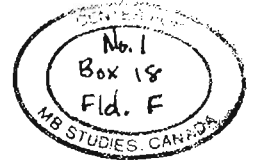


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## SOME STRATEGY ISSUES IN MENNONITE BROTHERS MISSION

by Victor Adrian



It is impossible to acquire and maintain a consistently relevant strategy in mission in a constantly changing world, without recapturing deep within our hearts and minds Christ's vision for the world! He manifested a profound indignation with the world as He saw it - its moral and spiritual blindness, its diseases, its deaths, its hunger - a world alienated from God's purposes. He also manifested a profound compassion for those victimized in the world - a compassion which called forth every ounce of His energy, interest and strength as He ministered to man's needs. This singular mindedness to fulfill the Father's vision for the world He expressed in the words - "My meat and drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4).

Focusing the Goal of Missions

Matthew tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds (and experts tell us the crowds in the world will almost double by the year 2035), He had compassion upon them for they were harrassed and helpless - as sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9). The focus of Christ is clearly on the people of the world: their bewilderment and confusion (they were harrassed); their helplessness (they were exhausted from their futile efforts and search); their lack of direction, purpose and goal (as sheep without a shepherd). He therefore commissioned the church to go out into these crowds to call them to follow Him and His vision for the world (disciple all the nations).

Jesus gave us a vision for the world and for all humanity. He came not only to redeem men and women, not only to bring kingdom peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. He came to create a new reconciled humanity - reconciled to God and to each other - and ultimately a new world unity in Himself!

Paul caught this vision of Christ for the world; the attractiveness of this grand vision is summed up by John Stott in the words:

Nobody can emerge from a careful reading of Paul's letter to the Ephesians with a privatized gospel. For Ephesians is the gospel of the church. It sets forth God's eternal purpose to create through Jesus Christ a new society which stands out in bright relief against the somber background of the old world. For God's

new society is characterized by life in the place of death, by unity and reconciliation in place of division and alienation, by the wholesome standards of righteousness in the place of the corruption of wickedness, by love and peace in the place of hatred and strife, by unremitting conflict with evil in the place of a flabby compromise with it.<sup>1</sup>

For the attainment of that divine goal, Paul suffered gladly in prison under duress, in persecution, and in stripes. Nothing, not even his own life, mattered to him if only he might finish the task given to him by the resurrected Lord: "the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24).

There are alternatives to this present world which must be pursued! Spiritual and moral confusion, hunger and illiteracy, injustice and violence - these are not acceptable! Nor is indifference and apathy, or a ghetto mentality. New redemptive powers to transform men and women and reconstruct human society have broken into this world through Christ and His Spirit. There is afoot a movement in history under the lordship of Christ towards a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (II Pet. 3). This dynamic kingdom which will triumph must claim our total allegiance and the allegiance of our churches! Its powers and blessings can alone create a new society and a hope for the world. No message is more radical or liberating for the world as Christ's vision for the world.

There are cries for a new order in the world. Writing from the heart of Western culture, Jaques Ellul writes:

Western society has given up on providing its members with a global vision, a final purpose, a direction, and it no longer has any clear sense of identity....Our world is looking for a faith, for something that will enable it to overcome its faintness of heart, its anxiety, and the countless books on their questions no doubt reflect our situation. We have not found a belief that satisfies: we still do not have a feeling of victorious conviction.<sup>2</sup>

Evgeny Barabanov, a former colleague of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, from within Marxist society, comments on the tragedy of the world in From Under the Rubble:

<sup>1</sup>John Stott, God's New Society, A Message of Ephesians, Downer's Grove: Intervarsity press, 1979, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Jaques Ellul, Living Faith (Belief and Doubt in a Perilous World), San Francisco: Harper & Rowe Publishers, 1983, p. 7-8.

It is impossible for men to "settle" in the world completely without God. Although proud of its successes and attainments, the world sees every day more clearly the provisional and insufficient nature of its civilization. On the verge of having its foundations shaken to the core, it thirsts as never before for the true light.<sup>3</sup>

The world, according to this Russian observer - thirsts as never before for the true light!

Not long ago I met a lawyer in Brazil who had recently received Christ into his life. He described his previous condition as one of inner lack of peace, of having an emptiness, of having a void in his heart. That condition, he maintained, was shared by many in the economic and socially turbulent Brazil.

A few weeks ago I talked to a vibrant new Christian in Madrid. She spoke of earlier unfulfilled inner longings - and a groping for the meaning of human existence in life in the world. Again, she indicated that this condition was shared by many others in her society.

A few years ago, in the suburbs of Karachi, I was greatly stimulated by the interest of Baluchi Muslims to share perspectives on Christ - even though only for a few fleeting moments over a drink of soda pop. Stanley J. Samartha, a Christian leader of the Church of South India, speaks of a religious resurgence in Southeast Asia, of a search for a new relationship of a view of life with a way of life; of a connection between the ultimate and the penultimate in life:

Perhaps the turbulence of the times has contributed to the growth of a heightened religious sense, pushing people to search deeper for the spiritual roots of life. The rejection of institutions and the questioning of dogmas may be a product not so much of the influence of secularization as of a deepening spirituality seeking more satisfying expressions of religious life.<sup>4</sup>

This worldwide restlessness is addressed by our Lord when He calls all to come to Him (Matt. 11). It was addressed by Paul at Athens, when he acknowledged man's spiritual quest as a God-given created drive in all, and maintained that it could only find its confident assured fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the resurrected One (Acts 17).

<sup>3</sup>Evgeny Barabanov, From Under the Rubble, Paris: YMCA-Press, 1974, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), Christ's Lordship & Religious Pluralism, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983, p. 21.

In the light of our Lord's mission to create a new humanity in the world and in the light of God's intention with His creation, we need to state clearly and unambiguously the goal of our mission in the world today as being the following:

TO GLORIFY GOD BY BRINGING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TO THE UNEVANGELIZED IN THE WORLD AND BY MINISTERING TO THE NEEDS OF MANKIND, TO THE END THAT ALL NATIONS ARE BEING DISCIPLED INTO VIBRANT, ACTIVE CHURCHES.

#### The Reason for Strategy

A mission strategy is an all-over plan or approach devised in order to attain to the stated goal of the church's mission. Such a strategy must include the following:

- A. It must be based on a search of the mind and will of God recorded in the Scriptures.
- B. It must be based on the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in understanding the researched human situation.
- C. It must be based on an attempt to anticipate the future.
- D. It must be based on an international consultation process.

A clearly stated strategy statement is important for all participants in the mission of the church: for conferences and boards; for national church leaders; for the staff and missionaries. It brings a sense of direction and coherence to the entire work. It assists in an understanding and a wholesome development of partnership with participating national churches; it permits bringing the spiritual resources of prayer insight, the resources of committed missionaries, education and material resources by all participating parties. Team work is enhanced if common goals, objectives and methods are accepted. Creative changes can more readily be made through discussion and consensus if there is an all-over plan. Respect for the unique contribution of participants is recognized in planned strategies.

A mission can more easily carry out a meaningful self-evaluation if it has a planned strategy at hand. Progress can be tangibly observed; the morale is sustained. Supporting conferences are able to anticipate future needs in people and financial resources. Prayer becomes more pointed and specific if goals and objectives are brought to supporting constituencies.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Edward R. Dayton (ed.), Planning Strategies for World Evangelization, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Pub. Co., 1980, p. 20.

It is, therefore, important that Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services have an all-over strategy (goals and principles, time and place) together with long-term plans (methods and tactics) and area and country strategies (also with long-term plans). As Hans Kasdorf says, every situation and context demand a different method. It is important, therefore, to apply the principle of creativity to varying situations.

Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services is presently in the process of developing strategy for the 1990s. It is a complex, though exciting, process if one takes seriously the "covenant community" and the partnership principles. It involves seeking insights and perspectives as well as consensus with all participating parties - the home conferences; the national churches (eventually we will be speaking of international conferences and perhaps international boards; certainly international cooperation), boards, staff and missionaries. It is a process which involves much calling on the Lord for wisdom and for illumination of the Holy Spirit.

This paper is not a presentation of Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services strategy, but an attempt to probe some aspects which constitute part of a mission strategy, in order to benefit from your counsel, suggestions, supplementations, improvements, so that we seek direction for the future together. In particular, this paper seeks to respond to the world trends and issues raised by Paul and Hans and their implications for Mennonite Brethren mission in the development of future strategy.

Paul points out in his paper that the population growth in the future, particularly in developing countries, is an important future development which we must take into account in developing our strategy. By 2036, it is estimated that the world population will be over eight billion; seven billion of these will live in Asia. In pointing out the implications of this tremendous population growth, Paul points out that the mission task is greater than ever; that the number who have not heard the gospel sufficiently are increasing; that we are responsible to proclaim the gospel so that all may hear and be saved (p. 11). He also speaks of the continuing and expanding need of missionaries. Missionaries, he maintains, are more effective in leading people to personal commitment to Christ and in bringing them together into believers' churches than is radio or television (p. 15). He also points out the tremendous need of Christian leaders among the converts of the national churches in Third World countries. He makes it a point to state that the West is rich in Christian leaders and in material resources. Therefore,

it is our obligation to assist developing countries in an effective partnership (p. 17).

All this suggests a greater involvement of Western churches in the future. It speaks of expanded ministries for Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services in the direction indicated in the goal statement above.

Hans also underscores the fact that there are multitudes of unevangelized people and many unevangelized peoples in the world. He suggests the need for more aggressive evangelism, church planting and ministering in all six continents, including North America.

THIS THEN IS A MAJOR PRESUPPOSITION OF A FUTURE MISSION STRATEGY, NAMELY, THAT UNTIL ALL HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR THE GOSPEL, GLOBAL EVANGELIZATION, CHURCH PLANTING AND MINISTRY TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE REMAIN HIGHEST PRIORITY FOR THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES IN PARTNERSHIP AROUND THE WORLD. SUCH A PRIORITY EMERGES NOT ONLY OUT OF OUR IDENTIFICATION WITH THE LOVE AND COMPASSION OF OUR LORD AND HIS COMMISSION TO US TO DISCIPLE ALL THE NATIONS, IT EMERGES NOT ONLY OUT OF THE TREMENDOUS NEEDS OF MEN AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE WORLD - BUT ALSO OUT OF THE MOVEMENT OF HISTORY TOWARDS THE COMING OF CHRIST. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IS AN ESCHATOLOGICAL EVENT WHOSE TASK MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST: "AND THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM WILL BE PREACHED IN THE WHOLE WORLD AS A TESTIMONY TO ALL THE NATIONS, AND THEN THE END WILL COME" (Matt. 24:14, cf. Mk. 13:10).

#### Religious Pluralism, Globalization, Urbanization, and its Implications for Mennonite Brethren Mission Strategy

The papers of Hans and Paul both emphasize the continuing growth of religious pluralism and its implications for Christian mission. Because of the more rapid growth of Muslims (235% during the last 50 years), the Hindus (170% growth), the Buddhists (63% growth), contrasting with Christian growth of 47% in the last 50 years, we will increasingly live in a religious pluralistic world. Furthermore, recent migrations and aggressive mission methods of world religions mean that all of us, the Western world included, will face pluralism firsthand. Religious pluralism is increasingly becoming a worldwide phenomenon.

Paul and Hans call for a counter-cultural stance which remains committed to the absolutes of Christian faith, which seeks to understand people with other than Christian religious commitments, dialogues with them in loving concern, and maintains a missionary spirit.

In addition to the above, they issue a call for a shift in mission thinking from foreign missions to global mission, incorporating Western countries, particularly North America, into our mission strategy. Both Paul and Hans suggest that with religious pluralism and worldwide migrations of peoples in the world, we need to coordinate our outreach abroad with our outreach at home. In other words, we develop a global strategy which incorporates the six continents.

I would like to pursue these thoughts a bit further and suggest the following in the light of growing global religious pluralism and urbanization.

- A. THAT WE DEVELOP A MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL ATTITUDE OF PENETRATING THE WORLD FOR CHRIST, WITH A STRONG CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL, THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD TODAY (THE REALITY OF HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH). THAT INCORPORATING NORTH AMERICA AS THE SIXTH CONTINENT IN WORLD MISSION BE SEEN, NOT AS A LESSENING OF EFFORTS TO FACE TOUGH WORLD CHALLENGES, BUT AN ENCOURAGEMENT TOWARD INVOLVEMENT IN EVANGELIZING THE UNREACHED AT HOME AND AS A STRENGTHENING OF THE HOME BASE (FOR US IN NORTH AMERICA) FOR WORLD PENETRATION.

We need to counter a ghetto mentality, fearful of secularism and growing religious pluralism. The early church shows us the way.

Peter suggests that we are to be prepared (suggesting an eagerness and readiness) to give an answer (apologia) to every man who asks for the reason of our hope in Christ (I Pet. 3:15).

Paul suggests that Christians are waging a spiritual warfare; they have divine power to demolish strongholds - arguments and pretensions (high towers), setting itself against the knowledge of God and take captive of every thought in obedience to Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5).

There's a need for an apologetics for our time: an apologetics which clarifies the gospel in the midst of growing religious pluralism; an apologetics which seeks a sound understanding of other religions; an apologetics which incorporates Peter's suggestions that Christ be set apart as Lord in our hearts, and that we give answers with gentleness and respect keeping a clear conscience.

A biblical Christian apologetics is not a defensive mind-set, but a positive and courageous witness to the truth in Christ! Its major purpose is to clarify the gospel of Christ in the various contexts of the world, seeking to address with clarity those aspects of Christian faith which are problematical in various world settings to the end that the gospel be clearly understood.<sup>6</sup>

Such biblical apologetics must give a rightful place to biblical elenctics. Elenctics is the word used by our Lord when He speaks of the convicting and convincing power, not of human logic, but of the Spirit of God when He promised: "When He comes (the Holy Spirit), He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). This understanding of the role of elenctics in the presentation of the gospel in a growing pluralistic world gives courage and hope to reach men, women and children for Christ. No matter how far they are from a knowledge of Christ, they are in the reach of redemption.<sup>7</sup>

B. IN ORDER FOR THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH TO ACHIEVE ITS GOAL AS SET BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF DOUBLING ITS MEMBERSHIP BY THE YEAR 2000, MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES WILL NEED AT GRASS ROOTS LEVEL TO ENGAGE IN PRACTICAL TRAINING AND PERSONAL EVANGELISM, FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM, AND EVANGELISTIC BIBLE STUDY GROUPS.

C. IN ORDER FOR THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES TO GROW IN A MISSIONS MENTALITY THAT IS GLOBAL, WE WILL NEED TO RE-EXAMINE OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS OUR SEMINARIES, BIBLE COLLEGES AND BIBLE SCHOOLS IN THE LIGHT OF THE MISSIONARY MANDATE FOR THE CHURCH AND IN THE LIGHT OF THE CHANGING WORLD, ITS RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, GLOBALIZATION AND SECULARISM.

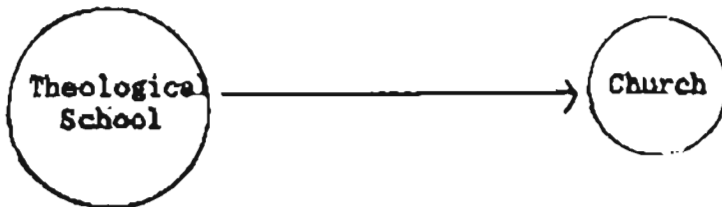
<sup>6</sup>William Dyrness, Christian Apologetics in a World Community (Meeting Challenges from Nationalism, Eastern Religions, Marxism, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and the Problem of Evil), Downer's Grove: Intersarsity Christian Fellowship, 1983, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>J.H. Bavinck, An Introduction to the Science of Missions, Philadelphia: Presbyterian Reform Pub. Co., 1960, p. 222.



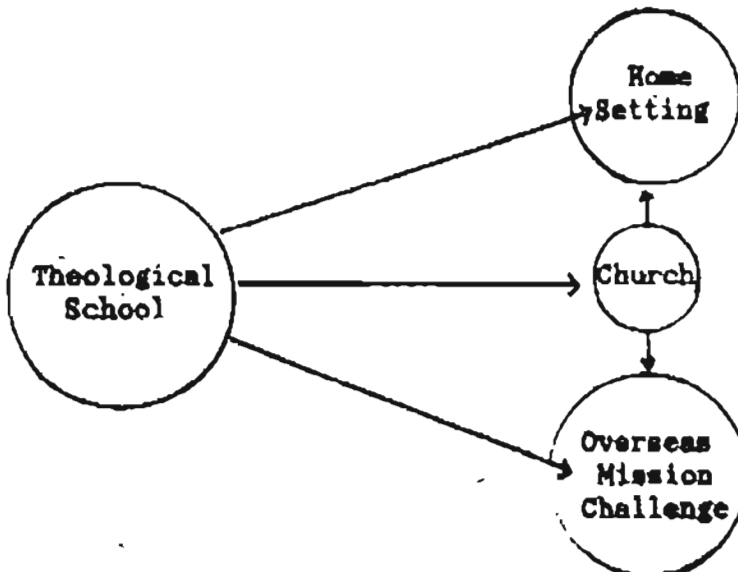
The key question is whether our schools are today training and educating men and women for Christian life and witness in the light of the trends and developments anticipated for the 90s. We need to move in our educational systems from traditional patterns of education to new patterns of education that fit the contemporary and future world developments.

1. From traditional patterns of education



- Emphasis on:
- theology and Bible understanding
  - worship
  - counselling
  - ministry (much internal)

2. To new patterns of education



witness, evangelism, church planting and ministries in a secular pluralistic and cross-cultural world

witness, evangelism, church planting and ministry in a cross-cultural pluralistic world

**D. MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS/SERVICES STEPS TOWARDS COORDINATING FOREIGN AND HOME MISSIONS**

The following three steps are being processed by Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services in the light of the growing awareness of the evangelistic challenge of the multi-cultural communities in North America and of the light that there is some continuity of ministry with unevangelized countries overseas and the movement of some of these peoples to our homelands. Vibrant churches among them could not only assist in further evangelization of unevangelized peoples in North America, but could also become aids in reaching out to their friends and associates in their home countries overseas.

1. THAT WE COOPERATE WITH NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCES IN DEVELOPING A TRAINING CENTER TO TRAIN WORKERS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL URBAN EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING

We have just completed our first 4 1/2-month training session in Fresno and Los Angeles under the leadership of Henry Schmidt at CTM/E. From the beginning we had in mind developing a center which would function as a training center both for church planters in our needy urban communities in North America as well as for overseas ministries.

With minor variations in the program, both needs can be met. The CTM/E is in the process of communicating with church extension boards to share with them the merits of CTM/E for training church extension workers today. It is envisaged that in a few years we should have as many church extension workers trained at the Center as we have for overseas ministries. In this way Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services is cooperating with North American needs in a crucial strategic way!

2. THAT WE COOPERATE WITH NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCES (CHURCH EXTENSION COMMITTEES) ON A CAREFUL, SELECTIVE BASIS IN ORDER TO REACH SUCH IMMIGRANT PEOPLE GROUPS IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES WHOSE ORIGINAL HOME COUNTRIES WE ARE UNABLE TO PENETRATE—OR HAVE HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY IN DOING SO

Ultimately, creating vibrant Christian churches among such groups could provide a future movement of the gospel in their home countries through: a) their family/friends associations back home; b) their interest and prayer support in reaching their country; c) their participation with us in international mission teams.

The procedures would include a readiness to work together with conference church extension committees which are prepared to do so—targetting together with them a peoples group, finding together with them a suitable worker, and assisting in the funding.

3. THAT WE COOPERATE WITH CONFERENCE CHURCH EXTENSION COMMITTEES IN PLANNING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OUTREACH PROGRAM

Hundreds of thousands of foreign students come to study in North American colleges and universities. By far the majority return to their own countries to become leaders and influential people. It is easier for us to reach them here, in North America, than their home countries.

Returning Christian students could be an important help to us in countries we intend to penetrate in the future, or have difficulties in penetrating now.

We could cooperate in helping to develop strategies together with conference extension committees; we could provide some help and understanding students from other cultures through missionary personnel—either presently active or retired; we could help financially in assisting in providing partial support for key personnel who would engage in reaching international students for Christ. Such help could include developing awareness in congregations and assisting in the hosting of foreign students in Mennonite Brethren members' homes, etc. CTM/E could also play an important role in training for such a ministry, both through training personnel and through seminars in different regions.

There's no doubt that we need to make greater use of the opportunities we have in North America to reach foreign students and immigrant peoples for Christ. The CTM/E is a key step in that direction. In other areas awareness needs to be developed.

#### E. THE POOR AND URBANIZATION

Jesus began His public ministry by summing up His mission as follows:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18,19; cf. Matt. 11:4,5).

The poor in the Bible are those who are socially oppressed, who suffer injustice, are exploited, harrassed and weighed down. At the same time, the poor are also those who recognize they are helpless and they cry out to God as their deliverer. Their hopes lie in the Messiah and His kingdom.

The Good News that Jesus preached to them was that He had come. In Him their longing, their thirsting after righteousness would be filled. He had come to bring justice to the nations. In Him they would find freedom and deliverance. In His kingdom there was hope. In a most profound sense, therefore, the poor were the poor in spirit.

Our ministries to the poor in the world need to incorporate medicine, literacy relief and development. We need, however, to be profoundly mindful that Christ's care for the poor and the captives, the lame and the blind, went far beyond what might today be a secular Western agenda. It directed itself to the hopes of His kingdom, the hopes and blessings of His rule. The poor, said Jesus, have the gospel preached to them.

As Mennonite Brethren we need to direct ourselves in greater measure to a strategy of reaching the poor in the name of Christ. We are actively working in cities where there are many poor - e.g. Sao Paulo, Bogota, Karachi, Kinshasa, etc. We need to come to grips with some of the problems we have in reaching the poor. I want to draw on an article by Viv Grigg, Sorry, the Frontier Moved, as published by Urban Mission, March, 1987. Let me sum up his arguments.

1. Having researched eight mega-cities, he concludes as follows: "The greatest mission surge in history has entirely missed the greatest migration in history, the migration of Third World rural peasants to great mega-cities....The migrant poor are the largest, most responsive group on earth today. I have found this to be true of Muslims in Karachi, Hindus in Calcutta, Buddhists in Thailand and Catholics in Manila. All are in a state of rapid socio-economic and world-view change, and are hungry for the reality of a new relationship to a god" (pp. 13,14).
2. "More nightmarish than the poverty and the staggering growth of that poverty, is the fact that there are no more than a handful of God's people ministering among these poor. I don't mean that there are no relief and development agencies. There are many, and most are doing good work in their defined diaconal roles. But the church has given the poor bread and kept the Bread of Life for the middle class. The search has not been for aid programs but for people who are establishing the kingdom of God, for men and women working and living among the poor to bring them the Bread of Life by both word and deed (p. 15).
3. "There are some missions that have made a deliberate strategy to go for the rich, believing in a sort of religious 'trickled-down theory'. 'Trickled-down' no more works in the kingdom than it does in the economic realm....The gospel 'trickles up'. Any man or woman who would follow Jesus to walk among the poor will affect countless of the middle and rich classes.

"A missionary living on \$2,800 per month in an American-style house, sending his children to an American-style school, trying to reach people who live on \$200 per year, is like a B-52 Bomber attacking guerillas.

"We must send communities of men and women, married and singles, with commitments to live poor among the poor in order to preach the kingdom and establish a church in these great slum areas.

"The propensity for the American church to accept the agenda of the aid organizations as focal to the Great Commission has seriously skewed mission. Mission to the middle class is seen as proclamation, to the poor it has become giving handouts or assisting in development as defined by Christianized humanitarian perspectives."

WE ARE ZEROING IN, IN GREATER MEASURE, ON THE LARGE CITY POPULATIONS IN ORDER TO EVANGELIZE AND PLANT CHURCHES. WE ARE SEEKING TO HAVE INTERNATIONAL TEAMS INVOLVED IN SUCH MINISTRY. WE ARE SEEKING TO EXPLORE WAYS IN WHICH MEDICINE CAN BE PART OF A WHOLISTIC MINISTRY AS WELL AS OTHER MINISTRIES THAT ARE DICTATED BY THE NEEDS OF GIVEN SETTINGS. WE NEED MUCH HELP IN WORKING OUT A STRATEGY AS TO HOW TO REACH THE POOR AND NEED TO WRESTLE WITH SOME OF THE PROBLEMS AND ISSUES THAT VIV GRIGG DIRECTS TO US.

#### F. MISSION IN NORTH AMERICA - AND MISSION ABROAD

Why serve abroad when there are so many needs in Canada and the United States? Is not missions a task in all six continents of the world including the Western world? Because of the tremendous decline of church members in the West, there is talk of mission in reverse. David Barrett maintains that an average of 53,000 people leave the Christian church in Europe and North America every week. In other words, the Western world is rapidly being paganized while Africa, for example, is increasing her Christian population by about 18 thousand per week.

In addition, the refugee and immigrant movements from all parts of the world have brought unevangelized peoples into our midst. Do we not have enough of a challenge here to engage in evangelism and church planting? Can we not leave the missionary task in the Third World to the national churches which have been established in the Third World?

It is true that the Bible makes no distinction between home and foreign missions; it is also true that there are many unreached peoples in North America. The world is our mission field. Winning a person to the Lord in the

West is just as important as winning a person to the Lord elsewhere in the world.

The reason why we need to pursue "foreign" missions more actively is that there are far fewer resources to meet evangelistic need abroad than there are at home. In North America there are ample resources to carry out the task of evangelism and church planting. Among the three billion people who are unevangelized the resources are very meager and sometimes nonexistent. We will need to continue to encourage and to assist our international churches. We need to engage in pioneer mission, initiating evangelism and church planting in unevangelized cities and territories and among unevangelized people groups.

MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSION STRATEGY MUST, THEREFORE, WHILE SEEKING TO COORDINATE MORE EFFECTIVELY MISSION EFFORTS ABROAD AND MISSION EFFORTS AT HOME, AND WHILE AGGRESSIVELY PURSUING MISSIONS ABROAD AND MISSIONS AT HOME, RECOGNIZE THE DISPROPORTIONATE DEARTH OF RESOURCES ABROAD (PEOPLE, EDUCATIONAL, AND FINANCIAL), AND THE DISPROPORTIONATE MASSIVE CHALLENGE OF BILLIONS OF UNEVANGELIZED ABROAD, HAVING NONE OR INSUFFICIENT ACCESS TO THE GOSPEL! IF THE TASK GIVEN TO US BY OUR LORD IS TO BE COMPLETED, WE MUST INCREASE OUR INVOLVEMENTS ABROAD AS WELL AS AT HOME!

#### G. INTERNATIONALIZATION

This is the day of developing partnerships in mission on an international level. Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services is exploring partnerships in regional planning (Latin America, Asia, Europe) as well as in carrying out mission assignments. We are also exploring the possibilities of global planning of our total missionary efforts abroad through a partnership of participating Mennonite Brethren churches. The spiritual resources, the personnel, and the physical resources of the international church need to be tapped to pursue our mission in the world more effectively.

Victor Adrian  
January, 1988

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