

3. *A body that serves*

A third element we encounter in the Great Commission is that act of witnessing (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47; John 20:21-23). Christ ordered his disciples to walk the whole world giving testimony of that which they had witnessed. To witness does not only mean to make a verbal announcement, but it ought to include as well the proof of the transformation made in the life of the witness.

It is in this living witness that the church lends it services to the world. It is necessary that the element of service be included as an essential part of the mission of the church, as part of the evangelization that has been commended to it to be fulfilled among all men. Rolando Gutierrez-Cortes wrote, "When Jesus said, 'I have not come to be served but to serve', it was totally a revelation of the dimensions of the heart of God for man. In these words Jesus described the more profound intimacies of the divine purposes, and only when we serve in this same dimension is it that we are united in a Christian activity."

In its service to the world the church should be careful that it does not fall in either of these two extremes: one is the ministering of help to the individual with only evangelistic ends. Regeneration should not only be a "religious" subject, but rather a total transformation of the man should occur, including a change in his attitudes towards his fellow man. Ministering service only as an excuse to bring the unconverted to the church, or to make him accept our religious convictions, is not honest. In the missionary fields of the world much has been suffered by the sincere but mistaken efforts of missionaries who distribute clothing, food, and medicine to those who attend the worship, while impartial service assisting those who suffer oppression, injustice, or pain, remains outside their agenda.

The second extreme of which we should be careful, is thinking that we should leave all social action outside of the proclamation of the Gospel so that it can be effective. It indicates that the proclamation itself is social action. When the Gospel is presented completely and correctly, it has a transforming effect, such that men change their relations with others, rectify their conduct, and openly declare themselves in favor of justice and truth. The great revivals of the past had this characteristic. Men having been transformed in their inner lives, society also experienced a notable change in its action and in its structures.

By means of worship, proclamation, and service, the church should recognize that the mission that its Lord put to them was over all things that of the individual obtaining reconciliation with God. The evangelistic command given to the church should be completed and to this work the church should dedicate its best men, its most valuable resources, and its most ardent prayer.

THE BIBLICAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP, WITNESS AND SERVICE REPORT

Discussion among the participants of this group based on the paper by Hector Espinoza reflected the fact that uncertainty and perplexity concerning the mission of the church is indeed a problem faced by the church today. This uncertainty, it was recognized, has its roots in a number of unresolved issues, sixteen of which were outlined in Mr. Espinoza's paper.

Any approach to a solution of this problem must be based upon a fresh, widespread response of the Christian community to the Lord of the church, and such a response may well be considered in terms of worship, witness and service, as the paper suggests.

Many aspects of our uncertainty tend to disappear as the people of God gain a more mature understanding of who God really is, especially as they meet him afresh in the risen Christ. Any true response to the risen Christ vibrates with joy and adoration, as well as reverence. Expressions of worship may involve the gathered community in a particular area, either as whole congregations or in small group settings, or may characterize the expression and attitude of the individual believer. In developing our expression of worship, we should be less concerned about the binding elements of tradition, and more concerned about a joyful response to the Word of God and the Lord of the Word.

It was recognized that worship implies certain essential elements including praise and thanksgiving, confession and affirmation, intercession and petition, proclamation and exposition of Scripture, consecration and commitment and the sacramental celebration of the believing body around the table of the Lord.

Worship should also function as the means by which the people of God are built up in the Spirit in order to move out into the unredeemed world with an authentic, effective witness to the reality of God and to his great love made known to us in Jesus Christ. In the course of worship, even though it is primarily directed to the needs of the believers and represents the Godward expression of the Lord's people, the unbeliever may well catch sight of God and thus be brought to faith.

As believers move out into the world, thus refreshed in their witness to Christ by participation in worship, they are called to reflect the love of Jesus Christ, in their attitudes, their behavior and their explicit witness. The Christian community must remember the Scriptural injunction that all men should recognize the believers by their love and, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples because ye have love one for another" (John 13:35).

Further effective witness on the part of the church will depend heavily on the involvement of the laity — all the people of God — in the total ministry of the church. This in turn suggests the great need for further recognizing authentic gifts and carefully developing those gifts

for the benefit of the whole body. In pursuing this goal we must recognize the beautiful balance between unity and diversity which God has designed for his Body both within and among congregations.

Although different forms of witness may imply different particularized gifts, we believe that all Christians must be concerned with the developing of relationships which draw other people into contact with the believing community and thus eventually into a true corporation with the truth of God in Jesus Christ. It is along such lines of personal relationship that the Gospel usually moves.

Service to the world is the natural outgrowth of any attempt to understand Jesus Christ and his attitude toward mankind. It is impossible to be fully true to Christ and not maintain an attitude of concerned service to the world. We find that needs of people around us tend to define the points where we are called in service to the world.

The Christian is called to honest service, not to a manipulative or condescending reaction to people's needs. The Great Commission, to evangelize, must always be understood within the context of the great commandment, to love. In the acting out of our service to Christ, we recognize the opportunity for the Christian community to play a creative role, especially in building models that the world, including the secular state, can follow. We are thus involved in responding to the needs of the whole man, and the needs of all men.

THE NATURE OF THE UNITY OF THE LOCAL AND UNIVERSAL CHURCH IN EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH

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This is a difficult and "loaded" topic. Whatever position emerges out of it will have serious implications for our current understanding of the church and its missionary enterprise. Due to limitations of time I accepted this assignment reluctantly on condition that it be regarded as an Asian interpretive footnote to the crucial issue.

Our topic stands between Howard Snyder's paper on "The Church as God's Agent of Evangelism" and Henri Blocher's paper on "The Nature of Biblical Unity" — for both of which I am grateful. Our task here is to discover the nature of the unity between local and universal church with particular reference to evangelism which, in the Great Commission context, includes church growth.

Implicit in this subject also are such pressing missiological issues confronting evangelicals today as the following: (i) In the light of our understanding of the nature of this unity, what should be the role of the foreign missionary in relation to the emerging national churches in the Third World? (ii) Do foreign missions have the right to operate independently of the local national church, or to bypass it if the latter is not doing a good job in evangelism? (iii) What implications does this study have on the validity or continuity of culture-bound parachurch structures such as denominations in the "mission field" today? These and many more related questions demand nothing less than a re-examination of some of the most basic presuppositions of the evangelical missionary enterprise hitherto yet unchallenged.

PART ONE: Local and universal churches: their relationship and unity

The term "local church" is generally understood as the local congregation, whether denominational, state-related, or independent churches. Often it is used correlatively. In the missiological context, local churches refer to the national "younger churches" planted by a sending church which is often called the "universal church." Within a denominational context, the worldwide church of the denomination is regarded as the universal church.

The meaning of "universal church" is further complicated by the term "invisible church," with which it is often used interchangeably. Here the correlative of the invisible church is the "visible church," which refers to the organized institutional church. Augustine was probably the first to introduce the concept of the "invisible church" as "the true body of Christ" to which all believers belong, even though