

## CHAPTER II

### MISSION OR MISSIONS

By the time the ecumenicals assembled at Bangkok in 1973, the meaning of 'salvation' had been broadened out to include involvement in the struggles for human justice and human dignity, in the struggle against alienation from person to person and in the struggle of hope and despair in personal life. Salvation was now seen to touch soul and body, the individual and society, humankind and groaning creation. Mission was thrown open for its new secularized and action-oriented implications to challenge evangelism in its traditional understanding.

Despite all of the arguments, the new concept of mission was a challenge not merely to traditional and conventional concepts but to its biblical understanding itself. One cannot deny that God is concerned for humankind as a totality, but this does not imply that all *human* activity is *God's* mission. Stephen Neill remarked: "If everything is mission, nothing is mission, and we are back in the night in which all cats are grey."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, we need to accept that for far too long we have clung to an understanding of mission that does not fully correspond with our concept of God's Lordship. If God is really Lord of all, then ought not his Lordship be demonstrated in wider terms than we have allowed? We have emphasized a spiritual mission with very little social concern. Not that we have had no social concern. Take for instance hospitals, schools and aid to the poor. The fault lies in the fact that we have considered these to be purely a means of evangelism. Physical means were used only to reach people with this 'spiritual' gospel. As we reconsider our biblical mandate we must seek a healthy fleshing out

of the gospel in its fullest expression, actualising Christ's concern for a lost world.

Taking a closer look at the new direction, we must consider three particular implications. And in doing so we challenge our own limited understanding. First, we note a movement away from the concept of "missions" to an understanding of "mission". Second, we see a shift from the proclamation of the message of salvation to a plea for a dialogical approach. Third, we note the shift in understanding of evangelisation as "Christianisation" to what is termed as "humanization". All these implications will assist us in our approach to the biblical concept, helping to draw out relevant principles to undergird mission today.

### **Mission not Missions**

One of the key events that helps us to focus our attention on the issues in their context is the integration of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches. This was finalized in New Delhi in 1961, although the decision had been made in 1957. The IMC became just one division of the WCC, but the claims were lofty. Christians were called to understand the intrinsic missionary character of their churchmanship and therefore not allow any distinction between the Church and its mission. Some greeted it warmly, while others discerned the door thrown wide open for the watering down of mission.

The rationale behind the merger was convincing, although, as we have already noted, the consequences were disappointing. Edinburgh 1910 was a gathering of missionaries, mainly representatives of Western protestant missionary agencies. Their aim was to be challenged afresh to reach the millions who were still outside the Church. There was also the questionable intention of "civilizing" the the countries being conquered. Very clearly, this era of missions coincided with the era of Western cultural expansion. In the light of these challenges it

seemed appropriate and valid for right minded Christians to reconsider the essence of mission.

Bishop Newbigin, an enthusiast of the merger, summed up the essential elements of the new situation as follows:

1. The political domination of the world by the White races has ended. The course of history is no longer determined by decisions made in Western capitals. Western culture as a whole is no longer accepted by the rest of the world as that which has the right and power to dominate and replace the cultures of Asia and Africa.

2. There is emerging a single world culture which has its characteristic expression in the rapidly growing cities in all parts of the world, and which has as its common substance the science and technology which have been developed in the west, and as its driving power the belief in the possibility of rational planning for total human welfare. This world culture is made possible by the existence of modern means of communication and transport.

3. The Christian Church is now, for the first time, no longer compared to a small part of the earth, but is present—normally as a small minority—in almost all parts of the inhabited world.<sup>2</sup>

If it is accepted that there are no fixed patterns for understanding mission, it is reasonable for us to return to basics to find out how the mission of the Church i.e. the mission of God can be defined today. Even before its merger with the WCC, the IMC in Ghana had spelled out,

The Christian World Mission is Christ's not ours. Prior to all our efforts and activities, prior to all our gifts of service and devotion, God sent his Son into the world. And became in the form of a servant . . . We have seen it to be the only true motive of Christian mission and the only standard by which the spirit, method and modes of Christian missionary organization must be judged. We believe it is urgent that this word of judgment and mercy should be given full freedom to cleanse and redeem our present activities, lest our human pride in our activities hinder the free course of God's mission in the world.<sup>3</sup>

We cannot deny that it is truly *missio dei*, the term used by the WCC to spell out the total thrust of God's mission. Mission is no longer seen as missionary agencies, missionaries and "mission fields". The missionary era has ended. One-way traffic, the Western missionary going to a pagan world, or Christian-countries sending missionaries to non-Christian countries, was a thing of the past. The day of *missions* gave way for *mission*, God's mission in its broadest sense was to be fulfilled.

There was a major concern to shift from mission seen as the sending of people from the Western "home base" to the rest of the world. God's mission was the mission of the whole church to the whole world. Mission was to

be concerned as the mission of the whole church to the whole world, with the implication that the Church, wherever it exists and under whatever conditions it exists, is in principle part of the home base for mission to the ends of the earth, related in a nexus of mutual dependence and responsibility with every other part of the Church in the fulfilment of that mission to the whole world.<sup>4</sup>

This was a needed reminder. As evangelicals we have ignored a basic biblical fact that mission originates from the very heart of God and hence it is the basic essence of the Church. Admittedly, modern mission arose out of a coldness to the missionary mandate. As individuals responded to God's command, missions was seen only as an optional involvement. It was an activity outside of the Church, and the obligation of the Church was only to support rather than be involved in it. But now the focus shifted back to where it belongs—right at the heart of the Church itself, a body burning with passion to be involved in the mission of God.

With this renewed stress came the attempt to understand the true nature of the Church *vis a vis* the role of para-church or mission agencies. There was no need to define these structures during the missionary era as they preferred to be separate. In fact the relationship of Church to missions has been an embarrassment in many instances. The understanding of the Church with mission as its basic

essence is definitely to be welcomed. The Church is itself an expression of the mission of God, as, in fact, the Church *is* mission.

The debate was well-timed, as governments by and large were questioning the role of "foreigners" in the church. The term "missionary" had become synonymous with the Westerner and as a result mission itself smacked of a foreign intrusion. With the resurgence of traditional religion in Asia, the threat of communalism, and politically motivated nationalism, the priority was the rediscovery of the "localness" of mission in the sense of every church and every country being part of the mission of God. This in itself could have remedial effects on the explosive conditions prevailing in some countries.

A biblical theology of mission written anywhere today must seek to rediscover the thrust of God's mission from within the pages of the Bible. The universality of God's mission and the wideness of God's concern must be seen in the localness of this outworking. There is an inescapable responsibility laid on every church to be God's mission. In this sense the "missionary" era must end and the age of "mission" be ushered in.

The task is great! There are crucial questions—What is biblical mission? What is God's mission? Is there no uniqueness to the message of the Gospel? What is the difference between mission in the past and mission today? These and many other questions will need to be answered by Evangelicals today. Naive responses will only display an incomplete understanding of the biblical framework on which we claim to stand.

### **Proclamation or Dialogue?**

For the WCC all claims of God's mission and the call to interpret the Christian message in the world today were to lead to the accommodation of the gospel to a newer environment. No longer was it possible to continue handed down methods in missions, nor was it right to maintain traditional motives.

Rather than preaching down at the non-Christian, dialogue was advocated. The age of conversions and Christian expansion had passed, it was claimed, and the new climate of a pluralistic world demanded a totally different approach. Some of the principles behind the plea can be summarized below:<sup>5</sup>

i. We live in a pluralistic world in which many religions exist, and have to learn to co-exist within limited areas. The only way to peace is for all to recognize the existence and the rights of all the rest.

ii. This plurality of religions is likely to continue into a future as extended as can be considered by the human mind. The nineteenth-century expectation of the rapid disappearance of the non-Christian religions was based on a number of misconceptions, and cannot be seriously entertained by anyone today.

iii. All religions bear witness at least in some measure to the presence and activity of God. This used to be claimed only for the great historic religions. We now see that even the primal religions of Africa and such areas as the South Pacific are intricately woven textures, covering every aspect of the life of a people, and giving assurance of the presence and activity of God in every part of that life. In the past history has been written in western categories only, and civilization has been identified simply and explicitly with western civilization. As a result western people have tended to limit the idea of divine revelation and claimed for Christianity a unique status as the one religion in which any glean of divine truth can be discerned. Wider knowledge has made this claim untenable. After all, these other religions have sustained the inner life of millions of people over many centuries. Is it possible to affirm that God has no hand at all in all this, and that all these different religions are variant forms of error and nothing more?

iv. The Christian who wishes to enter into dialogue with those of other faiths must resolutely put away from himself every thought of intellectual, religious or cultural superiority, as though dialogue was a one-way traffic in which

communication of truth would be from his side alone. Such an attitude is a relic of the old Western superiority complex, and makes impossible from the start any dialogue on terms of equality and mutual comprehension.

v. The Christian must put away firmly the idea that it is his business to 'bring Christ' to the non-Christian. It is part of Christian belief that God has reconciled the whole world to himself in Christ, and that since his resurrection Christ is everywhere present in the world that he has redeemed. The non-Christian is part of this redeemed world. Therefore, Christ is already present in the other whom we meet. The Christian comes not to bring Christ but to find him, though he may also be privileged to bring more clearly into the consciousness of the other the Christ who is already in him.

vi. The Christian must approach the interlocutor in the hope that he will gain more than he has to give. He should go in the expectation that the other has more of God than he has himself, and that he will end the encounter with his awareness of God amplified and enriched.

vii. There must be no question of conversion from one faith to another. Each must be encouraged to go forward to the highest level of attainment possible for him on the path in which he has already set out. Conversion has undesirable associations of social and emotional disruption and these are likely to be harmful rather than helpful to the development of true spiritual life.

We need not question the exercise of dialogue itself. There has always been the need for a two-way communication, and this was evident even in the early church's attempts to communicate. Our one way communication of the Gospel has reflected a glaring neglect of other faiths and beliefs. Whether right or wrong, a sensitivity to these viewpoints could result in more effective communication. However, we need to know what is meant by dialogue? What is the intention behind our desire to dialogue?

There are two major positions—familiarily known as *exclusivism* and *inclusivism*. The first of these, exclusivism, starts with the belief that one's religion is the only true religion. It follows, naturally, that all other religions are false. This leads to an absolute commitment to proclaim one's religion and this stand is maintained despite all criticisms of intolerance and contempt. The early Church displayed this kind of a commitment and it is still maintained by the conservative sections of the Protestant Church and most of the Evangelical community.

The second attitude, inclusivism, accepts that there are different levels of truth in all religions and each must reinterpret one's own truth in harmony with all other truths. Each religion will thereby accept other faiths in tolerance and magnanimity. While one's claim to the truth maintained, this position allows the inclusion of other truths into each system. The Roman Catholic Church and also the liberal Protestants have advocated this position and many recent studies have developed varying shades of inclusivism.

Raimundo Panikkar's widely acclaimed *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* is written as a fervent cry for the Church to take dialogue seriously.

If Christianity, on the one hand aspires to be the universal religion, what is the meaning of any encounter it may have with Hinduism? Where and how can Hinduism take up the challenge of the nature and presence of Christianity? If, on the other hand, Hinduism claims to be the *sanathana dharma*, the highest 'everlasting religion', how can it start a true dialogue with Christianity? Is there any way for Christianity to cope with such a claim?<sup>6</sup>

Panikkar calls for an *interpenetration*. As the term suggests, this attitude to dialogue allows room for an interaction with one another and thereby supplements one's belief with whatever is found helpful in the other's. It is neither an exclusivism nor inclusivism but a mutual interpenetration without losing one's own peculiarities.

While avoiding fundamentalist attitudes and fanaticism, Panikkar claims that interpenetration will not dilute the nature of Christianity. And at the same time it does justice to the truths of Hinduism. Even the "substitution of one religion for the other"<sup>7</sup> must be rejected as it is the Christian "Missionary attitude", and dishonest and contrary to the principles of Christianity.

Panikkar is eager to avoid "rivalry between the two religions"<sup>8</sup> and wants to address "the relationship between the deepest faith of the followers of the Vedic tradition and a faith which Christians cannot help but call "Christian."<sup>9</sup> He emphasises—"We must refrain from rejecting a religious text or tradition—an attitude that has often proved fatal—simply because it does not accord with our already crystallized ideas or formulations."<sup>10</sup>

Panikkar's "sensitivity" even calls for using the word "Christ" without any inference of "Christian imperialism", but only because it is the name Christians use to express the reality common to all religions, no monopoly on the name or any form of exclusivity." For him, God is at work in all religions and the "Christian kerygma does not proclaim a new God, but the *mirabilia* of God of which the Mystery of Christ hidden in God is the *alpha* and *omega*". "In the wake of St. Paul we believe we may speak not only of the unknown God of the Greeks, but also the *hidden Christ of Hinduism*—hidden and unknown and yet present and at work because he is not far from any one of us."<sup>11</sup> His conclusion, ". . . recognizing the presence of *God* in other religions is equivalent to proclaiming the presence of Christ in them, "for in him all things subsist."<sup>12</sup>

Dialogue, from this position, is only an effort to discover the Christ that is already present in Hinduism. It is not any superior claim offering Christ to the Hindu. We approach other religions on equal terms and even learn from them rather than going to them with our judgmental attitudes.

Exclusivists will have many problems with inclusivism. But the present day pluralistic challenge takes us even

further away from the biblical position claiming to bring face to face with the need for a positive attitude to the reality of all other religions. Claims to uniqueness that will challenge one another's religious positions cannot be maintained, we are told. In our world that is being torn apart by various forces, we are called as Christians to seek for mutuality that will result in harmony. The position is referred to as Pluralism,

which describes the acceptance not only of the reality of the existence of all the religious paths but also a wholehearted acceptance of "their vitality, their influence in our modern world, their depth, beauty and attractiveness."<sup>13</sup>

Pluralism is gaining much ground. We have lived within the plurality of our world all along, but the pluralism with which we are called to approach it is questionable. It comes with the challenge for a wide open attitude to dialogue and the object is to display tolerance. Stephen Neill makes a caustic comment:

It has often surprised me that Christians alone should be required to be tolerant in a world in which no one else is prepared to be tolerant. The dedicated Marxist regards himself as a man with a mission. He alone knows the truth about society and about the ways in which society changes, all other men walk blindly in the world of ideology. His sincerity demands that he should be a ferocious propagandist, the greater the sincerity, the greater the ferocity. The Muslim is equally of the opinion that he has the whole truth . . . To the Buddhist there is only one way . . . All these are propagandist religions and make no secret of it.<sup>14</sup>

In our search for a theology of mission, we have affirmed that we seek a biblical foundation. The Bible is clear on the fact that there is a finality to the message of Jesus Christ, and this we must maintain. However, it does not demand that we regard dialogue as unbiblical. Some naive arguments for preaching as the only way of communicating the Gospel need to be questioned by pointing to the Bible. Paul's ministry integrated many aspects of communication with his desire to become "all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Co: 9.22). Even more, Jesus himself demonstrated skillful use of dialogue in his ministry.

Evangelicals must shake out of their suspicion that all dialogue smacks of compromise, universalism and a watering down of the evangelistic message. There are many opportunities where a dialogical approach opens many more doors for the proclamation of the Gospel. We are biblically justified in using all possible means for the proclamation of the message of the Kingdom. For instance, Paul adapted admirably to the varying situations he addressed. For Jewish audiences he drew heavily from their own traditions and establishes his commonality with their belief. With Greeks at Athens he appealed to their educated minds, displaying a familiarity with their traditions to support his arguments.

However, it is important to note that Paul was not merely establishing bridges to demonstrate a commonality. These entry points were to help intensify the confrontation with Christ to follow. Some believe that Paul regretted his cautious presentations at Lystra and Athens and later, as in his Corinthian preaching, determined to confront people directly with the crucified Christ. There is no biblical justification for a dialogue that will only assist the non-believer to discover salvation in his own traditions and beliefs. The concept of the "hidden Christ" and the "anonymous Christian" are an outright betrayal of the biblical Jesus Christ and his claims. However, we urgently need to approach the people of other religions with far more sensitivity and to discover some new direction from the Bible as we face our present context.

### Humanization not Evangelization

Mission, as reconceptualised in the WCC, was being opened up for all it was supposedly intended to be. Philip Potter, the first Third-worlder to head up WCC, enumerates four consequences of the newer insights of this mission, and we need to look seriously at his reminders.

In the first place, the Church as the people of God is not the centre and goal of mission, but the means and instrument. The Church participates in God's mission, in what God is doing in the world . . . As Christ took the form or structure

proper to God's purpose, so the Church must adopt its forms and structures to God's mission today as during every period in history.<sup>15</sup>

Potter suggests that such an understanding compels us to reconsider three attitudes towards mission: (a) the tendency to equate the Church with the Kingdom of God, rather than to see it as a sign of the Kingdom, (b) the tendency, by speaking of "our mission", to force those whom we seek to evangelize into our patterns of thinking and living; and (c) the tendency to regard our historically conditioned structures as fixed and sacred and indispensable for the fulfilment of God's mission. This is a valid reminder for the sensitivity needed both towards the text as well as to the context.

However, Potter's second consequence introduces a broader concern.

If the drama of mission is God's involvement with the world, the Church must take with radical seriousness what is happening in that world. Mission may not mean giving the church's answers to its own questions. Christ himself showed deep concern for listening to people's questions before he deepened those questions and gave his answer in word and deed . . . We must listen to the World's agenda.

We must also take this caution seriously. Most times we have gone out on evangelistic missions claiming to have answers with little knowledge of the questions. But the way we handle the world's agenda is crucial.

The third consequence of this new conception of mission, Potter reminds us is to accept that "the whole world is the mission field, not just what have traditionally been called non-Christian countries."<sup>16</sup> This is a good reminder if it intends for everyone to accept their responsibility to take Jesus Christ everywhere. But Potter wants us to accept that "the new humanity which is God's missionary purpose is the quest of every continent and country."

Further clarification comes as we read the fourth consequence—The Church which participates in God's

mission as the servant body of Christ and takes the world's agenda seriously is itself being renewed to be the sign of the new humanity. The Church as the people of God never remains static in the process of mission. Mission is not only concerned with the conversion of others but with the conversion of God's people. Because the survival of humanity is a priority on the world's agenda, Potter concludes, the Church has an inescapable responsibility.

We should not reject these concerns outright, particularly since we are called to an "ever greater depth of involvement in the tragedy of the world's disobedience and rebellion and their need for turning to God and receiving afresh his renewing grace."<sup>17</sup> But, we see the one sided stress. In his affirmations, Potter spells out "life before and with God means practising justice and being devoted to loyal kindness to all". Jesus Christ was made man in order to "show how human beings can practice justice and show this kindness to the poor, the oppressed, the alienated, as expressions of life in and with God. Potter sums up "Negatively, this means working for the survival of humanity. Positively, it means entering into the struggle for fullness of life in justice and peace".

WCC in its meeting at Uppsala had clearly outlined its new direction.

In another time the goal of God's redemptive work might best have been described in terms of man turning towards God . . . the fundamental question was that of the true God, and the Church responded to that question by pointing to Him. It was assuming that the purpose of mission was Christianization, bringing a man to God through Christ and His Church. Today the fundamental question is much more that of true man, and the dominant concern of the missionary congregation must therefore be to point to the humanity in Christ as the goal of mission.<sup>18</sup>

This new understanding of mission subtly shifts the focus from God to humankind. It is a secular humanistic focus that can easily accommodate itself within our modern day environment without any threat or criticism. The two concerns behind this shift are valid. First, there was an

attack on rigid and tradition bound structures of the Church which had resulted in a church centred rather than Christ centred mission. And second, there was an inadequate understanding of evangelism.

First, the Dutch theologian Johannes Hoekendijk pointed out the fallacy of making the Church the starting point and goal of mission. He had pleaded for a “Church for others” wherein “mobilizing the people of God for mission today means releasing them from structures that inhibit them in the church.”<sup>19</sup>

Would it not be a good thing to start all over again in trying to understand what it really means when we repeat again and again our favourite missionary text, ‘The gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the *Oikoumene* and attempt to rethink our ecclesiology within this framework of Kingdom-Gospel – apostolate-world?’<sup>20</sup>

We are advised to stop looking at the world from within the Church but to break out of such bondages and redefine mission in the context of the world itself. The shift is not only from the Church but ultimately from our understanding of the Church and mission from the Bible as well. The context dominates our definitions.

We accept that we need to take a fresh look at our ecclesiology. Static, denominational and structural understandings have undoubtedly stifled mission. Mission was ‘at the most’ merely one activity forced into this structure while other liturgical concerns were more essential to the understanding of the Church. Even the distinction between a Christ-centred mission and a Church-centred one could be acceptable. But the kind of Christ-centred mission advocated by Hoekendijk had a firm foothold in the world with only a vague allegiance to Christ. It is wholly concerned for the context. A Bible-based and Church-centred mission ought to be a Christ-centred mission. And this must be actualised within each context.

Second, there is the reaction against an inadequate understanding of evangelism. Sometimes we have equated evangelism primarily with increase in numbers in the

Church. Even recent Church growth approaches subtly fall into such an inadequate understanding. Further, evangelism is restricted to preaching, particularly on the model of recent crusade-type approaches. With the Spirit-anointed success of Billy Graham, countless numbers press themselves into that mould, believing evangelism to be only a mass proclamation. Then, there is evangelism that is so heavily concentrated on saving ‘souls’ that any material implications have been shunned as liberal.

Not surprisingly, with such limited understandings, we have been challenged to widen our understanding of mission itself. However, the reconceptualization advocated wholly from the perspective of the context of the world cannot be biblically justified. Amending the God-Church-World sequence to the God-World-Church has threatening implications. With no absolutes to correct our thinking, we are advised to relate our theology to the varying needs of the world. Although impressive appeals are made to God’s mission, all we have is whatever humans want to conceptualize as this mission. Such pre-occupation with the world without the authority of the Word is the secularizing of mission. God is not in the centre any more.

From such a perspective of mission, evangelization in its traditional biblical pattern is no longer recognisable. Potter considered himself committed to evangelism, but evangelism meaning setting free men and women from human bondages, from dehumanizing structures, from exploitative and oppressive forces, becomes the prime concern and not the offer of a right relationship with God.

Uppsala set the tone for the “renewal” of mission and opened the door wide for everything to be termed mission. With the emphasis away from reconciliation of God and humankind, and more on the reconciliation of humans and humans, the whole foundation of Christian mission is shaken. The well known WCC General Secretary W. A. Visser’t Hooft put it aptly

There is a great tension between the vertical interpretation of the Gospel as essentially concerned with God’s saving

action in the life of individuals and the horizontal interpretation of it as mainly concerned with human relationships in the world. A Christianity that has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt, and is not only insipid but useless for the world.<sup>21</sup>

This clear caution could serve as an attack on one of the strongest advocates of “Humanization”, M. M. Thomas. Thomas wanted ‘salvation’ itself to be replaced. In a well known booklet, he states,

Salvation itself could be defined as humanization in a total eschatological sense. And all our struggles on earth for the fragmentary realization of man’s humanity point to this eschatological humanization as their judgment and fulfilment.<sup>22</sup>

Three years later in Bangkok he affirmed even more clearly,

Herein lies the mission of the Church, it is to participate in the movements of human liberation of our time in such a way as to witness to Jesus Christ as the Source, the judge and the Redeemer of the human spirituality and its orientations as it is at work in these movements, and therefore as the Saviour of man today.<sup>23</sup>

Hooft’s cautions are to be heeded. The thoroughly horizontal dimension of mission enthusiastically propagated is far from biblical. Sunand Sumithra in his definitive study of M. M. Thomas’ theology points out the purely secular nature of this approach:

His (Thomas’) understanding of mission is basically political . . . his emphasis on the confession of participation as against proclamation, humanization as the goal, and Jesus Christ understood as the unifier, the ideal, an historical understanding of the Kingdom of God rather than the apocalyptic, the emphasis on the function of the Church rather than her nature—to mention a few—all these reveal this political aspect.<sup>24</sup>

In recent years WCC has opened up to a far more positive attitude to evangelism. While this is largely due to pressure from members within who continue to affirm the centrality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it has also come with a growing respect for the conservative protestant and evangelical position. But the pressure of pluralism has

more recently demanded an even more liberal attitude to evangelism by some proponents.

We stress the point—God’s mission must exercise its influence in every area of life. We will develop the idea of God’s total Lordship over all his creation, and this itself underlines the fact that his mission must be concerned for everything under his Lordship. But if one removes the vertical dimension and allows mission purely on a horizontal level we are left with only a human mission. If this mission is neither anchored in the Bible, nor channelled through the Church, it will be a purely secular endeavour.

However, this does not sanction a pre-occupation with the vertical dimension that some evangelicals continue to stress, ignoring the horizontal. Hooft added,

. . . a Christianity that would use the vertical dimension as a means of escape from its responsibility in the common life of man is a denial of the incarnation of God’s love for the world manifested in Christ.<sup>25</sup>

Rather than continuing to stress the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the Church, there is an urgent need to explore biblical implications for mission that would lead us into this horizontal dimension. Humanization is not unbiblical. From the perspective of the vertical relationship, there is dehumanization with men and women refusing to allow God to make them all that was intended. Human sin has brought about dehumanizing tendencies rampant within our world. God is concerned for a real world, for real human beings, for a mission that will not merely touch one part but one that will make a total impact on the whole world.

The discussions so far have helped us to get a better grasp of the problems we will encounter as we consider mission today. Restoring a biblical perspective will correct the secular humanistic tendencies, but in doing so we must be willing to be corrected. We must accept the restrictions we have imposed on God’s mission as we move towards a fuller understanding of God’s Kingdom concern for the world today.

## Notes

1. Stephen Neill, *Salvation Tomorrow*, Lutterworth Press, 1976, p. 57.
2. Lesslie Newbigin, *A Faith for This One World*, Lucknow Publishing House, Lucknow, 1961, p. 108f.
3. Statement received by the Assembly and commended to the member Organisation of the International Missionary Council. Ronald K. Orchard (ed.), *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council*, International Missionary Council, London, 1958, p.180.
4. *Ibid*, p. 109.
5. Neill *op. cit.* p. 28ff. I have utilized Stephen Neill's summary with some of my own comments.
6. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 1982, p. 31.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
14. *Ibid*, p. 40.
15. Philip Potter, *Life in all its Fullness*, WCC, Geneva, p. 73.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Hoekstra, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
19. *Ibid.*, 70.
20. Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction*, The Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1975. p. 62.
21. Hoekstra, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
22. M.M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanization*, CISRS, Bangalore, 1970.
23. Roger Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission*, TBT, Bangalore, 1993, p. 272.
24. Sunand Sumithra, *Revolution as Revelation*, TRACI, Delhi, 1984, p. 345.
25. Hoekstra, *op. cit.*, p. 80.