

Missionaries and mission strategists commonly talk about planting younger churches in the mission fields they are sent to. This is all to the good. But in this chapter, which may turn out to be a milestone in contemporary missionary thought, Ralph Winter raises a question that is not commonly talked about in missionary circles: How about planting younger missions? The matter of moving beyond the national church is something which was not stressed at Green Lake, but which is brought out strongly by Winter and other contributors to this symposium. Here, not only the goals, but the accompanying structures are analyzed with unusual perception.

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THE PLANTING OF YOUNGER MISSIONS

by RALPH D. WINTER

I was in the Philippines recently, staying in the Conservative Baptist Mission guest home while being involved in a seminar on theological education by extension. To my delight, different missionaries and nationals were invited to be present at mealtime from day to day, and through these contacts I re-

RALPH D. WINTER is Associate Professor of the Historical Development of the Christian Mission in the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, a position he accepted after ten years of experience as a United Presbyterian missionary in Guatemala. He holds the B.S. degree from California Institute of Technology, the B.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary, the M.A. in Education from Columbia University and the Ph.D. in Anthropology from Cornell. Dr. Winter is widely respected as a missionary opinion-former through his writ-

ceived a good impression of how determinedly the Conservative Baptist missionaries and national church leaders were involved in church-planting.¹

I observed, however, that the American missionaries, while they participate in local church life, are themselves preeminently members of a nonchurch organization (based in the USA) called the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society. The national leaders in the Philippines neither have joined this United States organization, nor have they formed a parallel mission structure of their own. I do not know that anyone has tried to stop them from doing so. I suppose the idea simply has not come up.

I would like to bring it up here and now. I have selected the people in the CBFMS because they are so up-to-date; if I can make a point in regard to their operation, it will have to apply to practically every other mission!

CLEAR GOALS, CONFUSED MEANS

In Manila there is no question about clarity of purpose in church-planting. The goal is an autonomous, nationally run Conservative Baptist Association in the Philippines, or perhaps an even larger association including other Baptists. "Some day" this Philippine association may sprout its own home mission society or foreign mission society. But when? How will it go about it? Why not now? Why is not a nationally run mission as clearly and definitely a goal as is church-planting? That is, why do the various goals prominent in everyone's mind not include both *church-planting* and *mission-planting*? And why do we talk so little about such things? Or, to take another tack, why is it that only the foreign missionary (no doubt not by

ings such as *The Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years* (cited by several authors in this symposium), and for his role as one of the architects of the extension seminary movement. The book he edited, *Theological Education by Extension*, has become a cornerstone for that movement, worldwide.

plan, but by default) has the right, the duty or the opportunity to "go here or to go there and plant a church"?

In the present circumstances, for example, if the Conservative Baptist Mission in the Philippines for any reason decides that its particular family of churches ought to be extended to some other country (or even to some other part of the Philippines), everyone would be likely to assume that it will take foreign money, foreign personnel, and even a decision by foreigners. There may be exceptions, but at least this is the usual approach. Without any foreign help, the local churches may be doing an excellent job reaching out evangelistically in their own localities. But if a new church is going to be established at a distance, especially in another dialect area, that will very likely be the work of the foreigner. Why? Because for some strange reason the only *mission* in the situation is a foreigner's mission, and because the vaunted goal of producing a nationally run *church*, as valuable and praiseworthy as such a goal is, has not automatically included the establishment of nationally run *missions* as part of the package.

This is not to say the idea has never been thought of. The American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea, for example, long ago saw fulfillment of their dream of a national church that would send foreign missionaries. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines sends foreign missionaries. The members of the Latin America Mission are in the throes of mutating into an association of autonomous missions in which Latin as well as Anglo Westerners are involved, but they do not include nor at the moment plan to deal with the far more drastic cross-cultural task of reaching the aboriginal, non-Western inhabitants of Latin America. There are many other examples. And as to the future, just wait: the recently established Conservative Baptist Association in the Philippines will before long be sending foreign missionaries.

Nevertheless, what I would like to know is why the sending of missionaries by the younger church is so relatively rare a phenomenon, and, if discussed, is so widely conceived to be a

"later on" type of thing. Just as a new convert ought to be able immediately to witness to his new faith (and a great deal is lost if he does not), so a newly founded church ought not only to love Jesus Christ but to be able immediately to show and share its love in obedience to the Great Commission. How long did it take for the congregation at Antioch to be able to commission its first missionaries? Were they premature?

Space does not allow us to describe the outstanding mission work done by Pacific Islanders (over 1,000 in a list recently compiled), by Vietnamese nationals in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or by the famous Celtic Peregrini and their Anglo-Saxon imitators, for example. Perhaps what we must at least point out is that the churches emerging from the Reformation must not be taken as an example. They took more than 250 years to get around to any kind of serious mission effort, but even then it was not more than on a relatively small scale for an entire century.

The most curious thing of all is the fact that precisely those people most interested in church growth often are not effectively concerned about what makes congregations multiply. Those who concede that church-planting is the primary instrument whereby mankind can be redeemed do not always seem to be effectively employing those key structures that specialize in church-planting. We hear cries on every side to the effect that an indigenous national church is our goal, but the unnoticed assumptions are (1) that only a Western mission can start a new work across cultural boundaries, and (2) that once such a church is established, the church itself will somehow just grow and plant itself in every direction. What illogically follows is this: United States churches need explicit mission organizations to reach out effectively for them, but overseas churches can get along without such structures. The goals are clear; the means to reach them are still largely obscured.

WHAT GREEN LAKE DID NOT SAY

Admittedly this chapter covers a subject the Green Lake

Conference did not plan to take up. As GL '71 unfolded, we all began to realize that what has carelessly been termed "church/mission relations" really refers, it turns out, to mission/church relations: the relations between an American *mission* and an overseas national *church* (which is probably the product of the U.S. mission's work over the years). To these mission/church relations, GL '71 added church/mission relations, namely, the relation of the *churches* back home to the *mission* they support. So now we have what George Peters characterized as the official docket of the conference, namely, church/mission/church relations. This included three focuses: (1) the church at home, (2) the missions which are their overseas arm, and (3) the churches overseas resulting from these missionary efforts. We can call this "second-generation church-planting" and diagram it as in Figure 1.

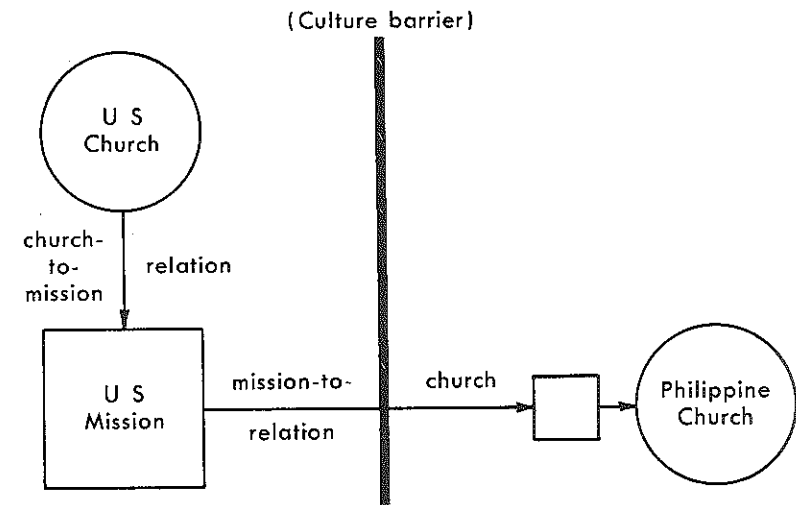


Fig. 1. *Second-Generation Church-Planting.* A new church is "planted" by a United States-based mission across a cultural barrier (mottled line).

It is greatly to be appreciated that this post-GL '71 symposium has allowed for an additional element to enter the picture,

namely, the *mission* outreach of the *younger churches*. Thus, while Green Lake tended to confine itself to church/mission/church relations, this symposium covers greater ground, namely, church/mission/church/mission relations. This may be termed "second-generation *mission-planting*," and diagrammed as in Figure 2.

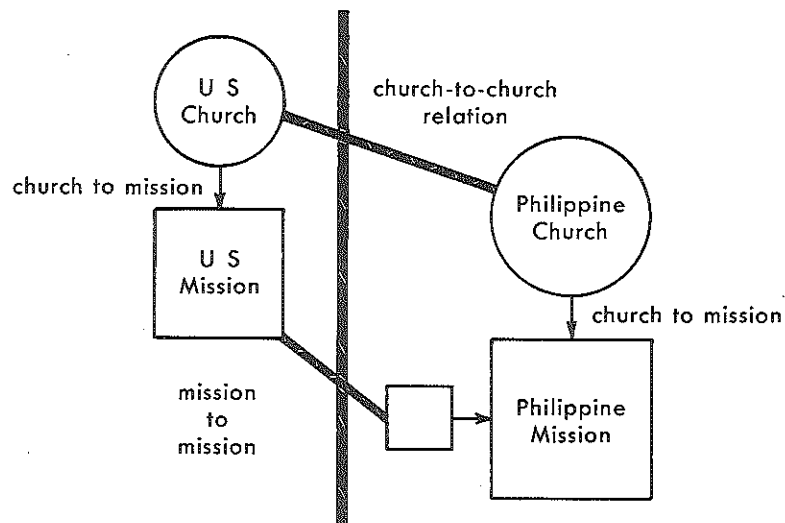


Fig. 2. *Second-Generation Mission-Planting*. A now-autonomous national church develops relations (dotted line) as an equal directly with the United States church body. Next the national church, with the help of the continuing United States mission, founds a nationally run mission.

Note that the appearance of the new fourth element may (in most cases) eliminate the former United States mission-to-Philippine church relation, and will likely create three new ones: (1) United States *church-to-Philippine church*, (2) United States *mission-to-Philippine mission*, and (3) a new kind of *Philippine church-to-Philippine mission* relation that is parallel to the existing United States *church-to-United States mission* relation.

In Figure 3 we are anticipating not only the existence of an autonomous Philippine mission, but also its success in establishing a third-generation church across some new cultural barrier. (The existence of such barriers is the primary reason for needing a specialized mission organization, in contrast to ordinary church evangelism, to accomplish such a task.) We call this step "third-generation church-planting." By this time it is possible that the United States mission has reduced its staff sufficiently to be able to move into a new field in a similar way to plant another second-generation church.

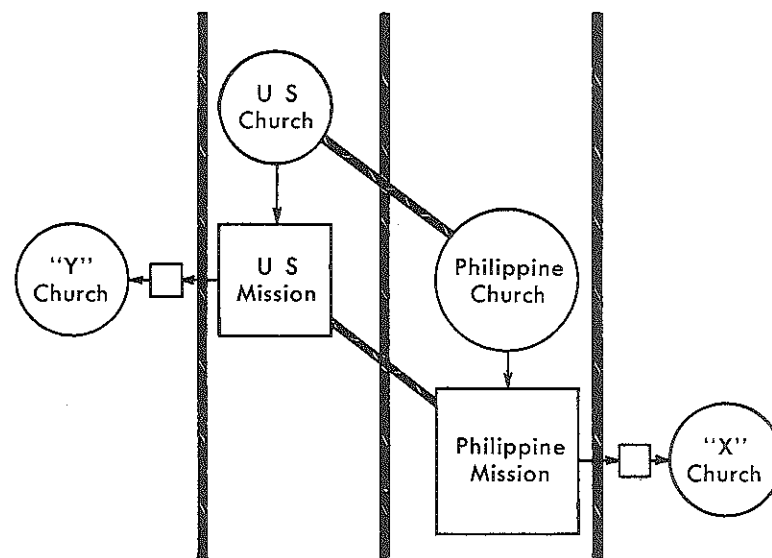


Fig. 3. *Third-Generation Church-Planting*. Both national church and national mission are now autonomous. The national mission establishes relations as an equal with the United States mission, and both it and the United States mission (elsewhere) plant churches across new cultural barriers. This is "third-generation church-planting" for the United States mission and "second-generation church-planting" for the Philippine mission.

Figure 4 assumes that the new third-generation church has now been encouraged to plant its own mission agency before the second-generation mission considers its task finished.

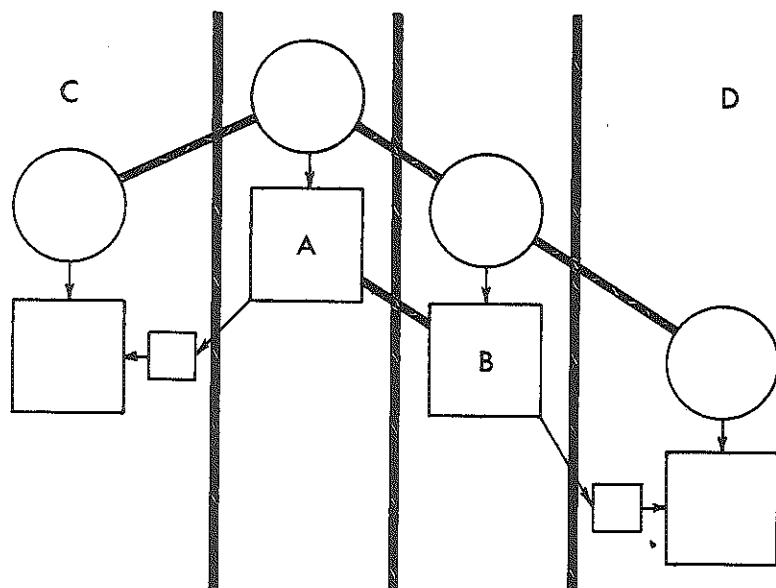


Fig. 4. Both (A) the United States mission and (B) the Philippine mission help establish nationally run *missions* in cultures C and D, respectively, each repeating the stage of Figure 2. In healthy church and mission multiplication this process will continue indefinitely.

FIRST REACTIONS

At this point some may recoil in horror at the thought of all this new machinery to be set up. Some readers may even have compared this to Rube Goldberg. It isn't that we object to the nationals getting in and doing things for themselves. We just somehow can't see the desirability of the nationals, with their limited resources and perhaps in some cases limited knowledge of the rest of the world, having to get involved in all the admin-

istrative paper work needed to set up and operate a competent mission agency. It is parallel to our feeling that every nation doesn't have to be a member of the nuclear club. Why should every small nation have to figure out how to make an atomic bomb? Some people may even feel that nationals can't be trusted that far! Can they not be trusted to send missionaries on their own? Western missions made a lot of mistakes in the beginning, and by now they have learned much about government red tape, anthropology, etc. Why should national leaders who have huge problems at home be bothered at this early stage with the problems of other nations?

Furthermore, it is rather mind-boggling to imagine how many new mission organizations will jump into existence around the world if this new kind of mission theory is pursued. The number of new churches (and whole denominations) springing up in the non-Western world is already astronomical, especially in Africa. You can image the statisticians at the World Council of Churches or the World Evangelical Fellowship going out of their minds trying to keep track of all the new denominations being born (currently at the rate of at least one a day). Isn't that bad enough? So the question naturally arises: Are we serious about every church communion in the world getting into the mission business?

Let's think about it some more. For one thing, we're not necessarily suggesting that the Dani tribespeople of West Irian send a missionary to the Eskimos. Let's reemphasize right here that a specialized mission structure is required not just for work in foreign countries, but also for work in foreign *cultures*, which may or may not be found merely in foreign countries. One of our common weaknesses is that we often take cultural differences more seriously when a political boundary is crossed than when we reflect upon groups of different culture within our own country, especially when those groups are minorities and may appear to be unpatriotic in their adherence to their traditional customs. Certainly, wherever it is feasible, full-fledged work in a foreign country is desirable for several rea-

sons. It not only puts the new national mission on a par with the United States mission which caused its own birth; it also creates a parallelism of circumstances and experience as national workers discover what it feels like to present the gospel while working as aliens in a foreign country. This kind of experience may for the first time introduce key leaders and their families to the psychological dimension of sacrifice involved in being a missionary. Nationals with such experience behind them will be the first to see the foreign missionary in a new light.

However, no matter what the miscellaneous factors pro and con may be, there are two overarching mandates that throw the whole subject of younger missions into the very highest priority.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE

In a recent article I found myself presenting a chart which indicated the existence of 2,150,000,000 non-Christian Asians. While Christians constitute a higher percentage of the Asian population than ever before, a far larger number of Asians do not know Christ than when William Carey first headed for India. We must be deeply grateful to God and to earlier pioneers that there are over ten million Christians in India, for example, but the perplexing fact is that there are at least 500 subcultures in India alone, as distinct from each other socially as the blacks and whites in Birmingham, Alabama, and that in at least 480 of these entire subcultures there are no Christians at all. Very bluntly, normal evangelistic outreach from existing Christian churches in India is utterly inadequate to face this challenge.

Note that I am not making a case here for the need of United States missionaries, although in many of these subcultures Western missionaries might be just as acceptable, or more so, than any Indian or Asian. What I am saying is that not even the Indian Christians can do this job unless (1) they understand it to be a task of full-blown *missionary* complexity, and

(2) they set up the proper *mission* machinery to do the job.

What is most needed in India today is the development of liberating fellowships of Christian faith among the hundreds of millions of Indian people who live in the hundreds of unreached subcultures. But the point is that these essential, crucial new fellowships in the unreached subcultures will not be planted by existing *churches* as much as by *mission* structures that can effectively express the true Christian obedience of the existing churches.

We hear that there are already one hundred such mission agencies in India, either for evangelism within the pockets of population where there are already Christians, or for real cross-cultural mission into pockets that are as yet unreached. But who cares? No one even has a list of these organizations. No one thinks it is important enough to make such a list. The new, immeasurably improved, *World Christian Handbook* for 1973 is projected for publications without such a list. There have long been directories of missions originating in the Western world; no one has yet begun a directory of the missions originating in the non-Western world.

This is not a bizarre, offbeat curiosity. It is impressively clear that the two thousand million non-Christian Asians will not be reached unless it can become fashionable for the *younger churches* to establish *younger missions*.

THE THEOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE

One reason why some apathy about missions has been growing in the United States recently has been all the talk (shall we say the "crowing"?) that has gone on during the past twenty-five years about the "great new fact of our time," that is, the emergence of a worldwide family of believers representing every country (but not every subculture) on the face of the globe. As we have seen, this quite distorts the picture demographically. Theologically it is very nearly totally misleading.

When pushed excessively, this "great new fact" ignores the

theological reality of the diverse subcultures of mankind. Let's take a hypothetical example. If the United States were an unreached country and Christians from Japan planted a church in Seattle, another in San Francisco, and a third in Los Angeles and then headed home feeling satisfied that the United States had now been reached for Christ, this would be the kind of demographic nonsense we pointed out above. But if the three churches that were planted by the Japanese mission were all among the Navajo Indians, it would become a *theological* absurdity as well. And it would be an even greater absurdity if all the rest of the United States were (like Africa and Asia) cut up into hundreds of radically different subcultures rather than being relatively unified in language and culture. This is only a parable of the whole non-Western world today.

The theological imperative, however, does not merely arise from such practical considerations of tough cross-cultural mission. It goes much deeper. Do we dare say that whether or not there is anyone to "win" in foreign countries, that God does not intend for national churches to be isolated from Christians of radically diverse culture? Do we dare say that the Great Commission will not be fulfilled merely by the planting of an indigenous church in every culture so long as those churches remain isolated? Surely the Bible teaches us that the worldwide multitude of Christians constitutes a body, and that the various members and organs of that body need each other. Isn't it possible, therefore, to assume on theological grounds that even if everyone in the world were converted to Christ, Christians in one culture would still need to know Christians in other places? And their growth in faith and love would have to consist in part of some kind of nonassimilative integration which would neither arbitrarily break down all the cultural differences nor allow the diverse elements of the body to wither and die, or be stunted due to the lack of proper circulation of witness and testimony through the whole body.

This is the ultimate reason for missions. God has allowed a gorgeous diversity among the butterflies, the leaves, the flowers,

and the human families of mankind. If He does not intend to reduce the number of butterflies and flowers to a single model, He may not intend to eliminate all the ethnic, racial and linguistic differences in the world today. If He doesn't, then there is (and always will be) a powerful case for special mission organizations to facilitate the intercultural contact and to provide the lifeblood that will enable the whole body to flourish through interdependence, rather than to languish in fragmented isolation or to be stultified in a monotonous uniformity.

The theological imperative means that we condemn national churches to stultification if we frustrate their right and their duty to enter into serious mission. This ominous stagnation can occur to missionless churches in the Celebes as easily as it can develop among complacent nonmissionary minded Christians in a Detroit or London suburb. This is a theological dimension that has nothing to do with arithmetic or demography.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE IMPASSE

At least two assumptions may contribute to the widespread blindness about the need for younger missions as well as younger churches. One of these arose years ago in what is now called the ecumenical camp. The other, which leads almost precisely to the same conclusion, is a pattern of thought common among the most fervent Evangelicals.

Ironically, the first assumption began to develop at that time in history when the older historic denominations' mission efforts were staffed and run primarily by people who would be considered clearly evangelical today. It was D. L. Moody who launched John R. Mott into the explosively powerful Student Volunteer Movement, for example, and it was these early evangelical student leaders and their followers who, in country after country around the world, organized the missionary councils. By 1928 there were twenty-three. By 1948 there were thirty, and virtually every "mission field" country of the non-Western world and even of the sending countries had its missionary

council or Christian council. Note that in only three of these was there any reference to "churches" in the title. They were missionary councils or "Christian" councils, but *not* councils of churches. This means that in India, for example, both national churches and *foreign* mission societies were originally represented in the national Christian council. Also, as a minor element, there already were indigenous mission societies of certain special types, such as quasi-nationalized offices of the American Bible Society or of the YMCA. The development of younger *churches* was the focus of attention, and apparently it was almost automatically supposed that *missionary societies* could only come from abroad. This fact later became a booby trap. Western mission societies themselves usually took the initiative to withdraw from these councils (in order to let national churches "run their own show") and, as a well-intentioned but tragic parting shot, they often even recommended either directly or indirectly that only *churches* should be allowed as members in the councils they left behind.

This fateful step assured the free sway of authority by national leaders, but it also swept the American Bible Society and the YMCA and all future indigenous mission societies! The National Christian Council of India in 1956 determined that "only organized church bodies are entitled to direct representation in the Council." As a result, many Christian councils actually changed their names to "councils of churches." Still other councils, as that of India, for example, changed their nature (as above) without changing their names.

However, it is not as though everyone simply forgot about the need for mission work to be carried forward by personnel and funds from within the new nations and the younger churches. By this time in history it was felt that all missions should properly result from the direct initiative of *church* organizations as such. The move to exclude all but churches from these new councils did not, it was thought, do any more than eliminate *foreign* missions. Missions sponsored by national Christians, it was assumed, would quite naturally and

normally be represented in the meetings of those new church councils by the appropriate representatives of the churches themselves. Thus the unquestionable principle stressing the autonomy of the national church was implemented in such a way as to exclude without a hearing the cause of the voluntary society. The reason the records do not show any great tussle at the time is partly because of the confusion of the two issues and of the predominant urgency after 1945 of getting the foreigners out of the picture. It also resulted from the fact that by this time most of the larger and older voluntary societies had already severed ties with these councils, and were thus not present to voice any opinion as to the structural implications of the new development. This leads us to the second basic assumption which has caused blindness among present-day Evangelicals about the need for younger missions.

There is no disguising the fact that a great deal (perhaps by now it would be fair to say the bulk) of mission efforts has been and is the work of people who normally call themselves Evangelicals. Evangelicals have expressed their missionary interest both inside and outside the older denominations. Every move by the older denominations to decrease foreign mission efforts has resulted in proportionate transferral of personnel and funds to newer "more mission-minded" denominations (and their mission boards) or to interdenominational missions, old and new. Thus, the average missionary overseas has tended to be either a strong Evangelical working within an older denomination (and thus believing that churches as such can and should send missions) or increasingly he is likely to be a missionary working for an interdenominational society, in which case he commonly believes that while older, perhaps liberalized, denominations back home can't be expected to send many missionaries, certainly the new churches overseas (started from scratch by evangelical fervor and developing with close dependence upon the Word of God) will surely be as missionary-minded as the missionary himself.

Thus, by 1972 we see that on every side, whether liberal or

conservative, there is a nearly unanimous assumption that the autonomous mission society in the mission land is either wrong and shouldn't exist or that it will be necessary only as an emergency measure someday in the future when younger churches follow the path of older United States denominations and "go liberal."

CONCLUSION

It is painful to add one more reason for blindness about the need for younger missions. True passion for the lost today is relatively scarce, even among missionaries. You don't have to be very daring to be a missionary today. As one missionary put it, "Circumstances have changed so much that it takes more courage to go home to the States than it does to go overseas." In the case of the United Presbyterians, for example, a young seminary graduate can very likely get a higher salary by going overseas as a missionary (if there is any budget for him at all) than he can by starting at the bottom rung of the ladder in church life back home. In general, American missions are a very elaborate end product of a massive century and a half of institutional development. The early missionaries were generally poor people who went from a poor country. But it did not take them long to build up institutions and vast land holdings—in some cases little empires—and in all cases a vast array of paraphernalia unimaginably beyond the ability of the national churches to duplicate.

Thus, even in an economic sense, the missionary from a well-heeled country is his own worst enemy should he ever want to promote a bleeding, sacrificial outpouring in foreign missions on the part of Christians in the national churches of the Third World. They literally cannot "go and do likewise."

Let us envision for a moment the young United States mission candidate. He may have to scrounge around for the wherewithal to buy his family a car, a camera, and a washing machine (just the "bare necessities" of the US life-style). Once on the field he will make expensive plane flights to the capital

city for necessary medical help from real medical doctors. Even the most pitiable, poverty-stricken new missionary appears quite wealthy to the national Christian of most mission lands. For example, he may purchase just a few native trinkets to dress up his home for the benefit of the occasional tourist from America. What he buys for this purpose may appear in the national's eyes to be a shockingly trivial use of items which are to him culturally functional and essential, and may even cost him a year's savings!

Quite obviously missions, United States style, are out of reach to the Third World churches. National churches are as unlikely to be capable of following the life-style of United States missions as they are able to own as many cars per family. The economic gap is so great that the only possible solution is for autonomous younger missions to enter the picture on their own and be able to do things their own way. This may or may not mean they will set up their own promotional office in Wheaton, Illinois. In any case, it will be a whole new ball game.

We may end the century somewhat in the way foreign missions first began (in Protestant hands), with German candidates going under Danish auspices supported by British funds. Entirely new patterns may develop once the ingenuity and creativity of the younger churches reign free. One thing is clear: We cannot promote second-generation churches without promoting second-generation missions. The great new fact of *our* time must be the emergence of Third World *missions*. This is the next phase of missions today.

NOTES

1. The word *plant* is not ill-chosen. To say *establish* would be presumptuous by contrast. *Plant* means precisely that you take into your hands life which is beyond your power and help it to take root and grow by a process which is beyond your power. *Planting* is a delicate but very much needed task in which man assists God.
2. Harold E. Fey, ed., *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, vol. 2, 1948-1968 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), p. 98.