in the circle of the American Society of Missiology until 1974. Several documents treat it in detail (Winter, 1976,

1977b, 1978). Briefly, it is the only 1980 meeting that proposes to base itself exclusively on delegations from mission structures and to focus exclusively on First Stage efforts to reach beyond present frontiers. It will naturally build upon every concern for frontiers that may be evidenced in the two earlier meetings.

### In Conclusion

Protestant Americans have ambivalent feelings about their missions. The older U.S. denominations are rapidly phasing out their mission activity, even their Second Stage activity. If you count only the overseas workers sent by *member denominations* of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. as reported in 1975, they number 2776<sup>7</sup> and constitute only seven and one half percent of a total close to 37,000. There would seem to be widespread contentment with present accomplishments and little knowledge of any frontiers. Thus the great vitality in American missions increasingly lies in the varied constituencies of some 600 other agencies, mostly not related to older denominations and yet often drawing heavily on the ordinary members of the older denominations. The IFMA-EFMA Retreats (held in 1976 and 1978) each time brought together over 400 executives; yet even this group reported in 1975 only 36% of the total of North American Protestant missionaries, virtually the same as in 1969. It is the totally unaffiliated group of mission agencies that is growing — 50% more in 1975 than in 1969, amounting to 40% of the total in 1975 rather than 31% as in 1969. But large, individual Protestant orders in roughly the same period have grown in the neighborhood of 500%. Rightly or wrongly, in the near future it would appear that structures not governed by denominations will have an increasingly large role unless the older denominations can allow their mission-minded minorities to express themselves more fully than at present. Even so it is not clear whether there will be a major recovery of interest in frontiers, but there are many hopeful signs.

### Notes

1. I realize the dictionary gives several little used and unrelated meanings to the word *modality*, and I realize that both the Catholic and anthropological uses of the word *sodality* are slightly narrower than mine. I am not myself particularly attached to these terms, but I am certainly very concerned to suggest that the two kinds of structures to which I refer are the very warp and the woof of the fabric of all healthy societies and as such are both to

be considered legitimate elements in any human community — religious or secular. As a result, much of my own writing has dealt with the dangers resulting where either modality or sodality is missing or either is not fostered and respected (Winter 1969, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974a, 1974b).

2. It is not as though Carey's ideas were a new creation. There were a number of mission societies already in the U.S., and of course the Moravians had been active for many decades. Neither is it that no one had ever proposed in writing that a mission society be formed in the Protestant tradition. Justinian Welz, had he been dealing merely with a rural Baptist association, might have succeeded more than a hundred years earlier, but the Lutheran hierarchy was too much for him. If Carey's *Enquiry* was immensely influential, it is to his honor, not so much to his credit. It was well done, but so was what Welz did. Carey's material simply played an infinitely greater role. *The Protestant missionary movement is in some ways as important as Protestantism itself.*

3. Cf., for example, Bowden 1970; Miller 1961; Robertson 1966, especially the chapter entitled "Voluntary Associations as a Key to History" by James D. Hunt (359-373); Gustafson 1961; Powell 1967; Pennock and Chapman 1969. More recent are Snyder 1976 and Richey 1977.

4. For a fuller discussion of this problem, cf. Winter 1971, Winter and Beaver 1970.

5. The data underlying these calculations and those in Figures 2, 3 and 4 are as follows:

KEY: CCC = Canadian Council of Churches

NCCCUSA = National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

EFMA = Evangelical Foreign Missions Association

TAM + FOM = The Associated Missions and the Fellowship of Missions

IFMA = Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association

Year	Conciliar	Non-conciliar							
1925	11,020	2,588							
1952	10,416	8,160							
			CCC + NCCCUSA	EFMA	Unaffi- liated	TAM + FOM	IFMA	TOTALS	
	Type A,B,C		8986	4564	4784	37	0	18,371	53%
	Type D		312	1992	6088	1612	6085	16,089	47%
1969	Totals		9298	6556	10,872	1649	6085	34,460	
	%		27%	19%	31%	5%	18%	100%	
	Type A,B,C		6921	4848	5106	43	0	16,918	47%
1972	Type D		0	1839	9755	1088	6450	19,052	53%
	Totals		6921	6687	14,861	1051	6450	35,970	
	%		19%	19%	41%	3%	18%	100%	
	Type A,B,C		5339*	4892	5003	49	0	15,283	41%
1975	Type D		0	2120	11,673	1468	6406	21,667	59%
	Totals		5339*	7012	16,676	1517	6406	36,950	
	%		14%	19%	46%	4%	17%	100%	

\*Note: Only 2776 of these are sent by Member denominations of the NCCCUSA.

6. The United Presbyterian Order for World Evangelization, 1605 Elizabeth St., Pasadena, CA 91104.

7. Dayton (1976:382): 5010 including affiliated non-member boards.



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Dr. Ralph D. Winter graduated from the California Institute of Technology, has an M.A. from Columbia University, a Ph.D. from Cornell University and a B.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He served ten years as a missionary in Guatemala, and another ten years on the faculty of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary. He was one of the plenary speakers at the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, Switzerland and has given major addresses at the Executives Retreat of the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association meeting, the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, and the National Conference of the Association of Church Missions Committees. He has been active in the formation and development of several mission organizations, as well as the Theological Education by Extension movement, the American Society of Missiology (of which he was the first Secretary and later President), the Summer Institute of International Studies, and the William Carey Library Publishing house. From time to time he serves as an adjunct professor both at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and at Fuller Theological Seminary. He was the editor of *Theological Education by Extension*, *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok*, the author of *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years, 1945-1969* and numerous chapters and articles in well-known publications. He is the Founder and currently General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena.

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