

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FROM “WINNER” TO “SIGN”:  
THE CHANGED UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH-WORLD  
RELATION  
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ECUMENICAL THOUGHT

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This dissertation entitled

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THE CHANGED UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH-WORLD RELATION  
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ECUMENICAL THOUGHT**

written by

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To Jessie, Tominayingibo, Otonyesia and Datubo  
my solid and supportive family

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## **ABSTRACT**

Many critics and supporters alike of the World Council of Churches (WCC) contend that it has shifted from its original Christocentric and Trinitarian “Basis.” Some, especially conservative evangelicals, see this shift as a movement away from Christian evangelism and the uniqueness of Christ to the unification of all humanity in a syncretism of religions in which the gospel is replaced by social work. Others have identified the shift to be a movement away from Christology to cosmic pneumatology, or from an eschatological vision of human unity to a narrow vision of church unity, or from a Christocentric universalism, which did not allow for the wider vision of the unity of humankind, to a fuller Trinitarian vision encompassing all of life and all of creation in one grand view.

The argument of this dissertation is that the shift in understanding of twentieth-century ecumenical church-world relation is not from Christology to pneumatology, or from Christological universalism to Trinitarian universalism, or in a loss of eschatological vision. Ecumenical theological thinking has consistently remained within its Christological and Trinitarian “Basis” and has been consistently eschatological. The shift is from an understanding of the church as the sphere of redemption to that of the world as the sphere of redemption. The proposal in this thesis is that this shift is best understood by a contrast between two interpretive models which may be described as “the Church as Winner of the World” (the Winner model) and “the Church as Sign to the

World” (the Sign model). In the former model, the church understands itself as called to win the world for Christ by means of the gospel and in that way to realize the unity of humankind. In the latter model, the church does not consider itself as standing over against the world in order to win it for Christ, but rather, in solidarity with it, as a sign to it of God’s reconciliation of all things in Christ. The shift in the twentieth-century ecumenical understanding of the church-world relation is the result of a move from the Winner model to the Sign model.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. The Nature of the Problem

The World Council of Churches was established in 1948 with a clear “Basis” to be “a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior.”<sup>1</sup> This “Basis” was altered at the New Delhi Assembly in 1961, with the inclusion of the International Missionary Council and the Orthodox Church among others, to allow for a more explicit Trinitarian confession. Thus, the World Council of Churches became

a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

And the fellowship was to, among other things, “facilitate common action by the churches,” and “support the churches in their task of evangelism.”<sup>3</sup> The International Missionary Council became the Commission on and Division of World Mission and Evangelism. This Commission and Division was to “further the proclamation to the

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<sup>1</sup> W. A. Visser’t Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches Held At Amsterdam August 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 196 – The Constitution of the WCC. Hereafter cited as *Amsterdam Report*.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 152 – Report of the Committees (original text italicized). Hereafter cited as *New Delhi Report*.

<sup>3</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 197-198.

whole world of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the end that all men may believe in him and be saved.”<sup>4</sup>

In the course of its history, critics and supporters alike have contended that there has been a shift or drift in the World Council of Churches’ theology, goals and strategies.<sup>5</sup> Several different sorts of critique can be identified. Many, especially conservative evangelicals, have been critical of what they contend is a shift away from committed Christian evangelism toward social humanization in which the unification of all humanity was being attempted by means of religious pluralism and syncretism.<sup>6</sup> Also, these think that the ecumenical program is a corruption of the Christian faith<sup>7</sup> and a

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<sup>4</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 421.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Norman Goodall, *Ecumenical Progress: A Decade of Change in the Ecumenical Movement, 1961-1971* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); J. A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 33f., 108; Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology: 1948-1975 Years of Worldwide Creative Tension Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), esp. 15-121; David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), esp. chap. 12; Ans van der Bent, “A Renewed Ecumenical Movement,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/2 (April 1991): 172-177; J.-M.R. Tillard, O. P., “The World Council of Churches in Quest of its Identity,” *The Ecumenical Review* 50/3 (July 1998): 390-398; Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 1ff.; Bert Hoedemaker, “The Unity of Humankind: Problems and Promises of an Indispensable Ecumenical Theme,” *The Ecumenical Review* 50/3 (July 1998): 307-314; Paul Abrecht, “From Oxford to Vancouver: Lessons from Fifty Years of Ecumenical Work for Economic and Social Justice,” *The Ecumenical Review* 40/2 (April 1988): 147-168; idem, “The Predicament of Christian Social Thought after the Cold War,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/3 (July 1991): 318-328; Charles West, “Ecumenical Social Ethic Beyond Socialism and Capitalism,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/3 (July 1991): 329-340; Christian T. Iosso, “Changes in Ecumenical Public Witness, 1967-90,” in *The Church’s Public Role: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 143-175.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the Berlin Ecumenical Manifesto and the many contributions of evangelicals making the same point. Walter Künneth and Peter Beyerhaus, eds., *Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft?: die Berliner Ökumene-Erklärung zur utopischen Vision des Weltkirchenrates* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> Bert Beverly Beach, *Ecumenism, Boom or Bust?* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1974); Herbert Carson, *United We Fall: A Study of the Current Ecumenical Pressures* (Haywards Heath, England: Carey, 1975).

deviation from the church's historic idea of mission.<sup>8</sup> These conservative evangelicals have, therefore, launched their own ecumenical movement for the purpose of world evangelization.<sup>9</sup> Some others have concentrated their criticisms on the WCC's political agenda, seeing it as a departure from the church's historic position.<sup>10</sup>

Other forms of theological assessment of the WCC have also been made. John Bolt, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for instance, judges that between the First Assembly at Amsterdam in 1948 and the Seventh Assembly at Canberra in 1991, the theological focus shifted from Christology to cosmic pneumatology.<sup>11</sup> Bert Hoedemaker, professor of missions and ecumenics at the State University of Groningen, The Netherlands sees in the ecumenical movement a strong tendency to narrowing its vision from an original eschatological vision embracing

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<sup>8</sup> Harvey T. Hoekstra, *The World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> A number of conferences in this respect are significant: see, the Church's World-Wide Mission at Wheaton, Illinois, 1966, the World Congress on Evangelization, Berlin 1966 and the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, 1974. See: Harold Lindsell, ed., *The Church's Worldwide Mission: Proceedings of the Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission, 4-16 April (1966) at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois* (Waco, Tx: Word Books, 1966); Carl F. H. Henry & W. Stanley Mooneyham, eds., *One Race, One Gospel, One Task: World Congress on Evangelization, Berlin, 1966*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967); J. D. Douglas, ed., *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland. Official Reference Volume: Papers and Responses* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975); idem, ed., *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes: Calling the Whole Church to Take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World. Lausanne II in Manila, International Congress on World Evangelization, 1989* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Edwin R. Norman, *Christianity and the World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); J. A. Emerson Vermaat, *The World Council of Churches and Politics 1975-1986. Focus on Issues no. 6* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989); Paul Ramsey, *Who Speaks for the Church?* (Nashville, Abingdom Press, 1967).

<sup>11</sup> John Bolt, "The Ecumenical Shift to Cosmic Pneumatology," *Reformed Review* 51/3 (Spring 1998): 255-270.

the whole human family to one that concentrates on the church.<sup>12</sup> In this tendency, the goal of the unity of humankind is subordinated to the quest for church unity, with worldwide issues becoming mere “*addenda*” to the agenda of the church. Konrad Raiser, long time General Secretary of the WCC contends that the movement is the reverse – from a Christocentric universalism, which did not allow for the wider vision of the unity of humankind, to a fuller Trinitarian vision encompassing all of life and all of creation in one grand view.<sup>13</sup>

It is the thesis of this dissertation that while the various critiques and judgments of the twentieth century ecumenical movement contain elements of truth, none of them adequately captures the complexity and subtlety of its wrestling with the church-world relation. Reducing this complexity to a shift from Christology to pneumatology or from Christological to Trinitarian universalism, or to a loss of eschatological vision runs the risk of misrepresentation. While there is significant continuity in the major doctrinal/theological areas, there was a shift in the understanding of the basic posture of the church’s relation to the world. The proposal in this thesis is that the shift in the ecumenical movement’s church-world relation is best understood by a contrast between two interpretive models that I have described as “the Church as Winner of the World” (the Winner model) and “the Church as Sign to the World” (the Sign model). In the former model, the church understands itself as called to win the world for Christ by means of the gospel and in that way to realize the unity of humankind. In the latter

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<sup>12</sup> Hoedemaker, “Unity of Humankind,” 311-312. Although Hoedemaker insists that this is nothing more than a tendency within the “balanced” ecumenical vision, he suggests that this tendency was strengthened within the ecumenical movement, but could have been avoided by “more conscious and consistent reflection on the eschatological framework of the ecumenical renaissance.” Throughout his essay, he suggests that the eschatological had been abandoned and needs to be recovered.

<sup>13</sup> Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, chapters 2 and 3.



model, the church does not consider itself as standing over against the world in order to win it for Christ, but rather in solidarity with it, as a sign to it of God's reconciliation of all things in Christ. I will argue that the shift in the ecumenical understanding of the church-world relation involves a move from the Winner model to the Sign model. The major theological changes have not taken place in areas such as the doctrine of God, Christology, or even pneumatology, but in the understanding of the church in its relation to the Kingdom of God and, therefore, to the world.

It is worth asking at this point why this broad shift has been overlooked and attention directed instead to fundamental doctrines such as Christology and pneumatology. At least six missteps exist in the efforts to account for and explain the massive amount of materials produced by the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century. The first misstep, and perhaps the most common, is to consider some of the ideas of persons and/or literature associated with the movement as equivalent to the official positions of the movement. An example of this is the interpretation of the ecumenical movement by the evangelicals behind the Berlin Declaration and the 1975 publication of *Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft*. Hendrikus Berkhof, among others, called attention to the failure of this Berlin declaration to base most of its charges on official ecumenical statements.<sup>14</sup>

The second misstep is to exaggerate the significance of key "ecumenical moments." By "ecumenical moments" I refer to significant points or phases of ecumenical thought. Charles Van Engen, for instance, believes that the ecumenical

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<sup>14</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, "Berlin versus Geneva: Our Relationship with the Evangelicals," *The Ecumenical Review* 28/1 (Jan. 1976): 80-86, at 84; cf. Künneht and Beyerhaus, ed., *Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft?* The articles here accuse the WCC of an enthusiasm for Mao and of being on the way of the anti-Christ, among other things.

movement erred when it adopted and misused the notion of *missio Dei* as expounded by J. C. Hoekendijk.<sup>15</sup> The misuse Van Engen alludes to is the reduction of the church to its apostolic or mission function. It will become clear in the course of this study that though the *missio Dei* notion became and remains formative in ecumenical discussions, the reduction of the church to its apostolary aspect was also repeatedly rejected. Van Engen has therefore exaggerated the misuse of this ecumenical moment of *missio Dei*. The misunderstanding of the nature of the change within ecumenism is in part due to exaggerations of this sort.

A third misstep takes place when changes effected by an ecumenical moment upon the preceding era are misunderstood. It has been generally claimed, for instance, that the church-centered view of mission which was represented in the pre-Willingen 1952 ecumenical assembly lacked an eschatological perspective. Van Engen and J. A. Scherer, among others, have made this claim.<sup>16</sup> However, when the ecumenical documents are examined, what we discover is not the lack of an eschatological perspective of mission but a reworking of the implications of the eschatological perspective that had been present in ecumenical missionary engagement since the nineteenth century. In this reworking, the understanding of the church and the world as they relate to the eschaton and to one another is affected without any radically different

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), esp. 150-153. Similarly, Klaus Bockmuhl thinks that the study on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation is "the manual for understanding ecumenical theology." "Pre-Suppositions in Contemporary Theological Debate," in *The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents 1964-1976*, ed. Donald McGavran (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 351-359, at 352.

<sup>16</sup> Van Engen, *Mission on the Way*, 153; J. A. Scherer, "Church, Kingdom, and *Missio Dei*," in *Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium*, eds. Charles Van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland and Paul Pierson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 82-95 at 84; cf. also Hoedemaker, "The Unity of Humankind," 307-314.

eschatology itself. As we shall see, one of the consistent aspects of the Winner and Sign models alike is that in every stage of ecumenical history, the eschatological perspective has been prominent. Eschatology has remained a constant element even though its implications have been differently expressed in the course of the history of ecumenical missions.

A fourth misstep is the failure to discern ecumenical continuities. Examples here include Konrad Raiser, who claims a shift in ecumenical thought from Christocentric universalism to Trinitarianism, and John Bolt, who claims a shift from Christology to cosmic pneumatology. Also to be included here is the tendency to shift away from the unity of humankind to the unity of the church, which Hoedemaker thinks the ecumenical movement nurtures.<sup>17</sup> These scholars do not adequately appreciate the continuities in ecumenical thought concerning the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ. The reason for this, in my judgment, is the lack of a model by which the ecumenical church-world relation can be expressed. Ecumenical thought has consistently remained eschatological, Trinitarian and Christocentric. At some points the Christocentric emphasis did dominate, and sometimes dangerously so, but at no point was it replaced by a pneumatological or a Trinitarian view of God which was not Christocentric.

A fifth kind of misstep concerns the inability to discern the depth of key ecumenical conceptions such as “catholicity” and “sign.” An illustration of this is the

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<sup>17</sup> Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, esp. chapters 3 and 4; Bolt, “The Ecumenical Shift to Cosmic Pneumatology;” 255-270; Hoedemaker, “The Unity of Humankind,” 311-312. For eschatology in the early part of the ecumenical missionary enterprise see Richard T. Gillespie, “Edinburgh, Jerusalem and Madras in the Light of the Kingdom Concepts” (Diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1947). Also, for a view which sees Madras 1938 as involving an eschatological perspective see *Preparatory Studies for the Missionary Obligation of the Church, Why Missions?* Prepared by the Committee of Research in Foreign Missions of the Division of Foreign Missions and the Central Department of Research and Survey, The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC), (Mimeographed, February, 1952), 5.

inability in many circles to perceive the depth of the concept of humanization or “genuine humanity” as understood within the ecumenical documents.<sup>18</sup> Oftentimes, preset definitions of the meaning of this term are imposed upon the ecumenical movement and illegitimate contrasts are drawn between “humanization” and “salvation” as if in ecumenical thought one excluded the other. The same lack of depth in the understanding of the concept of the church as “sign” may be behind Van Engen’s view that in the ecumenical movement the church is conceived as “a bystander applauding God’s activities or at best playing a ‘utilitarian role.’”<sup>19</sup>

A sixth kind of misstep is the tendency to ignore documents that contradict pre-formed stereotypes or to dismiss them as exceptions to ecumenical theology. This has been the general way many have treated the 1982 *Mission and Evangelism* document. Van Engen is among those who do such a selectivity that blurs the ecumenical wholeness.<sup>20</sup> It is apparently this inability to see the ecumenical wholeness that prevents Rodger Bassham from seeing the consistency between Uppsala 1968’s position on conversion into the church and its position on the church as the arena for mission.<sup>21</sup>

In view of the muddying of the ecumenical waters to which these interpretive missteps lead, it is important to understand the reasons for the missteps and to initiate a

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<sup>18</sup> See e.g. J. Herbert Kane, *The Christian Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), esp. p. 160; Peter Beyerhaus, *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption*, forward Donald McGavran, preface Harold Lindsell, trans. Margaret Clarkson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971); contra Won Yong Ji, “Evangelization and Humanization,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 42 (March 1971): 163-172; W. A. Saayman, *Unity and Mission: A Study of the Concept of Unity in Ecumenical Discussions Since 1961 and its influence on the World Mission of the Church* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1984), 41-42; and Bassham, *Mission Theology*, 80.

<sup>19</sup> Van Engen, *Mission on the Way*, 155.

<sup>20</sup> Van Engen, *Mission on the Way*, 155.

<sup>21</sup> Bassham, *Mission Theology*, 81.

process towards their correction. That is the larger goal of this study. I hope to show that the shift in ecumenical understanding of church-world relations may be more accurately perceived by means of the Winner and Sign models, and that the ecumenical movement itself may be more wholistically understood. And even if this shift in ecumenical understanding from the Winner model to the Sign model is considered by some as illegitimate, at least this illegitimacy would be rightly placed and not just lost in stereotypes.

## II. Survey of Scholarship

There are different kinds of writing about the ecumenical movement as represented in the World Council of Churches (WCC). Apart from documents that prepare for or that arise from conferences and assemblies, there are several general histories of the different arms that formed the movement. There are works on the history of Faith and Order,<sup>22</sup> on the history of Life and Work,<sup>23</sup> on the history and theology of the International Missionary Council,<sup>24</sup> and on the history of the World Council of Churches

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<sup>22</sup> John E. Skoglund and J. Robert Nelson, *Fifty Years of Faith and Order: an Interpretation of the Faith and Order Movement*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1964); Oliver S. Tomkins, *The Church in the Purpose of God: An Introduction to the Work of the Faith and Order*. Faith and Order Commission Papers No. 3 (New York: WCC, 1951); Edwards S. Woods, *Moving Towards Unity: An Introduction to Faith and Order Movement* (London: SCM, 1936).

<sup>23</sup> Charles S. Macfarland, *Steps Toward the World Council: Origins of the Ecumenical Movement as Expressed in the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work* (New York: Flemming H. Revell Co., 1938); George Macleod, *Church Union and Social Concern* (Grahamstown: Rhodes University, 1952); Randolph C. Miller, ed., *The Church and the Organized Movements* (New York: Harpers, 1946); Nathan Söderblom, *Christian Fellowship: or the United Life and Work of Christendom* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1923).

<sup>24</sup> See especially William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952). For works on the Theology of the IMC see e.g. Tomas Shivute, *The Theology of Mission and Evangelism in the International Missionary Council from Edinburgh to New Delhi* (Helsinki: Finnish Society for Missiology and Ecumenics, 1980); Wilhelm Anderson, *Towards a Theology of Mission: A Study of the Encounter Between the Missionary Enterprise and the Church and Its Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1955); Gerald

as formed at Amsterdam in 1948.<sup>25</sup> While these works have very informative discussions of the different phases of the development of the ecumenical movement, none of them provide an overarching framework or model with which the nature of the change or changes within ecumenism may be understood. Kuncheria Pathil has done a formidable work in demonstrating the models within ecumenical dialogue in the Faith and Order Commission, and thereby highlighted essential differences and growth in thought processes within Faith and Order discussions.<sup>26</sup> Yet, his work, concerning only Faith and Order, does not give enough insight into the works of other aspects of the WCC and was only an examination of study methodologies and not a framework for the whole

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Harry Anderson, "The Theology of Missions: 1928-1958 (Diss., Boston University Graduate School, 1960); R. M. Rutherford, "An Examination of American Study Procedures for Three International Missionary Conferences: Edinburgh 1910, Jerusalem 1928, Madras 1938, with Implications for Missionary Education in Local Christian Churches" (Diss., University of Michigan, 1962); William J. Schmidt's "Ecumenicity and Syncretism in Special Reference to the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches" (Diss., Columbia University, 1966); Charles M. Sell, "A Critical Survey of the Theology of Missions of the International Missionary Council" (Diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1967).

<sup>25</sup> The most popular book on this subject is probably the two volume work edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill (volume 1) and Harold E. Fey (volume 2): *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1968*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Geneva: WCC, 1993); some other important historical works include: David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches: A Study of Its Background and History* (Peterborough, New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith, 1966); G. K. A. Bell, *The Kingship of Christ: the Story of the World Council of Churches* (Harmondworth, Middlesex, England: Penquin Books, 1954); Paul G. Macy, *If It Be of God: The Story of the World Council of Churches* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1946); idem, *The Story of the World Council of Churches* (New York: WCC, 1943); *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation. Minutes and Reports of the Meeting of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches held at Geneva from February 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1946; the Constitutional Documents of the World Council of Churches and an Introduction by W. A. Visser 't Hooft* (Geneva: WCC, 1946); *World Council of Churches: What It Is and What It Does* (New York: WCC, 1956). For two works on general ecumenical church history see: John T. McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism: The Ecumenical Spirit and Its Persistent Expression* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964); Robert McAfee Brown, *The Ecumenical Revolution: an Interpretation of the Catholic-Protestant Dialogue* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967). For more modern historical works see: *And So Set Up Signs. . . The World Council of Churches' First 40 Years* (Geneva: WCC, 1988); "Commemorating Amsterdam: 40 Years of the World Council of Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 40/3-4 (1988); Marlin VanElderen, *Introducing the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1991); W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1982);

<sup>26</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue: A Study of the Methodological Development in the Commission on "Faith and Order" of the World Council of Churches*, with Forward by Lukas Vischer (Bangalore, India: Dharmaram Publications, 1983). Pathil noted four methods for Faith and Order discussions: the comparative method, the dialectic method, the Christological method, and the inter-contextual method.

ecumenical movement. Nonetheless, in so far as Faith and Order studies have to relate the church's life to its mission, Pathil's work definitely sheds light on many aspects of this relation.

Michael Putney's 1985 dissertation at the Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana is a useful work in understanding the pneumatological deficiencies in ecumenical thought especially in ecclesiology.<sup>27</sup> Wolfgang Günther's 1968 dissertation to the faculty of Friedrich-Alexander-Universität is helpful in tracing the nature of the "ecumenical moments" and discontinuities with which each of the IMC conferences may be associated.<sup>28</sup> While these studies are helpful, none of them provides a broader framework for understanding the nature of the change within ecumenism as a whole. Other general treatments of ecumenical mission or unity pursuits are helpful in highlighting aspects of ecumenical thought or particular moments of ecumenism but they do not seek to examine changes in ecumenical thought as such.<sup>29</sup>

Three works that attempt to provide some framework to understand the changes in ecumenical thought are Gert Ruppel's *Einheit ist Unteilbar*, Konrad Raiser's *Ecumenism*

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<sup>27</sup> Michael E. Putney, *The Presence and Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in the Studies of the Commission on Faith and Order (1927-1983)* (Rome, 1985)

<sup>28</sup> Wolfgang Günther, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City: die Ecclesiologischen Bemühungen der Weltmissionskonferenzen (1910-1963)* (Stuttgart: Evan. Missionsverlag, 1970). It should be recalled that we have defined ecumenical moments as significant points or phases in ecumenical thought.

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Nash, *Ecumenical Movement in the 1960s* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975); Bassham, *Mission Theology*, esp. part I; David Bosch, *Witness to the World: the Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), esp. part III; Saayman, *Unity and Mission*; James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987). Included here should be the many works on missiology and theology of mission which treat ecumenical mission.

*in Transition* and David J. Bosch's *Transforming Mission*.<sup>30</sup> Ruppell's study used the understanding of the relationship between the unity of the church and the unity of humankind to underscore ecumenical changes as a gradual shift in understanding of the conception of human unity from a narrow, partial and one-sided Western concept to a broader global conception. This work is a useful reminder that eschatology remained alive in ecumenical thought. Ruppell's work, while an excellent contribution to understanding ecumenical thought, has its accent on the expansion of a Western understanding of human unity to a more global understanding. My work accents the theological shift in the understanding of the world itself as it stands under God. This approach highlights the issues concerning the world mission of the church.

Raiser's study describes emerging changes in ecumenism as a transition from a Christocentric to a Trinitarian universalism. He argued that this emerging Trinitarian model would clarify the ecclesiological significance of the WCC and its engagement with the world in a conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Raiser's work has received significant reviews, both positive and negative.<sup>31</sup> In my judgment, Raiser is correct when he notes that Uppsala 1968 was a definite break from earlier

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<sup>30</sup> Gert Ruppell, *Einheit ist Unteilbar: die Menschheit und ihre Einheit als Thema in der ökumenischen Diskussion zwischen 1910 und 1983* (Rottenburg: Ernst Lange-Institut für Ökumenische Studien, 1992); Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*; David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), esp. part 3.

<sup>31</sup> Some of these reviews include: Mark Ellingsen, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 29/3-4 (Fall 1993): 470-472; Thomas P. Rausch, *Theological Studies* 53/3 (Sept. 1992): 600-601; Jeffrey Gros, *The Christian Century* 109/23 (July 29-Aug. 5, 1992): 718-719; Thomas N. Finger, *Ecumenical Trends* 22 (April 1993): 53-57; Geoffrey Wainwright, *Mid-Stream* 31 (April 1992): 169-173; Belle Miller McMaster, *Church and Society* 85 (July-Aug. 1995): 133-139; Paul G. Schrotenboer, *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (April 1995): 214-221; Mark E. Chapman, *Lutheran Forum* 28 (Nov. 1994): 12; Richard L. Van Houten, *Calvin Theological Journal* 28/2 (Nov. 1993): 478-481; James A. Scherer, *Currents in Theology and Mission* 20 (June 1993): 209-211; John Kent, *Expository Times* 103/6 (March 1992): 187; Martin Conway, *Modern Churchman* 34/4 (1993): 61; Lesslie Newbigin, "Ecumenical Amnesia," *International Review of Missionary Research* 18/1 (Jan. 1994): 2-5; idem, "Reply to Konrad Raiser," *International Review of Missionary Research* 18/2 (April 1994): 51-52.



ecumenical positions. However, I shall argue in this work that this is not accurately characterized as a move from Christological universalism to Trinitarianism. Furthermore, as Lesslie Newbigin most sharply pointed out in his critique of Raiser, the Trinitarian framework of ecumenical thought is no departure from the centrality of Christ.<sup>32</sup> From Jeffrey Gros' critique of Raiser's book may be discerned the chief problem with Raiser's paradigm, namely, that it was built not upon the officially approved ecumenical documents but on tendencies associated with the ecumenical movement. According to Gros, Raiser's work is "a polemic against the wholeness advocated by the WCC," a wholeness which held together the sacramental and confessional unity and witness in the world. Raiser's work, Gros says, "focuses on a relatively narrow dimension of this vision."<sup>33</sup> Raiser's work is therefore unhelpful in providing the framework by which it might be possible to evaluate ecumenical trends that might or might not be official positions of the WCC.<sup>34</sup> As we shall see in this study, there is no such shift as Raiser suggests within ecumenical thought.

David Bosch builds upon six paradigms of Christianity provided by Hans Küng: the apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity; the Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period; the medieval Roman Catholic paradigm; the Protestant (Reformation) paradigm; the modern Enlightenment paradigm; the emerging post-modern or ecumenical

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<sup>32</sup> Newbigin, "Ecumenical Amnesia," 3ff.; cf. idem, *The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission* (London, Eng.: Edinburgh House Press, 1963), 31-34, 77-78.

<sup>33</sup> Gros, *Christian Century*, 718.

<sup>34</sup> Not many reviews could see that Raiser's position negates the wholeness of mission for which ecumenism has stood for so long and that it is not founded upon ecumenical documents. Newbigin's criticism sees the lack of the wholeness of mission but apparently took it for granted that Raiser's opinion reflected the ecumenical position! Newbigin, "Ecumenical Amnesia," 3ff.; cf. idem, "Reply to Konrad Raiser," 51-52.

paradigm.<sup>35</sup> While Bosch suggested that in each of these epochs there is “a distinctive understanding of Christian mission”<sup>36</sup> he did not point out the distinctive understanding of the ecumenical paradigm. For this, and at least two other reasons, Bosch’s work cannot offer the kind of framework which would enable us to understand the church-world relation in ecumenical thought, in spite of being otherwise an excellent work of missiological studies.<sup>37</sup> Bosch bases his thought almost exclusively on the International Missionary Council (IMC)/Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) rather than the full range of ecumenical works which would have also included the Commission on Faith and Order, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work/Department on Church and Society. Bosch also failed to distinguish sufficiently between ecumenical tendencies and the official positions of actual ecumenical documents.

### III. Methodological Limitations

The method of this study follows a combination of historical and systematic theological interests. Because of limitations of space, the historical details cannot be sufficiently explored. I shall rather concentrate on theological elements of the discussion. This does not assume a separation between the historical and the theological but it does mean that though historical developments will not be avoided in this work, they will be referred to minimally and only when absolutely necessary. While I will consider

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<sup>35</sup> Hans Küng, *Theologie im Aufbruch: Eine ökumenische Grundlegung* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1987), 157.

<sup>36</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 182.

<sup>37</sup> This work was commended by Hans Küng, Lesslie Newbigin, Alan Neely and Louis Luzbetak among others. See cover page of *Transforming Missions*.

representative positions of contributions to ecumenical conferences, it is the official voted-upon positions that will be definitive for any conclusions I reach. In this connection, a number of observations must be made.

First, the early ecumenical conferences of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not have any official voted-upon positions as such. Individual opinions were recorded. These are the officially available sources for interpreting the missionary movements of the time. I shall therefore take these individual opinions as expressing general trends unless we find the view negated by others. But in all citations of the nineteenth century and also of Edinburgh 1910 and Liverpool 1912, this methodological limitation should be taken into consideration.

Second, the official positions of Faith and Order, Life and Work and International Missionary Council must be seen as official positions of these bodies alone and not of the entire stream of the ecumenical movement. This is even more so after they were joined together in the WCC. The assemblies are the bodies which express the official positions of the whole ecumenical movement. Nevertheless, Eugene L. Stockwell's point should also be remembered that Assemblies, as a result of their diversity in delegations and traditions "are not the most apt vehicles for elaboration of precise definitions."<sup>38</sup> In the same way, the studies of Faith and Order, Church and Society, and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism do not represent the positions of their official bodies unless as those studies are approved or adopted by the bodies as a whole or through delegated leaders.

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<sup>38</sup> Eugene L. Stockwell, "What Word from Vancouver on Mission?" *International Review of Missionary Research* 7/2 (April 1983): 50-52 at 50.

Third, it is important to note that when we speak of the official ecumenical position, we are not unaware of the nature of ecumenical conferences. We must realize, for instance, that it is only “in substance” that most ecumenical statements are approved. This allows for a degree of freedom and should guide us in places where conflicts or contradictions arise. However, to the extent that a statement is not contradicted by the conference, we should treat it as reflecting the opinion of the majority of the conference. Usually, statements that are problematic in ecumenical gatherings are responded to either at the plenary sessions or in writing to the drafters. The assumption that guides our study of ecumenical documents is that the official reports and documents reflect the majority opinion of the delegates. Even when notable figures make contributions that strengthen ecumenical documents, so long as these contributions were accepted at a plenary of the meeting, they would be seen as reflective of the position of the ecumenical gathering and not merely those of the notable figures.<sup>39</sup> This is not to deny, however, that the nature and wording of an ecumenical document are reflective to some degree of the drafter(s)’s point of view. Nevertheless, we would give to ecumenical documents the integrity that they deserve as opinions voted upon by people who made mature corrections and contributions to the original drafts.<sup>40</sup>

Fourth, although there is a great cross-fertilization of thought between the Roman Catholic Church and the ecumenical movement especially since after Vatican II, and

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<sup>39</sup> The attempt, for instance, by Rodger Bassham, and David Allan Hubbard to weaken some contributions of Section II at Uppsala 1968 fails for this reason. Bassham, *Mission Theology*, 83; David Allan Hubbard, “The Theology of Section Two,” in *The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents, 1964-1976*, ed. Donald McGavran, Expanded Edition of *Eye of the Storm: the Great Debate in Mission, Including Documents on Bangkok and Nairobi* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1972, 1977), 269-272.

<sup>40</sup> On comments reflecting the nature of ecumenical documents see, e.g.: Thomas F. Stransky, “A Roman Catholic Response [to Stowe],” *Missiology* 9/1 (Jan. 1981): 41-51.

although this relationship is important, I have concentrated only on the World Council of Churches. Nevertheless, when there has been need to make references to thoughts and ideas of the Roman Catholic Church as they affect the ecumenical discussion I have made brief references to them. This work is limited in this respect. There are excellent works on the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the WCC and these, though forming background knowledge of my discussion are not analyzed in any detail.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, though other forms of ecumenism such as evangelical ecumenism and Pentecostal ecumenism did form part of my background knowledge, they have only been tangential to my discussion here.

Fifth, one more limitation concerns the period covered by this study. Effectively, this study covers the period from the World Mission Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 to the Seventh Assembly of the WCC at Canberra, Australia in 1991. The reason for this breadth of study is in order to be able to take into account a wider ecumenical history. However, as a result of the extensive amount of materials, very careful selection had to be made. I will concentrate on those that deal primarily with the church-world relation and make important contributions to our understanding of the theological issues involved. While we do cover all the conferences of Faith and Order, Life and Work, and IMC (except Ghana 1957/8<sup>42</sup>), CWME, and all the Assemblies of the WCC between 1948 to 1991, we have not covered all the studies and consultations. I believe that the selection made is broad enough to reflect the wideness of ecumenical thought. I have not been

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<sup>41</sup> See e.g. John J. McDonnell, *The World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church*. Toronto Studies in Theology (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985); Bernard Lambert, *Ecumenism: Theology and History*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962); Paul M. Minus, Jr., *The Catholic Rediscovery of Protestantism: A History of Roman Catholic Ecumenical Pioneering* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976).

<sup>42</sup> Ghana was skipped because it was basically an administrative meeting in preparation for the IMC's joining of the WCC. It did not further the ecumenical discussions further in any significant way.

able to pursue issues of justice and peace, matters of racism, sexism, etc. on their own merits because they are only tangential to my thesis. These are the important aspects in which this study is limited.

#### **IV. Summary of Content**

From its earliest beginnings at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910, the twentieth century ecumenical movement held that Christ is unique and universally relevant as God and Savior. And because only in Christianity is Christ fully revealed, all other religions were seen as aberrations of the truth and, therefore, false. It was therefore important to be a Christian in order to be saved. The church, then, saw its task as that of winning the world for Christ through Christianization primarily by preaching the gospel and secondarily through social work, which was a handmaid to gospel preaching. Only in this way, that is, through the Christianization of the world, could the unity of humankind be achieved. The church's efforts in pursuing unity were important in order to make the church more effective in winning the world for Christ. This was the Winner model in its original form as inherited from the nineteenth century missionary movements by Edinburgh, 1910.

This perspective was shaped between Edinburgh 1910 and the International Missionary Council at Whitby in 1947 with slight modifications made to some of its elements but with the model of the church as called to win the world for Christ unchanged. It was this model, shaped through these decades of ecumenical activities that was inherited by the World Council of Churches at its first assembly at Amsterdam in 1948. But between this first assembly at Amsterdam in 1948 and the fourth assembly at Uppsala in 1968 this understanding of the church's relation to the world was challenged

in turn by emphases on the centrality of Christ, the priority of the Trinitarian God in mission, the eschatological bearing of the world, and cosmological awareness arising from all these emphases. In the midst of these tensions, the Sign model eventually triumphed over the Winner model with the definitive victory coming at Uppsala 1968.

In this new model, though Christ was still affirmed as unique, this uniqueness was now, not a ground to *win* the world for Christ, but to be in *solidarity* with the world as a *sign* to it of its ultimate unity in and through this universally redeeming Christ. Because God was already at work in the world, the world, and not the church, was the primary place of God's activities. The world was judged to include church. Thus, the church was no longer seen as the sphere of redemption but the world was considered the place where God was acting in both redemption and judgment. Non-Christian religions could no longer be categorically described as false and idolatrous, but now their spirituality was to be valued and respected and they were to be regarded as dialoging partners with the church for the good of universal humanity and the entire creation.

Nevertheless, the church still owed to the world, including non-Christian religions, its witness to Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord. This witness, however, was now not to be done in the spirit of conquest, but in a relationship of sharing. Thus, although all the world is to be invited to faith in Christ and to the fellowship of the church, this witness was no longer a movement from a community which had exclusive possession of God's redemptive activity to one without it. Instead, it was seen as a movement from a community which is conscious of its redemption in Christ to one which is yet to know the true name of the redeemer and to understand through faith in him, the true Savior of the world. The church's witness does not realize the unity of humankind,

but God's active working in creation realizes this unity. Nevertheless, the church is to be engaged in the renewal of human community through proclamation of the gospel, solidarity with all the forces of life, and exemplary living. Whereas the church remained an essential part of this work of God in creation, this work was now only a participation in the *missio Dei*, the mission of God to all creation.

The church's witness to the world was therefore now as a sign to the world of Christ as redeemer, of the ultimate unity of humankind and of a community of justice and peace on earth. The unity of the church was to make effective this witness of the church as a sign to the ultimate unity and reconciliation of all things in Christ. While in the Winner model, only the world of humanity was taken into consideration, in the Sign model, the entire creation was taken into consideration. The church's mission now involves both humankind and the rest of creation because through the sacraments God is united not only to humanity but also to all of creation and because God will ultimately redeem not only humanity but also the whole of creation.

It is within this new understanding of how the church and the world relate to God's mission in the world that the changes in ecumenical thought may be perceived. In this work, I shall show that the shift in ecumenical thought was not from the uniqueness of Christ to other possibilities of salvation apart from Christ; nor from Christology to pneumatology; nor from a Christological universalism to a Trinitarian universalism; nor from an eschatological orientation in mission to a church-centered orientation in mission; nor from the proclamation of the gospel to social and political concerns; nor from an abandonment of the mission of the church to a universalism which embraces all religions. I shall show that while some persons associated with the World Council of Churches may



hold these positions which reflect some of the changes noted above, the official ecumenical documents do not reflect such positions.

## V. Summary of Chapters

The present chapter is the first in this study. It is an introduction to the thesis, an explication of the nature of the problem and the necessity of the study. Also, it provides the review of literature and the methodological limitations. In addition, it provides the summary of the content and of the chapters.

Chapter 2 will trace the shaping of the Winner model in a variety of conferences from Edinburgh 1910 through Whitby 1947. These would include the Students' conference at Liverpool in 1912, the Life and Work conferences at Stockholm in 1925 and Oxford in 1937. In these three conferences the ethical shaping of the Winner model took place. Also included will be the Faith and Order conferences at Lausanne in 1927 and at Edinburgh in 1937. Here the ecclesiological elements of the Winner model were shaped. This chapter also includes the events at the IMC meetings at Jerusalem in 1928, Madras in 1938 and Whitby in 1947, where the evangelistic elements of the Winner model were shaped. The chapter will conclude by summarizing the elements of the Winner model as bequeathed to Amsterdam 1948.

Chapter 3 will show the progresses of ecumenical discussion in the face of tensions in the Winner model. These tensions arose from challenges posed by implications of the universal relevance of Christ, the priority of the Trinitarian God in mission, and the world's eschatological bearing and from heightened awareness of the world raised by all these challenges. The chapter will disclose the gradual emergence of elements of the Sign model due to tensions in the Winner model. At Uppsala 1968, the

Sign model would finally triumph over the Winner model. In this chapter, the first three assemblies at Amsterdam 1948, Evanston 1954 and New Delhi 1961 will be examined along with the Faith and Order conferences at Lund 1952 and Montreal 1963. Faith and Order studies considered here will include the Lordship Studies of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and several other studies considered by the Faith and Order Commission at Bristol in 1967. The study, "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation," authorized by the New Delhi 1961 Assembly shall also be considered in addition to the International Missionary Council meeting at Willingen in 1952 and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism at Mexico City 1963.

Chapter 4 considers the shaping of the Sign model from 1969 to 1991. The model was shaped ecclesialogically in the studies of Faith and Order between 1969 and 1974 (the study on "The Unity of the Church – Unity of Mankind") and between 1981 and 1983 (the study on "The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community") and between 1984 and 1990 (the study on "The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign."). The final document of this study was published in 1990 as *Church and World*.<sup>43</sup> The shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness took place in the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism beginning at Bangkok 1973 and included the consultation at Chiang Mai in 1977, the CWME conference at Melbourne in 1980, the 1982 *Mission and Evangelism* publication, the 1988 consultation at Tambaram, the CWME conference at San Antonio in 1989, the Baar Consultation in 1990. Also involved here in both aspects of the shaping of the Sign model are the WCC Assemblies at Nairobi in 1975, at Vancouver in 1983, and at Canberra in 1991.

and humankind with which the missionary movement operated. This will limit this study and also enable me to select from the many available materials.

## I. Original Form of the Winner Model

### A. Edinburgh's Nineteenth Century Heritage

The story of the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century begins with the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910. This was a consultative conference on missionary work among non-Christian people.<sup>4</sup> Edinburgh's missionary understanding, however, may be traced to the missionary movements of the nineteenth century, in the line of whose tradition of ecumenical missionary conferences it stood.<sup>5</sup> These movements, as revealed by the records of the missionary conferences of the time, were characterized by an assurance of the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ and this uniqueness was claimed also for Christianity. The missionaries understood themselves as called to be part of the army of Christ to win the pagan world over to Christ and to Christianity by means of the preaching of the gospel. They expressed themselves and the missionary task by means of military metaphors (e.g. 'soldiers,' 'win,' and 'conquest') and these will be indicators for us of the Winner model. Sometimes, these missionaries identified the Christian faith with Western civilization in

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<sup>4</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9. – Introduction; see Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 120ff., 131f. for how this brought a strain in relations with missions in Latin America.

<sup>5</sup> The following are some of the conference documents that we shall encounter in this section: James Johnston, ed., *Report of the Centenary Conference on the Protestant Missions of the World, Held in Exeter Hall (June 9<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>) London, 1888*, 2 vols. (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1888), hereafter cited as *London 1888 Report*; *The Ecumenical Conference New York, 1900: Report of the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions, Held in Carnegie Hall and Neighboring Churches, April 21 to May 1, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.* 2 vols. (New York: American Tract Society; London: Religious Tract Society, 1900), hereafter cited as *New York 1900 Report*. Other conferences shall be cited here and there. Since no officially approved texts existed in earlier ecumenical conferences, I shall cite individual opinion as representative unless where they were negated by other contributions. The names of the persons shall be put at the end of the citation.

this task of conquest. Their hope was to realize human brotherhood by means of Christianization. They believed in the oneness of humanity, but this oneness was to be realized through the preaching of Christ. It is for these considerations that we have chosen to describe the model that operated as ‘the Church as Winner of the World’ (Winner model). This model was what Edinburgh 1910 inherited from the nineteenth century.

One of the clearest understandings of the Winner model in the nineteenth century was its conviction about the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ. At the Ecumenical Missionary Conference at New York in 1900, Henry T. Chapman, the Secretary of the United Methodist Free Churches, Leeds expressed the general conviction among missionaries of the nineteenth century concerning the Christian gospel when he asserted that it is the gospel which “can meet the deepest needs of universal man, and can fulfill the sublimest possibilities.”<sup>6</sup> This universal relevance of the gospel is the result of Christ’s kingship over all nations and his place as the only Savior of humanity.<sup>7</sup> Because of this uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ the Christian religion also claimed uniqueness for itself. Thus, Christianity was the “universal religion,”<sup>8</sup> the fullness of religion, having in “perfect form” whatever good other religions have in imperfect form.<sup>9</sup> And the Christian gospel was the civilizer of the nations. Christian missions held “the

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<sup>6</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:71 – Henry T. Chapman, Secretary, United Methodist Free Churches, Leeds.

<sup>7</sup> See these views as expressed by some of the participants. *New York 1900 Report*, 1:14 – Rev. J. T. Gracey; *New York 1900 Report*, 1: 357, 360 – John Henry Barrows.

<sup>8</sup> *London 1888 Report*, 1:165 – The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Aberdeen.

<sup>9</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:363 – Samuel Macauley Jackson, Central Presbyterian Church, New York; cf. 1:358 – John Henry Barrows.

secret of all progress and life in the non-Christian nations.”<sup>10</sup> Arthur Pierson, therefore encouraged Christian nations to “crowd pagan people with colonies of Christian workers” in every field of employment, arguing that:

[t]here is no reason why Christian England should not do in Missions just what she does when she colonises such a country as Australia – send a colony, not in the interests of commerce alone, not in the interests of trade alone, not in the interests of national glory and extension alone, but in the interests of the spreading of the Redeemer’s Kingdom – that is the only way we can overtake the evangelisation of the population of the globe.<sup>11</sup>

While native languages and such cultural forms as dress and food were generally respected, these missionary societies saw themselves as the civilizing force of these backward races.<sup>12</sup>

For this uniqueness of Christianity, non-Christian religions were generally seen in a poor light in the missionary conferences. Though having “glimpses and foreshadowings” of Christian truths,<sup>13</sup> they were in fact “adumbrations of the Gospel,” “doomed systems” of “idolatry and superstition” that would fade away with time.<sup>14</sup> At the London 1888 Missionary Conference, against unsuccessful attempts by some to

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<sup>10</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:64 – Robert E. Speer. For two approaches to understanding Christianity’s depth in colonialism see, Edmond J. Dunn, *Missionary Theology: Foundations in Development* (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1980), 9-20.

<sup>11</sup> *London 1888 Report*, 1:179-186, citation at 184 – Rev. Arthur T. Pierson, Philadelphia, USA. This same view was held by E. E. Jenkins who saw the colonization of nations as a means of defense for Christianity should the enemy of the cross, (enemies he did not name) attack the Western nations. *London 1888 Report*, 1:435 – E. E. Jenkins. Jenkin’s hypothetical point is interesting because it seems like an unknowing prediction of what is being increasingly admitted today by many in the West, namely, that the West needs to be evangelized by nations of the South and East, especially Africa and Asia.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *London 1888 Report*, 1:424-5 – W.H. Webb-Peploe, C.M.S.

<sup>13</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:358 – John Henry Barrows.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., *New York 1900 Report*, 1:357-358 – John Henry Barrows; 1:363 – Samuel Macauley Jackson; cf. Johannes Gustav Warneck’s *The Living Christ and Dying Heathenism: the Experiences of a Missionary in Animistic Heathenism*, trans. Neil Buchanan (New York, Chicago, etc.: Fleming H. Revell

create a positive view of non-Christian religions, many saw these religions as “false faiths,” “kingdoms of Satan,” and as realms of “wickedness in high place and low place.”<sup>15</sup> Whatever truths the heathens have were not considered salvific.<sup>16</sup> Non-Christian religions were to be approached with respect and tolerance, but without thereby shrinking from declaring to them their need for Christ as Savior.<sup>17</sup> Non-Christians were to be converted to Christ through the gospel given to the church for the world as a sacred trust. For this reason it would be a crime for the church to fail to preach the gospel.<sup>18</sup> The gospel communicated to the world was to be primarily by means of verbal communication. Social action was the consequence of preaching; in the words of Robert E. Speer, the latter belongs to “the immediate aims” of mission while the former belongs to its “ultimate aims.”<sup>19</sup>

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Co., 1909). This work is the translation of the German *Des Lebenskräfte des Evangeliums* (the Living Forces of the Gospel).

<sup>15</sup> *London 1888 Report*, 2:89-92.

<sup>16</sup> *London 1888 Report*, 2:89-92 – G. Mackenzie Cobban.

<sup>17</sup> Though limited to 1815, J. Van Den Berg’s discussion of the missionary motives of the time is very helpful. His discussed motives include: political motives, humanitarian-cultural motives, ascetic motives, the motive of debt, romantic motives, theocentric motive, the motive of love and compassion, the ecclesiological motive, the eschatological motive, and the motive of obedience to Christ’s command. See, Johannes van den Berg, *Constrained by Jesus’ Love; an Inquiry into the Motives of the Missionary Awakening in Great Britain in the Period between 1698 and 1815* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1956), 106-165; cf. J. Verkuyl’s list of motives in *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, trans. and ed. Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 168-175.

<sup>18</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:95 – J. R. Mott.

<sup>19</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:75-76 – Robert E. Speer; cf. *Report of the Seventh Conference of Officers and Representatives of the Foreign Missions Boards and Societies in the United States and Canada Held in the Church Mission House, 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. & 22<sup>d</sup> St. New York. January 10-12, 1899* (New York: Foreign Missions Library, 1899) 45. (Hereafter cited as *Report, FMBS, 1899*). It was clear to the participants at the conference that all the aspects of the missionary work should be evangelistic in the sense of bringing the people reached to Christ, “otherwise they have no place in the work” of mission. See *Report, FMBS, 1899*, 50 cf. 44-45; *London 1888 Report*, 1:418-442 – Speeches on the Church’s Duty and a New Departure.

In order to accomplish this missionary task, however, the church was to seek unity. But being conferences of missionary societies and not of churches, the unity which was of primary interest was “comity,”<sup>20</sup> that is, cooperation of missionary bodies within a mission field. Though some like G. Warneck and W. R. Huntington called for a deeper sense of unity than comity, this was not of prominent interest in the missionary conferences.<sup>21</sup> The American Baptist, A. J. Gordon, was apparently of the view that unity would not help the church’s mission.<sup>22</sup> Concentration in these missionary conferences was on the individual’s participation in mission by means of the power of the Holy Spirit through “fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit of God”<sup>23</sup> or “the baptism of fire.”<sup>24</sup>

One of the driving forces in nineteenth century missionary concern was the oneness of humanity. It often appeared as the concept of human equality, the “brotherhood” of humanity and the “Fatherhood of God.”<sup>25</sup> It was understood in relation to Christ, and Christianization of the world was the means of bringing it to pass. C. D.

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<sup>20</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:13 – Benjamin Harrison; cf. *London 1888 Report*, 1:421f. – W. H. Webb-Peploe, C.M.S., etc.

<sup>21</sup> *London 1888 Report*, 2:431f. – G. Warneck, Rothenschirmbach, Germany. See also the position of W. R. Huntington, rector of Grace Church, New York, who noted that some participants at the New York 1900 conference held that “‘comity’ was not enough” but that Christian unity was to be sought, even though its realization was far away it was sure to come. *New York 1900 Report*, 1:356; cf. Martin Schmidt, “Ecumenical Activity on the Continent of Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1:105-109; Donald Herbert Yoder, “Christian Unity in Nineteenth Century America,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1:247- 252.

<sup>22</sup> *London 1888 Report*, 1:439-440 – A. J. Gordon, American Baptist Missionary Union, Boston.

<sup>23</sup> *London 1888 Report*, 1:420 – Bishop of Exeter.

<sup>24</sup> *London 1888 Report*, 431 – W. M. Taylor. R. Bruce compared the approximately 120 missionary societies represented in the conference to the 120 in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit was given to the church on the Day of Pentecost. *London 1888 Report*, 1:437.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g. the position of President Seth Low of Columbia University who held that “no brotherhood less wide than the brotherhood of man can satisfy” the Christian and Jesus Christ. *New York 1900 Report*, 1:47.

Hartranft, for example, saw this concept human oneness as simply another way of speaking about the “family of God” or the Christian family.<sup>26</sup> Hartranft related it to the cross of Christ by means of whose reconciling work for all humanity the concept of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind is true.<sup>27</sup> Henry T. Chapman related it to the humanity of Christ, holding that “[t]he manhood of humanity was the flesh of Jesus Christ,” and that it was in Christ’s humanity that the gospel’s universality was proved. Thus, for Chapman, the purpose of mission was the same as “the purpose of the universe,” namely, “to multiply Christ, to reincarnate the Son of God, to enthrone Christ in the hearts of men,” such that in the end, Christ “may fill the world with Himself.”<sup>28</sup> This Christological understanding meant that human oneness was understood as the consequence of faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, the brotherhood of all humans was to be achieved through the Christianization of the world by Western nations and the church’s mission.<sup>29</sup> The eschatological understanding<sup>30</sup> of the unity of humankind emerges in the linking of this concept with the kingdom of God. Benjamin Harrison, for example, noted that what the missionaries preach is “the principles of the gospel of Christ – the doctrine

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<sup>26</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:349-350 – C. D. Hartranft.

<sup>27</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:355 – C. D. Hartranft.

<sup>28</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:72, 71 – Henry T. Chapman.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *London 1888 Report*, 1:xvi. While participants in the London 1888 conference were aware of the lamentable examples of some travelers and of the destructive policies of their governments, by and large, they had confidence in Western civilization. E.g. *London 1888 Report*, 49f – Albert Spicer, Esq. As was freely but shamefully admitted in the 1930s, “[t]here was a time when we made Western civilization practically a part of our message. That time has gone by.” E. Stanley Jones, et al., *The Christian Message for the World Today: A Joint Statement of the World-Wide Mission of the Christian Church* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1934), 198 cf. Roy L. Smith, *The Revolution in Christian Missions: The Fondren Lectures for 1941* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), 200-215.

<sup>30</sup> On the importance of eschatology to missionary theology see Dunn, *Missionary Theology*, 51-52.



of the parity of man – that God has made of one blood all people” and it is this doctrine that will work “its quiet way through the world” and “will yet bring in the kingdom that is promised.”<sup>31</sup> The link between the concept of human equality and oneness and the concept of the kingdom of God seems quite clear. This meant that although the church was the means of realizing the ‘brotherhood’ of humanity, it was in the kingdom of God that this was to find fulfillment.

It was quite natural, therefore, to identify the success of the missionary enterprise with the advancement of the kingdom. This was what Judson Smith did in seeing the gathering to consider the progress of the missionary enterprise at New York 1900 as an attempt to “draw out in some detail the story of Christ’s advancing kingdom.”<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, John Mott saw every one of the “wonderful facilities” made available by modern technology as having “been intended primarily to serve as a handmaid to the sublime enterprise of extending and building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ in all the world.”<sup>33</sup> The Christian was in this task of kingdom establishing and building, “a junior partner” with Christ “in the salvation of the world.”<sup>34</sup> Not only was human unity understood both Christologically and eschatologically, the activities of the church were seen as kingdom building and kingdom extending activities, albeit through God.

All these elements characterized the nineteenth century missionary enterprise and fit in well with what we have called the Winner model. Christ was both unique and

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<sup>31</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:45 – Benjamin Harrison.

<sup>32</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:30 – Judson Smith.

<sup>33</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:103, 101 – John R. Mott; cf yet with Benjamin Harrison’s views in 1:44, 56.

<sup>34</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:37 – Jacob Chamberlain.

universally relevant. Christianity was thereby also unique and the one true religion. And sometimes, this uniqueness was claimed for Western civilization, and Christian missions were, in such cases, the civilizers of the nations. All other religions were false and were corruptions of truth. Because of the idolatrous nature of non-Christian religions, non-Christians were to be won over to Christ primarily by means of the preaching of the gospel. Social action was secondary. The evangelization of the world was the means of realizing the unity of humankind, usually expressed in terms of “the Fatherhood of God” and the “Brotherhood of Mankind,” and this was understood both Christologically and eschatologically. The church’s Christianizing effort was the way to realize this human ‘brotherhood’ and its fulfillment was in the kingdom of God. In its understanding of the kingdom of God, the church and the kingdom were not properly distinguished, and the tasks of the church were believed to build the kingdom. Though some called for a deeper unity, the concern for unity in the missionary conferences was usually in terms of comity. The Winner model expressed itself through all these elements. Thus, the “Winner” ideas dominated missionary activities of the time. Hence for the missionary church, the “conquest” of the world for Christ was “the fundamental object of the Church’s existence.”<sup>35</sup> And from this perspective, the purpose of the missionary task was to “win the world to our Redeemer,” that is “to Christ.”<sup>36</sup> Christian mission was “a war of conquest” and not “a mere wrecking expedition.”<sup>37</sup> The church was not to “give up the

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<sup>35</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:37 – Jacob Chamberlain.

<sup>36</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:31, 53 – Judson Smith, Benjamin Harrison, respectively.

<sup>37</sup> *Report of the First International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, Held at Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A., February 26, 27, 28, and March 1, 1891* (Boston, MA.: Press of T. O. Metcalf & Co., 1891), 22 – Dr. Ashley.

great task of winning the world to Christ.”<sup>38</sup> All these expressions clearly underscore the Winner model. As would seem clear, in this model, the church and the world were in antithesis and it was the duty of the church to win the world for Christ. This was the church-world understanding that Edinburgh 1910 inherited.

## **B. Edinburgh 1910 and Its Legacy**

The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 was a conference specifically concerned with the spread of the gospel to non-Christian lands.<sup>39</sup> Its posture was, therefore, thoroughly missionary, and its understanding of church-world relations came out clearly in many respects as a continuation of the Winner model of the nineteenth century. In the first place, the “Winner” terminologies were repeatedly used. Thus, the Christian gospel was “a world-conquering gospel,” and it was only this gospel that would ensure “the empire of Christianity.”<sup>40</sup> The conference was believed to have received an “in-breathed” call by God “to take steps to move on the Army of Christ for the Conquest of the World.”<sup>41</sup> The church’s task was to “win” the world for Christ<sup>42</sup> by means of the elements of the gospel that had “the greatest power of appeal in winning and changing the hearts of men.”<sup>43</sup> The method of the missionary enterprise was “a method

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<sup>38</sup> *New York 1900 Report*, 1:53 – Canon W. J. Edmonds of Exeter Cathedral, England.

<sup>39</sup> Delegates to the conference were only from missionary societies having persons in foreign fields. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:7. The Archbishop of Canterbury in his address describes the conference as “the most serious attempt which the Church has yet made to look steadily at the whole fact of the non-Christian world, and to understand its meaning and its challenge.” *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:148.

<sup>40</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:326 – Robert E. Speer.

<sup>41</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:341 – Horton; cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:245 – J. W. Bashford.

<sup>42</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:246.

<sup>43</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:1.

of love that wins as the Saviour won.”<sup>44</sup> John R. Mott’s closing address at Edinburgh was begun in the words: “The end of the Conference is the beginning of the conquest.”<sup>45</sup> This conquest was to reach even to the primitive and backward peoples and was necessary in order to ensure the fullness of the church.<sup>46</sup>

As a foreign missions conference, Edinburgh 1910 spent a good part of its energies on the relation of Christianity to non-Christian religions. While, as Thomas Shivute has claimed, there may have been “some changes” in “missionary thinking” due to the “Liberal Movement,”<sup>47</sup> these changes did not affect Edinburgh’s conviction about the superiority of Christianity over non-Christian religions.<sup>48</sup> Although there were at Edinburgh those who found very little good in the morality of non-Christian cultures,<sup>49</sup> most of them found some truths in non-Christian religious and cultural experiences,<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:153.

<sup>45</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:347.

<sup>46</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:270, 271.

<sup>47</sup> Tomas Shivute, *The Theology of Mission and Evangelism in the International Missionary Council from Edinburgh to New Delhi* (Helsinki : Finnish Society for Missiology and Ecumenics, 1980), *Mission*, 28.

<sup>48</sup> In fact, the changes only affected the manner of the evaluation of non-Christian religions; rather than seeing Christianity as a religion with the only revelation, the liberals saw it as the religion with the highest moral principles. Cf. Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 106-107. However, at the Edinburgh conference, the liberal view did not emerge in any noticeable way, except, perhaps in a more realistic appreciation of the positive values of non-Christian religions and cultures. On the influence of the Social Gospel in nineteenth century America, see James Dombrowski, *The Early Days of Christian Socialism in America* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966); Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism 1865-1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940); Willem Adolph Visser’t Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America* (Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1928).

<sup>49</sup> E.g. Chinese morality: *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:38-40, 42ff.

<sup>50</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:23; *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:24, 22; *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:178. The view was expressed that “[f]rom a doctrinal standpoint . . . the most important *praeparatio evangelica* is to be found along the lines of Hindu Theism” tracking it back to the Rig Veda.

even though they were sure that the truth in Christianity transcends them all.<sup>51</sup> Non-Christian religions exist by the truths they contain,<sup>52</sup> and as such, missionaries were to be respectful to these religions<sup>53</sup> without detracting from the fact that Christianity does not share the same essence with these faiths but rather fulfils, corrects, redirects and perfects them.<sup>54</sup> The gospel was therefore to be preached to people of other faiths in order to win them for Christ. This, as we have seen, was essentially the position of the nineteenth century which forms one of the elements of the Winner model.

Edinburgh attempted to understand the relation of Christianity to non-Christian religions by means of both Christology and pneumatology. Whereas Commission II<sup>55</sup> raised the question of truth outside the Christian church in terms of the doctrine of the incarnation, Commission IV approached the matter in terms of pneumatology. This latter commission wondered, on the one hand, if it “fully realised the immeasurable value of the idea of the Holy Spirit in the light of Comparative Religion,” especially “in the light which India, casts on the inner nature of the religious aspiration of man;” and on the other hand, it questioned whether or not anything could meet and satisfy “that unresting desire

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<sup>51</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:23.

<sup>52</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:21 (emphasis in the report). Commission II puts it this way: “False systems do not live on account of the falsehood they contain, but on account of some truth they enshrine.” *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 2:113; cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 2:113-114.

<sup>53</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:21.

<sup>54</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:167 – Henry Sloan Coffin; cf. also *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:145; *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:339.

<sup>55</sup> The eight Commissions are as follows: Commission I - Carrying the Gospel to All the Non-Christian World; Commission II - The Church in the Mission Field; Commission III - Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life; Commission IV - The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions; Commission V - The Preparation of Missionaries; Commission VI - The Home Base of Missions; Commission VII - Missions and Government; Commission VIII - Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:5-6, 11-12; cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 2:113-114.

for unity with God which is manifest in the higher Hinduism,” apart from the eternal life in Jesus Christ.<sup>56</sup> The Commission thus asked if Hinduism, at least in its positive manifestations, was not an “ancient Revelation” with truths “which have been hidden in part from the just and the faithful of the Western world.”<sup>57</sup> Edinburgh, however, did not pursue this line of thought further, yet it raised important questions concerning both Christology and pneumatology with respect to people of other faiths. As we shall see, these questions kept coming up and responses to them kept being fashioned through ecumenical history. The one unquestioned response of Edinburgh was to re-affirm its commitment to Christian uniqueness and superiority.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the Spirit’s work outside the church could not be considered in any other terms apart from that of God’s redemptive purpose in Christ.<sup>59</sup> And this was done by seeing non-Christian religions as either a preparation for Christianity, or as God’s way of holding onto the customs of a people until their truth elements are fulfilled in Christ.<sup>60</sup>

The concept of “the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of mankind” was used even among non-Christians,<sup>61</sup> but its understanding was not the same in the church as it was among non-Christians. For example, while for the missionary church this term

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<sup>56</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:255-256.

<sup>57</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:256.

<sup>58</sup> For a general understanding of Edinburgh’s pneumatology in this respect see: *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:153; 233; 240; 256; 267; 8:8.

<sup>59</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 8:8.

<sup>60</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:240.

<sup>61</sup> For instance, James L. Barton related to Commission VIII that he heard a Moslem who was glad to learn that “religion may be, and is, the greatest band to bind us together into a great fellowship in the Fatherhood of a common God” [*Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 8:201]; Also, many reported to Commission IV

always assumed the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the inability of any to approach God apart from him,<sup>62</sup> to the Hindus its appeal lay in the Indian commitment to family life, tribal purity and veneration of the ancestors.<sup>63</sup> For the missionaries there was no possibility of human unity without Christianization. It was thus in this strictly Christocentric sense that expressions like “the universal Christ” and Christianity as the “universal religion”<sup>64</sup> were understood. And it was only by means of the Christianization of the world that human unity was to be achieved. Understood in this form, the “aim” of mission was “to communicate a life which we have in Christ to all the world,” and this was based on “a principle of hope which sees in all humanity the possibility of redemption.”<sup>65</sup>

However, at Edinburgh human unity was also spoken of in a general sense that seemed to have no bearing on human destiny in Christ. Thus, Edinburgh noted that “the beliefs and customs and capacities of the coloured races” deserve attention in the future, not only because of their “common humanity” with the West, which “inspires” Western “sympathy,” but also because of the continued impact of these races “on the interests of the human race in general, and on the western races in particular.” These nations cannot but have a continued influence on “the community of civilized nations,” hence the need

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that among some sects of Hindus, “the Fatherhood of God is the doctrine which, above all others, lays a great hold” on the audience [*Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:190].

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:189.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:164-166, 227. See also how this difference exists in the concept of acceptance and forgiveness vis-à-vis the Hindu concept of karma. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:191-193.

<sup>64</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:173.

<sup>65</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:153 – Robert E. Speer cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 6:284; *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:226-227.

to take them seriously.<sup>66</sup> In ways consistent with the internationalism of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Edinburgh's foresight was already seeing the need to grapple with global impact of the non-Christian nations. This understanding, however, does not rule out the more common understanding of the unity which all humanity has and is to have in Christ.

Edinburgh, like the nineteenth century missionary movements, also expressed the church-world relation in terms of the kingdom of God. Though no developed theology of the kingdom of God was present at Edinburgh, it was seen as both a Christological and a social conception.<sup>67</sup> As a Christological concept, the kingdom of God was hinged upon the redemption in Christ. Here it includes not only "inward deliverance from the power of sin," but also "ultimate deliverance from everything that cripples and depresses the entire life of man," since redemption covers not only "the alien sin within" but also "the evil of the world without."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, Ruppell, having in mind V. S. Azariah's view at Edinburgh on "Christ as the great Unifier of mankind," asserts that in the context of the kingdom-of-God-ethics it is Christ himself who unites humanity.<sup>69</sup> As a social conception, as Henry Sloan Coffin insisted, the kingdom of God is the church's ethical ideal, and while "primarily social," it "is not to be identified with any particular economic

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<sup>66</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 8:5-6.

<sup>67</sup> Gert Ruppell, *Einheit ist Unteilbar: die Menschheit und ihre Einheit als Thema in der ökumenischen Diskussion zwischen 1910 und 1983* (Rottenburg: Ernst Lange-Institut für Ökumenische Studien, 1992): 54-55. This view was chiefly expressed in the address of Henry Sloan Coffin (*Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:164-172) and in the work of section IV (*Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:250).

<sup>68</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:250.

<sup>69</sup> Ruppell, *Einheit ist Unteilbar*, 58; cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:306.



or political régime.”<sup>70</sup> The church, therefore, cannot content itself with individual righteousness or with only an indirect impact on social ethics since to do that is “to lose sight of the Kingdom;” it must rather have “a clear vision and a plain message of the Christlike relations of man with man” which must, however, be clearly distinguished from “modern civilization.”<sup>71</sup>

Here is one of the first clear signs of modification of the Winner model. The idea expressed in the nineteenth century by Robert E. Speer, for example, which tended to see social action as part of the “ultimate aims” of mission separate from “the immediate aims” of mission was here being readjusted. The separation in the past was argued on the ground that the church’s missionary task is spiritual and not “philanthropic,” “political,” or “secular;” but now, this separation was being challenged by some. The idea of the church only having an indirect effect on social issues was also being questioned by some. Now, the preferred way of conceiving the gospel seems to be to include the social as an integral part of the gospel message. In this sense, Edinburgh had begun to adjust the element of the gospel message in the Winner model in this inclusive way, shunning separation of the spiritual from the social, and yet separating the church’s ethical pursuit from any secular social program or movement. This ethical dimension is later to be pursued by Liverpool 1912 and other ecumenical conferences.

Edinburgh’s language with respect to the role of humans in the establishing of the kingdom was ambiguous, just like most of the conferences before, and some of the conferences after it. The participants believed that the missionary task, when pursued in

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<sup>70</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:164 – Henry Sloan Coffin.

<sup>71</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:166 – Henry Sloan Coffin.

Christian unity, would “effectively advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ both at home and abroad,”<sup>72</sup> since unity is “the ideal, the end, the true state of nature in the Kingdom of God”<sup>73</sup> and also because “the Kingdom of God is greater than any Church.”<sup>74</sup> However, some of them blurred the line between the church and the kingdom. Coffin was looking for nations with “faith enough to venture to let the Spirit of Christ motivate its policy” and to make it “become God’s servant to lead the world into the era of peace and goodwill.”<sup>75</sup> The spread of Christianity or Christendom meant “the expansion of Christ’s Kingdom” and “the extension of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, the view of the participants at Edinburgh on the kingdom of God is to be understood against the background of some other admissions they made, including 1) the “already-and-not-yet” distinction of the kingdom which was familiar to many,<sup>77</sup> 2) the view of some that the kingdom was essentially spiritual, and 3) the view of many in which the sufficiency for missionary work was found as present only in God and not in humans.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 8:201, cf. 138; see also *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 1:22, 33, 48, 97.

<sup>73</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 8:231 – the then Bishop of Southwark; cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 2:94.

<sup>74</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:70.

<sup>75</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 1:22, 33, 48. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:170. Also he noted that “the finality of the Christian ethic” does not mean that “we are infallibly guided in our attempts to set up in human society the Kingdom of God.” *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:171. It is also important to note the definitive change of language preferred by later conferences, especially, Jerusalem 1928. See Shivute, *The Theology of Mission*, 55.

<sup>76</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 1:22, 33, 48.

<sup>77</sup> See e.g. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:250. Here section IV notes that the kingdom’s true nature in only revealed by “our Lord’s absolute victory over death” but will ultimately find perfection in eternity; it is only now “very imperfectly revealed” in the church.

<sup>78</sup> E.g. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:331 – Bishop Brent; *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:254 – Robert Gairdner; God, the participants at Edinburgh confessed, was “the Divine Factor” and “the prime mover of the missionary enterprise.” *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 1:359, 356.

In one other way Edinburgh began adjustments in the Winner model. Though Edinburgh had originally summoned its conference with an intention not to discuss matters of faith and order, it did not get far into its deliberations before realizing that the question of a united mission was also that of visible unity in faith and life. Edinburgh, therefore, found out that its earlier position was inadequate and set in motion the forces that were later to lead to the formation of the Faith and Order Movement.<sup>79</sup> Many participants at the conference, convinced that the question of mission was also that of unity, highlighted the need for understanding the things that divided the church and those that united it; they were also concerned about possible ways of transcending the former. And this unity was important for the sake of the church's mission.<sup>80</sup> But in this way Edinburgh set in motion ecclesiological changes in the Winner model that were later to blossom. The idea of comity alone, which seemed to have dominated the earlier missionary conferences, was now being reshaped for the idea of a deeper visible unity.<sup>81</sup>

In summary, Edinburgh's understanding of the relationship of the church to the world was a carry-over from the nineteenth century. It involved the uniqueness of Christ and the superiority of Christianity over non-Christian religions and, therefore, the need to win non-Christian people for Christ by means of the gospel. Thus winning terminology – winning, conquest, army, etc – was commonly used to describe the church's relation with

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<sup>79</sup> See Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 15; Latourette, "Ecumenical Bearings," 1:360-361; see also Tissington Tatlow, "The World Conference on Faith and Order," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1:407.

<sup>80</sup>E.g. Lord Balfour of Burleigh and George Sherwood Eddy. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:143ff., 319ff; Bishop Montgomery, Eugene Stock, and R. Wardlaw Thompson, *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 8:213-216; see also *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 8:117, 133-137. Cf. Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 16.

<sup>81</sup> However, at Edinburgh representatives of both federal and organic unity were present as shown in the work of Commission VIII. See e.g. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 8:117-118 cf. 134-136; cf. 10.

the world. The church was clearly over-against the world. The concept of human brotherhood under the “Fatherhood” of God was seen as a missionary ideal, but this was found as possible only through faith in Christ and through the Christianization of the world. The concept of the kingdom of God expressed the eschatological bearing of the church’s mission and its social conception. But, as has also been noted, in at least five respects Edinburgh polished the old model without any significant departure from it. It maintained a comparatively more positive, though not radically different, view of truth in non-Christian religions. Second, it had begun to better realize the need for taking non-Western nations seriously because of their continued global influence. Third, it held together preaching and social work as both integral to the gospel. Fourth, it began processes towards reshaping the understanding of the nature of the “church” which is to be involved in united mission from merely one that engages in comity to one which actively seeks a deeper visible unity, including unity of faith. Fifth, it more clearly defined the concept of the kingdom of God as both a sociological conception and as one hinged upon redemption, thus making clearer the eschatological bearing of the church’s mission.

These minor modifications to the Winner model by Edinburgh were in the model’s socio-ethical and socio-political implications, its understanding of unity and its missionary posture. Further socio-ethical and socio-political reshaping of the Winner model took place at the student’s conference at Liverpool in 1912, and in the Life and Work conferences. Further ecclesiological shaping took place in Faith and Order conferences and further shaping in the missionary posture or evangelistic understanding of the model took place at the IMC conferences. These shapings of the model will be the

concern of the next three sections. Our intention is to make clearer the theological processes and changes which led to the final form that the Winner model took at the formation of the WCC at Amsterdam in 1948.

## **II. Ethical Shaping of the Winner Model**

The ethical shaping of the Winner model as it was inherited by the first assembly of the WCC at Amsterdam took place at Liverpool (1912), Stockholm (1925) and at Oxford (1938). Each of these conferences, while operating with the Winner model added some element to its understanding that further shaped it and set the ethical dimension of the church's mission in specific perspectives. At Liverpool (1912), the idea of "humanity" was used, not only as a missionary motive, but also as a general criterion for ecumenical ethics. At Stockholm, there was a conscious move to seek mission only in terms of the application of Christian socio-political principles. At Oxford, the Christian mission was defined in terms of the rise of totalitarian states and its ethical demands upon the church. However, apart from the ethical shaping that each of these conferences offered to the Winner model, they also contributed in other ways to the total understanding of the church's mission. I shall continue to limit my study to the church-world relation in each of these conferences and through this search attempt to define the specific ways that each conference shaped the emerging ecumenical model.

### **A. Liverpool 1912 and the Criterion of "Humanity"**

The ecumenical movement in the immediate post-Edinburgh years up to the formations of the International Missionary Council (1921), the Commission on Faith and Order (1927) and Life and Work movement (1925), was in a period of social, intellectual

and economic change on a global level.<sup>82</sup> Contemporaries freely described the period as a “crisis,” “catastrophe” and “confusion.”<sup>83</sup> This change was particularly reflected in the renewed emphasis on social issues, not only in the growing stream of the Social Gospel but also within the student movement. One conference where this was faced head-on was the Student Volunteer Missionary Union’s Conference at Liverpool in 1912 on “Foreign Missions and Social Problems.” If Edinburgh 1910 highlighted the need for the whole Home Church to be engaged in united mission, and discovered that the question of mission was also that of unity, Liverpool 1912 highlighted the social dimension as integral to the missionary task.<sup>84</sup>

Liverpool 1912, by its concentration upon social problems in the foreign mission fields, highlighted important dimensions of the ethical shaping of the Winner model. That the Winner model continued at Liverpool is clear from at least three factors. First is the continuation of the Winner language: “winning the world,” “winning of the Far East,” to “win China,” to “win India for Christ,” and other such expressions.<sup>85</sup> Second is the belief that the missionary enterprise was what would realize the “brotherhood” of

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<sup>82</sup> Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 165-166; E. Stanley Jones, et. al., *The Christian Message*, 15-91.

<sup>83</sup> See: e.g. A. G. Hogg, “Missionary Intercession and the Crisis” *International Review of Mission* 4 (1915): 248, 258; W. M. MacGregor, “The Quest for a Message,” *International Review of Mission* 4 (1915): 540-549.

<sup>84</sup> Though Edinburgh had begun to correct the nineteenth-century distinction between the “ultimate issues” and the “immediate issues” in mission, [cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 9:166 – Henry Sloan Coffin], the social only came to be seen as part of the core of the gospel at Liverpool.

<sup>85</sup> The addresses delivered at the conference are published as *Christ and Human Need: Being Addresses delivered at a Conference on Foreign Missions and Social Problems, Liverpool, Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, 1912* (London: Student Volunteer Missionary Union, s.a.), 77, 78, 85, – Cairns and Fraser.

humanity, the “Fatherhood” of God and the kingdom of God.<sup>86</sup> Third is the continuation of the integration between preaching and social engagement started at Edinburgh 1910. Liverpool took this on by insisting that both are included in the church’s one mission to the world.<sup>87</sup> Participants found an “intimate connexion” between “social facts and spiritual issues,” asserting that it is the preaching of “false prophets,” a preaching which is “false to the very core,” to suggest that “the social lies outside” the church’s domain.<sup>88</sup> In the view of these conference participants “serving Christ and humanity” was the “great emergency of the Spirit” for the time,<sup>89</sup> and “the service of mankind” was the “one Divine Service” for the church to undertake.<sup>90</sup> Evangelistic, social, and ethical issues were all “equally sacred” and “in truth all one.”<sup>91</sup> Fourth is the understanding of human unity as a Christocentric concept. This was expressed at Liverpool in the language of “brotherhood.” The Christocentrism of this concept was underscored by Bishop Brent in two ways. In one human “brotherhood” was Christocentric because it was the “core teaching of the cross” of Christ. And in the other it was Christocentric because it was only realizable by means of the transformation that comes through Christ, “when the Divine comes in to rescue and transform the human.”<sup>92</sup> It is a relationship that takes

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<sup>86</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 85 – A. G. Fraser; cf. *Christ and Human Need*, 159-161, 144, 54, – John Kelman, H. P. Cronshaw, and Gray.

<sup>87</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 77 – D. S. Cairns.

<sup>88</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 44 – Harry Bisseker.

<sup>89</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 78 – Cairns.

<sup>90</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 60 – A. H. Gray.

<sup>91</sup> These expressions were Cairns’s used in a context implying social and evangelistic services. See *Christ and Human Need*, 78 cf. *Christ and Human Need*, 206.

<sup>92</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 27 – Brent.

place by means of “the filial relation with God” since “[t]here is no meaning to brotherhood until we have been taught the meaning of fatherhood and sonship.”<sup>93</sup> Through this “brotherhood” established by Jesus, and because of the resurrection of Jesus from death, the church becomes “the earnest of the new world.”<sup>94</sup> Yet also, the Winner model was continued in the affirmation of the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ. Thus Jesus Christ was seen as “the central Figure of history,” who gives history its meaning and reality and is also “the Savior of Society.”<sup>95</sup>

Liverpool 1912, however, highlighted the concept of “humanity” as a criterion both of missions and ethics, and in so doing gave the Winner model a distinctive emphasis. Thus, in Asia Christian missionary work was necessary in order to avoid the “anarchy” and “human crisis” that would otherwise ensue due to the materialism introduced into the fabric of Asian lands by Western civilizations.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, the condition of the so-called “Backward races” “appeals to the best instincts of our humanity” and should therefore be reached.<sup>97</sup> This is a fresh emphasis of the humanitarian motive with which mission was done in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>98</sup> But at Liverpool this sense of the criterion of “humanity” was to guide the entire ethical life. Thus, human life was to be seen as “a trust to be used for the whole

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<sup>93</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 22-23 – Brent.

<sup>94</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 186, 187, 188 – Cairns.

<sup>95</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 22-23, 29-30 – Brent; *Christ and Human Need*, 78 – Cairns.

<sup>96</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 74-75 – Cairns.

<sup>97</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 115 – R. Wardlaw Thompson.,

<sup>98</sup> Van Den Berg shows elements of humanitarian motives in William Carey, Claudius Buchanan, and others. *Constrained by Jesus' Love*, 147-149; cf. Edward Caldwell Moore, *The Spread of Christianity in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), 43.



family” of humankind.<sup>99</sup> No action was Christian which was not undertaken in recognition of the rights and claims of the family of humanity and a self-subjection thereto.<sup>100</sup> What is important in one’s conduct is whether or not it has a favorable impact on the family of humanity. And it is when one is in right relation with humanity that one may claim right relation with God.<sup>101</sup> Industrial life is also to be shaped by this ethic.<sup>102</sup>

Liverpool 1912 also showed that there was a more realistic view of world religions emerging from ecumenical discussions. Whereas in the nineteenth century and even at Edinburgh the conviction was expressed that non-Christian religions would soon disappear under the force of Christianity, at Liverpool, as K. Axenfeld’s paper demonstrated, this confidence had begun to be shown to be unfounded, especially with respect to Islam.<sup>103</sup> And apparently some questions had begun to be raised as to whether or not the Mohammedan world should be evangelized. So, as the editor of the conference addresses noted, “Islam faced Christendom unshaken, scornfully conscious of more victories than defeats *and superior in unity!*”<sup>104</sup>

In these two respects, then, Liverpool 1912 reflects changes in the Winner model. It expressed its ethical emphasis in terms of the criterion of “humanity;” mission was to be undertaken not only for the sake of the Great Commission, but also because it is the

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<sup>99</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 47 – Gray.

<sup>100</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 47 – Gray.

<sup>101</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 47-48 – Gray.

<sup>102</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 66 - Temple; *Christ and Human Need*, 55; cf. 50-55 – Gray; cf. 60 – Temple.

<sup>103</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 97ff. – Axenfeld.

<sup>104</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 12 (emphasis in the text) – Introduction by the editor.

humanitarian thing to do. All aspects of life were to be shaped by this consideration of the good of humanity. The confidence in the fading off of non-Christian religions was now shaken especially by the rising strength of Islam. These changes notwithstanding, Liverpool 1912 on the whole continued the Winner model.

## **B. Stockholm 1925: The Church's Socio-Ethical Uniqueness**

The Winner model, bequeathed to the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century by Edinburgh 1910 was not only ethically shaped at Liverpool 1912, but also at the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work which met at Stockholm in 1925. The Life and Work Council was created as a response to the devastations of the First World War and the other issues of global crisis in the second and third decades of the twentieth century.<sup>105</sup> It was also a response to the socio-ethical problems especially in economic, social and civic matters, which appeared to threaten the future of civilization.<sup>106</sup> The conviction was that all these problems called for the church's credible witness in life and

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<sup>105</sup> See Professor Yngve Brilioth's article on the History of the Conference in G. K. A. Bell, ed., *The Stockholm Conference, 1925: The Official Report of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work held in Stockholm, 19-30 August, 1925* (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1926), 2-12 (Hereafter cited as *Stockholm 1925 Report*); Edward Shillito, *Life and Work: The Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work Held in Stockholm, 1925* (New York, Toronto, etc.: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1926), 3-6; cf. Charles S. Macfarland, *Steps Toward the World Council of Churches: Origins of the Ecumenical Movement as Expressed in the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work*, intro. Adolf Keller (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1938), 1-28. Macfarland traces the steps that led to Stockholm from the interchanges of churchmen of Great Britain and Germany, 1907-1910, to several activities culminating in Stockholm. He notes in particular the efforts of Dr. Nathan Soederblom, the archbishop of Uppsala. The role of the war in the strengthening of Christian solidarity he calls "an illustration of the divine law of compensation coming out of the War" (pp. 26-27; see also 29-90, esp. 88-90). Participants at Stockholm severally made reference to the War and its effect on their meeting. See, e.g., *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 56ff. and 180.

<sup>106</sup> The report of the special Commission on Co-operative Movements, cited in Macfarland, *Steps Toward the World Council*, 91.

work both to the oneness of the church of Christ<sup>107</sup> and to the oneness of humankind, and both understood as “the *fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all peoples*.”<sup>108</sup>

Stockholm believed that the Christian distinctive in social ethics lies in the “spiritual ideal” of the kingdom of God which it possesses, and which is lacking in the secular efforts towards world peace.<sup>109</sup> Stockholm was, therefore, a conference in which the Christian ethical distinctive was shown to lie in its eschatological bearing.<sup>110</sup> Society was not to be changed realistically apart from the ideal of the kingdom of God. At Stockholm, however, there was no agreement on how this kingdom was to shape human society.<sup>111</sup> One group emphasized the kingdom as an entirely spiritual reality, qualitatively different from the order of creation; even though it comes into contact with creation and affects social relationships and fellowships, it belongs entirely to the realm of redemption.<sup>112</sup> This view, is a reflection of the Lutheran concept of the two kingdoms. Another view, closer to the Reformed position, held that there is a divine purpose at work

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. the hope of the conference for its Continuation Committee as expressed in its Message, *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 715: “May we not hope that through the work of this body [the Continuation Committee], and through the increasing fellowship and co-operation of the Christians of all nations in the one Spirit, our oneness in Christ may be more and more revealed to the world in Life and Work?”

<sup>108</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 18 – the Official Letter of Invitation (emphasis already in the text).

<sup>109</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 417.

<sup>110</sup> Stockholm has been generally seen as too idealistic partly due to the influence of the Social Gospel (with its assured confidences as to how the world should go) and was not sufficiently abreast with the sinfulness of its own time. Also, Stockholm was so naïve as to hold the view that doctrine divides but service unites; it did not get far into its deliberations to see the difficulties of making a formidable ethical impact as a result of different conceptions of the relation between the church and the kingdom. *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 711; cf. John C. Bennett, “Breakthrough in Ecumenical Social Ethics: the Legacy of the Oxford Conference on Church, Community, and State (1937),” *The Ecumenical Review* 40/2 (April 1998):132-146; Paul Abrecht, “From Oxford to Vancouver: Lessons from Fifty Years of Ecumenical Work for Economic and Social Justice,” *The Ecumenical Review* 40/2 (April 1998):147-168.

<sup>111</sup> Shillito, *Life and Work*, 18.

<sup>112</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 74-76 – Bishop Ludwig Ihmels.

in the world and in human history with which the church is called to cooperate, and that “the ideal goal of that purpose is a human society worthy of man’s capabilities.”<sup>113</sup> It is humans who “can hinder or help, delay or advance the fulfillment of God’s purpose.”<sup>114</sup> A third group, however, attempted to mediate between the first two views, insisting on a balance between the fact of human fallenness, which is the strength of the first view, and the call of God upon the church to do its best in society in spite of human fallenness, which is the strength of the second view.<sup>115</sup> Despite these differences in perspective, however, all saw a place for the church’s social involvement in the world.<sup>116</sup>

Christian ethical involvement was to be manifested in all spheres of life. It was to be manifested in the overcoming of provincialism and sectarianism. It was to be manifested in industry in the spirit of Christ rather than an acquisitive spirit; that is, the managing and conducting of industry and property for the good of the community rather than personal profit. It was to be manifested in the bridging of opposition between capital and labor and between the spiritual and the material. And it was to be manifested in the “humanizing of humanity” in “a just and fraternal social order” that will ensure the opportunity for “the development, according to God’s design, of the full manhood of every man.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 157 – Sir William Ashley.

<sup>114</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 85-93, esp. 88 – A. E. Garvie.

<sup>115</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 108-109, 109-115 – Rt. Rev. Jens Glenditsh; 159-160 – Sir William Ashley; 137 – Licentiate Steinweg.

<sup>116</sup> Shillito, *Life and Work*, 19-21.

<sup>117</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 50 – Arthur J. Brown; 198 – Worth M. Tippy; 712; cf. 130 – D. Kähler; cf. 712, 715 – Message; 55-56 – Wilfred Monod.

Whereas Stockholm was not very fond of the “winning” language, it was not completely absent. But the socio-ethical was emphasized rather than the traditional sense of conversion to Christ. Thus the church was “to capture the minds of men for the corporate view of life” and “to liberate the captive personalities of men.”<sup>118</sup> But the Winner ideas dominated the entire conference: Jesus Christ was “Savior and Lord” and the conference message declared that “[i]n the Crucified and Risen Lord alone lies the world’s hope.”<sup>119</sup> The unity of humankind or the “brotherhood” of humanity was understood Christologically. As Garvie put it, in order that God might “realize His Fatherhood, man must be reconciled to God, and redeemed from sin” and this is “by the power of the Holy Spirit given to all united to Christ by faith as Savior and Lord.”<sup>120</sup>

In two ways, then, Stockholm, seems to have contributed to the ethical shaping of the Winner model. First of all it showed that the Christian socio-ethical uniqueness lies in the concept of the kingdom of God, which spiritual ideal secular bodies lacked. Secondly, it showed that the concept of the kingdom of God was not monolithically understood, but was in fact taken from at least three perspectives: those who saw it as a spiritual reality, those who saw it in human societies and those who mediated between the first two. Thirdly, in choosing to pursue the ethical principles of the kingdom of God alone, rather than the whole gospel as defined by Liverpool 1912, Stockholm seems to

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<sup>118</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 101-102 – the archbishop of Dublin.

<sup>119</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 715-716 – The Message of the Conference. As W. A. Visser’t Hooft points out, the Executive Committee planning the Stockholm conference was of the erroneous opinion that there was no need for any common starting point or common conviction concerning the nature of Christian unity and mission in their position that doctrine divides, but service unites. The Stockholm Conference’s stand on the importance of the centrality of Christ is a good corrective of this error. *No Other Name: The Choice Between Syncretism and Christian Universalism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 100-101. The phrase quoted was from a letter to Gardiner from the Executive Committee in August 1922, cited by Visser’t Hooft.

exemplify a view of mission as social services alone, which view stands different from the missionary tradition in which social engagement was secondary to preaching the Word. Stockholm, however, did not claim that its pursuit of the ways of application of the ethical principles of the gospel is the totality of the Christian gospel.

### C. Oxford 1937: Humankind and Totalitarian States

Whereas Liverpool highlighted the criteria of the 'human' in personal and social ethics, and Stockholm showed that the church's socio-ethical uniqueness was in the spiritual ideal of the kingdom of God, the 1937 Life and Work conference at Oxford struggled with the relationship between the church and the state. The First World War had resulted in a state of tension which found new expressions in "resurgent nationalism, in selfish isolation or in antagonistic national groupings, in rearmament on a colossal scale," and in universal fear of yet another war.<sup>121</sup> Totalitarian national states arose in nations like Germany, Italy, Turkey and Mexico and claimed the power to determine the faith and conduct of their peoples and serve as alternatives to the Christian religion. In addition to this, as Eric Fenn notes, there was "a great chasm" between "the faith of the Church and the life of mankind," and with it came a weakening of the accepted moral standards of the past.<sup>122</sup> It was in this context that the Life and Work conference at

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<sup>120</sup> *Stockholm 1925 Report*, 89.

<sup>121</sup> J. H. Oldham, ed., *The Oxford Conference (Official Report)* (Chicago & New York: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937), 151; cf. Nils Ehrenström's chapter I "the Challenge of the Modern State" in Nils Ahrenström, *Christian Faith and the Modern State: an Ecumenical Approach*, trans. Denzil Patrick and Olive Wyon (Chicago and New York: Willett, Clark and Co., 1937), 1-6; on different positions on the relationship between church and state in the period of totalitarian states see Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, eds. and trans., *Church and State Through the Centuries: A Collection of Historic Documents with Commentaries* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1954), 378-617.

<sup>122</sup> Eric Fenn, *That They Go Forward: An Impression of the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State* (London: SCM Press, 1938), 26; cf. *Oxford 1937 Report*, 55 – Report of Section I.

Oxford in 1937 was convened to reflect upon the relation of the church to the emerging modern states. Oxford's basic assumption was that all theories of the state depended upon a definite understanding of humanity held. They found this clearly illustrated in Marxism, Nazism, Fascism, and in the naturalistic philosophers, the Mussolinis, and the humanistic Freethinkers.<sup>123</sup> Thus, the intention of the preparation for the conference was to search for what may be considered a Christian understanding of humanity, apart and distinct from the many other views of the time, an understanding which would inform a Christian perspective on the nature of the state and the relation of the church to it.

Oxford's response in the face of these challenges was to clearly affirm its conviction that humanity can only be understood in terms of its relationship to God. For the participants at the conference humanity's true worth exists in this relatedness to God. This relationship existed at creation, but as a result of humanity's fall into sin, this relatedness was broken at root. Humankind's problems of racism, division and war therefore exist because of humanity's attempt to exclude God from its realities.<sup>124</sup> Because of humanity's fall into sin, the bridging of human brokenness does not and cannot be by human "aspiration but by the love of God."<sup>125</sup> The solution to human brokenness is not in humankind's "native worth and dignity," which have been "largely obscured" by sin, but in "the Christian revelation of God's purpose to restore that dignity

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<sup>123</sup> Henry Smith Leiper, *World Chaos or World Christianity: A Popular Interpretation of Oxford and Edinburgh 1937* (Chicago & New York: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937), 12-17; *Oxford 1937 Report*, 1-2, 21, 36-38; Fenn, *That They Go Forward*, 21, 26ff.

<sup>124</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 59-61 – Report of Section I; 213ff – Additional Report of Section I.

<sup>125</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 153 – Report of Section V.

through the redemption that is in Christ.”<sup>126</sup> This means that the “fundamental need” of humankind is in true fellowship with God through the change of life which Jesus brings and it is by means of this individual change that society will be changed.<sup>127</sup> This is no call for individualism<sup>128</sup> but to state, as J. H. Oldham put it elsewhere, that if the Christian faith in the present and in the future is to bring about changes in the thought, habits and practices of society:

it can do so only through being the living, working faith of multitudes of lay men and women conducting the ordinary affairs of life. The only way in which the Christian faith can affect business or politics is by shaping the convictions and determining the actions of those engaged in business and politics.<sup>129</sup>

The task of the church, in this context, was therefore to direct humanity to this understanding of its true worth. And it is to do this by being “in its own life that fellowship which binds men together in their common dependence on God” and to exemplify the oneness of the source of human worth by overcoming, in its life and fellowship, all barriers of social status, race and nationality.<sup>130</sup> It is only in this way that the church can boldly “call the nations to order their lives as members of the one family of God” in the midst of the polarizations of people, race and class.<sup>131</sup> When the church becomes “in very deed the church – confessing the true faith, committed to the fulfillment of the will of Christ, its only Lord, and united in him in fellowship of love and

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<sup>126</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 75-76 – Report of Section II.

<sup>127</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 154 – Report of Section V.

<sup>128</sup> As clearly noted in Oldham’s summary of Maury/Brunner’s position. See *Oxford 1937 Report*, 30; cf. e.g. Emil Brunner in *The Christian Understanding of Man*, 167-178.

<sup>129</sup> J. H. Oldham in *The Church and its Function in Society*, 105.

<sup>130</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 47.



service” it fulfills its “first duty” and “greatest service to the world.”<sup>132</sup> Thus, in Oxford’s view, the church was to change society by being within its very life and fellowship an example of human relatedness to God through Christ. This was also to be the goal of the church’s labor among its members, through whom society was to be changed.

The view of the participants at Oxford with respect to the relationship between the church and the state varied in emphasis depending upon the understanding of the kingdom of God operating within each viewpoint. As shown in J. H. Oldham’s summary,<sup>133</sup> these views were essentially along the three divisions already expressed at Stockholm. Those who saw the kingdom as essentially spiritual saw in the state nothing of the kingdom of God. Those who saw the kingdom as present in human society saw the state as a possible manifestation of the kingdom. Those mediating between these two views saw elements of the kingdom in elements of the state in so far as they arise from the changed lives and changed ethics of the church. But in spite of the differences in these views, they were all agreed that the church was not to be directly involved with the state even though the church’s ministry relates to the state. They were also agreed that no secular institution, not even the League of Nations, should be identified with Christian

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<sup>131</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 47.

<sup>132</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 45, cf. 48; 56-57 – Report of Section I.

<sup>133</sup> See J. H. Oldham’s introduction in *Oxford 1937 Report*, 27-34. For a more comprehensive view of the unanimity and divergences, see the following preparatory documents to Oxford: *The Christian Understanding of Man; The Kingdom of God and History; Christian Faith and the Common Life; Church and Community; Church, Community and State in Relation to Education; and The Universal Church and the World of Nations*; all published in Chicago and New York by Willett, Clark and Co., 1938, and in London by George Allen & Unwin, 1938. Some contributions of these person’s whose views Oldham summarizes are present in these volumes; Oldham also did a some more work on the differences of these positions in W. A. Visser’t Hooft and J. H. Oldham, *The Church and its Function in Society* (Chicago and New York: Willet, Clark and Co., 1937), 108-139.

hope.<sup>134</sup> Though the church in its present state is caught in the corruptions of the world,<sup>135</sup> it is, nevertheless, with respect to the world, “the trustee of God’s redeeming gospel” and “‘a colony of heaven’ in a fallen world” showing in its life and example the true way of human living.<sup>136</sup> The church is to shape the ethics of society and the state is “the guarantor of order, justice and civil liberty.”<sup>137</sup> It is in this way that the church and the state are to stand in relation to one another. No aspects of societal life may claim divinity and no nation may divinize itself. God alone has sole authority. Nations and political systems are servants of God.

Oxford has been shown to be different from Stockholm in two ways. One, Oxford was more realistic (over against Stockholm’s idealism) about the church’s appropriation of the ideal of the kingdom. The church, Oxford notes, can only appropriate this ideal in ambiguity because of its sinfulness. Secondly, Oxford recommended inter-disciplinary studies for social ethics, which recommendation will later be most significantly appropriated by the Church and Society meeting at Geneva in 1966.<sup>138</sup>

From all of Oxford’s views it is clear that the operating model was the Winner. There were clear declarations concerning many of the elements of the model: the

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<sup>134</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 155f.

<sup>135</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 45, 68-69 – Section II.

<sup>136</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 69 – Report of Section II; cf. *Oxford 1937 Report*, 187-188 – Additional Report of Section I.

<sup>137</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 69 – Report of Section II.

<sup>138</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 77; cf. Abrecht, “From Oxford to Vancouver,” 148-150; Konrad Raiser, “Growing into the Ecumenical Covenant: Reflections on the Occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1925 Stockholm Conference,” in Wolfgang R. Schmidt, ed., *Catalysing Hope for Justice: a Tribute to C. I. Itty* (Geneva: WCC, 1987), 50-57; Bennett, “Breakthrough in Ecumenical Social Thought,” 132-146.

uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ for humanity was unambiguously stated; the uniqueness of Christian ethics in view of the ideal of the kingdom of God was clearly affirmed; the need for human return to God through Christ was made; and “the secret of true unity among men” was shown to exist only in “Christ, and the union of man with God and of man with man which he creates.”<sup>139</sup> Even though the Winner terminology was not in much use, it was not completely absent.<sup>140</sup> Oxford’s contribution to the ethical definition of the Winner model lies in its definition of humankind in relation to God, in its belief that societal problems are the result of human sin and attempt to be independent from God, and in its definition of societal change as possible only through faith in Jesus Christ and the Christian church. Oxford also is significant in pointing to the need for interdisciplinary studies for Christian ethics.

In summary then, the Winner model, inherited by Edinburgh 1910 from the nineteenth century missionary movements, and bequeathed to the WCC formed at Amsterdam in 1948, was ethically shaped through several key conferences. The particular conferences which shaped the ethical emphasis were the conference of the Students Volunteer Mission at Liverpool in 1912 on the relation between foreign missions and social problems; the conferences of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work at Stockholm in 1925 and at Oxford in 1937. Liverpool 1912 emphasized social action as integral to the gospel and highlighted the place of the criterion of “the human” for mission and social ethics. Stockholm showed that the socio-ethical uniqueness of the church is the result of the “spiritual ideal” of the kingdom of God by

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<sup>139</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report*, 56 – Report of Section I; *Oxford 1937 Report*, 51.

<sup>140</sup> See e.g. *Oxford 1937 Report*, 31 – J. H. Oldham.

which it is guided. Oxford 1937 saw that a true understanding of humankind was important for social ethics. It found humanity as related to God and the problems facing humanity as the result of human attempts at independence from God. It is the church's task to call humanity back to this understanding of its relatedness to God. Oxford pointed to the place of interdisciplinary studies for Christian ethics.

Each of these conferences operated with the Winner model but gave it their particular emphasis. Though the winner language was not much in use at Stockholm and Oxford, perhaps because of the socio-ethical emphasis in these conferences, it was nevertheless not completely absent. But other elements of the Winner model continued. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his universal relevance for life and society was maintained. The possibility of and requirement for societal change through Christ and the church was emphasized. The healing of human brokenness and the realization of the unity of humankind was asserted as possible only through Christ and Christianity. While especially Stockholm and Oxford reflected varying conceptions of the kingdom of God, they were all clear on the uniqueness of the Christian socio-ethical engagement as lying in the concept of the kingdom of God. While these three conferences contributed to the Winner model in terms of ethics, the ecclesiological and evangelistic shaping of the model was to be in other conferences and these will be examined in the next two sections of this chapter.

### **III. Ecclesiological Shaping of the Winner Model**

Whereas Liverpool 1912, Stockholm 1925 and Oxford 1937 conferences shaped the Winner model in terms of its ethical and socio-political implications, the Faith and Order conferences at Lausanne 1927 and Edinburgh 1937 shaped the Winner model's

understanding of the church. These latter conferences did this by attempting to define the nature and ministry of the church which is to be engaged in mission and by attempting to wrestle with differences in the faith and order of the Christian churches. The belief was that God wills a deeper unity than comity for the church and that the way to attempt to realize this unity within the church was through dialogue. It was also believed that the church's disunity was a great hindrance to the church's mission. Through an attempt to better understand the views that differ from one's own, the church was to move into greater unity. Hence the comparative methodology in which the beliefs and practices of the different denominations and theological persuasions were compared with a view to better understanding.<sup>141</sup> Faith and Order discussions at Lausanne defined the church's message to the world and Edinburgh defined the place of the church in God's redemptive purpose for humanity. Lausanne and Edinburgh were therefore important in defining the kind of church which is to be engaged in mission and, thereby, effected ecclesiological understandings that profoundly shaped the Winner model.

#### **A. Lausanne 1927: The Church with a Message**

When the World Missionary Conference gathered at Edinburgh in 1910, the conference originally resolved not to allow questions of faith and order engage its attention, but it did not move far into its deliberations to realize that the question of mission was also that of unity. This realization found fruition at the Faith and Order conference held at Lausanne in 1927. This conference gathered to compare beliefs of the different churches, strengthening their agreements and sincerely probing their

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<sup>141</sup> See Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, part I for details of this method and the ways it was transcended in the Amsterdam and post-Amsterdam years.

disagreements.<sup>142</sup> Since the nineteenth century, the place of the church in God's purposes for humanity had not been in doubt, but the place of the church's unity in faith and order for the credibility of the church's mission was not emphasized until Edinburgh's discovery of the inter-relation between the church's unity and its mission. Now at Lausanne the churches were attempting, for the first time, to confront their divisions together for the purpose of effectively carrying out the mission that God has committed to the church.<sup>143</sup> This was the particular emphasis of the Winner model that was being shaped in the Faith and Order Movement: the church was understanding in a more realistic way the need for its unity in faith and order for the successful accomplishment of God's call upon it.

Lausanne understood the church as called into being by God alone, using human will merely as an "instrument;" Jesus Christ is its "Head" and the Holy Spirit "its continuing life."<sup>144</sup> The church is one because "there is but one Christ, and one life in Him, and one Holy Spirit who guides into all truth."<sup>145</sup> The church's oneness also depends upon the indestructible nature of the "Unity of God" which is "the supreme

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<sup>142</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, vii-x, 459; cf. Edwards S. Woods, *Lausanne 1927: An Interpretation of the World Conference on Faith and Order Held at Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927* with an intro. by His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927), 25-34. Woods noted that "the dominating thing about Lausanne was the general consciousness from first to last that we were all not just nominally but *really* 'one in Christ.'" [p. 29, emphasis his]; cf. Edmund Soper, *Lausanne: The Will to Understand* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1928), 1-135.

<sup>143</sup> Edward S. Woods, *Lausanne 1927: An Interpretation of the World Conference on Faith and Order Held at Lausanne August 3-21, 1927* (London: SCM Press, 1927), 53.

<sup>144</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 463.

<sup>145</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 464. The Bishop of Amagh says: "The Unity of the body depends upon the unity of the Spirit which animates it." *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 25.

Unity which dominates, pervades and penetrates the universal order.”<sup>146</sup> However, in the church’s present life, and as a result of its sins,<sup>147</sup> there is division. Yet God wills unity for the church and calls upon it to pursue unity. Lausanne thus highlighted this call of God upon the church in spite of the church’s lack of agreement on the nature and meaning of this unity.<sup>148</sup> The church is to seek unity because of its mission.<sup>149</sup> Unity is “the unalterable condition on which” Jesus “can fulfill His mission to mankind,” and on unity “depends our ability to know Jesus Christ in full splendour, to do His works, to evangelise the nations.” The church’s divisions make “Christianity contradict itself as a world religion,” “lower the level of its life,” “disorganize its proper functions” and “weaken its power in the face of the tremendous forces which oppose its world-wide mission.”<sup>150</sup>

The mission of the church is to be “God’s chosen instrument” for the reconciliation of humanity to God. For this task, the church is to live as a new humanity

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<sup>146</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 23f. – The Archbishop of Armagh, Anglican Primate of Ireland.

<sup>147</sup> Though all would agree that the church’s divisions are the result of sin, some apparently found some good in the church’s divisions and were therefore not prepared to blame it all on sin. *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 466; cf. Stockholm’s position in Macfarland, *Steps Towards the World Council*, 90-91.

<sup>148</sup> “1. Some hold that the invisible Church is wholly in heaven; others include in it all true believers on earth, whether contained in any organization or not. 2. Some hold that the visible expression of the Church was determined by Christ Himself and is therefore unchangeable; others that the one Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may express itself in varying forms. 3. Some hold that one or other of the existing Churches is the only true Church; others that the Church as we have described it is to be found in some or all of the existing Communion taken together. 4. Some, while recognizing other Christian bodies as Churches, are persuaded that in the providence of God and by the teaching of history a particular form of ministry has been shown to be necessary to the best welfare of the Church; others hold that no one form of organization is inherently preferable; still others, that no organization is necessary.” *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 465; for a discussion of the details of the agreements and disagreements at Lausanne, see Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 83-91.

<sup>149</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 460-461, 468.

<sup>150</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 4, 7, 8 – Bishop C. H. Brent; *Lausanne 1927 Report* 25 – Archbishop of Armagh and Anglican Primate of Ireland.

in the world with a message from God for the whole of humanity. It is in the message the church bears to humanity that Lausanne distinguishes its contribution to the Winner model, as it emphasized the uniqueness of Christ especially in the light of the emerging secularism of the time.<sup>151</sup> The church's one message to the world, Lausanne declared, is the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ, that is, "the joyful message of redemption, both here and hereafter, the gift of God to sinful man in Jesus Christ."<sup>152</sup> This message, as many pointed out, is essentially the same for all times and all peoples, in spite of differences in apprehension and presentation; it concerns both individuals and society and relates not only to the past but also to the present and the future.<sup>153</sup> This message is committed to the church "to be held in trust for all our brother-men."<sup>154</sup> Thus, as Ruppell observes, Lausanne saw the function of the church as anticipatory.<sup>155</sup> In this way Lausanne conceived of the church as the new humanity through which God transforms the world and gives to the world the one gospel of Jesus Christ. The Winner element that is present here is to be noted, especially as it appears in the understanding of the church as the bearer of the message of the world's salvation. This conviction was so strong that even secular bodies geared towards unity were believed to need the church for their success.

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<sup>151</sup> Jerusalem 1928 was later to depend upon Lausanne's lead for its position on the witness of the church to the world. *The Jerusalem Meeting of the of the International Missionary Council, March 24-April 8, 1928* (New York: IMC, 1928), 1: 406. Hereafter cited as *Jerusalem 1928 Report*.

<sup>152</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 461. Woods notes that on this matter the conference was in "absolute agreement." *Lausanne 1927*, 36.

<sup>153</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 43-105 – various speakers.

<sup>154</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 79 – Dr. William Adams Brown of Union Theological Seminary, New York.

<sup>155</sup> Ruppell, *Einheit ist Unteilbar*, 85.



This was the conviction of Eugene Choisy of the University of Geneva concerning the League of Nations.<sup>156</sup>

Lukas Vischer has observed, and very rightly so, that many ecumenical statements “say so little” because they are “phrased so vaguely” that they are evidence “less of unity than of division.”<sup>157</sup> Vischer goes on to suggest that Lausanne’s message was unclear on the meaning of the “Gospel of Jesus Christ.” However, this does not seem to be so. In the first place the diverse speakers in the conference made clear and specific contributions concerning the content of the Christian message to the world, and the ensuing discussions did not reveal any essential or significant disagreement.<sup>158</sup> Even the responses from the churches that were later collated showed, on the whole, very impressive unanimity on this subject.<sup>159</sup> In the second place the conference’s statement clearly spelled out the content of the message to include the life and teachings, death and resurrection, exultation to God’s right hand of Jesus Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the statement asserts, is “the crucified and living One,” the “Savior and

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<sup>156</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 31.

<sup>157</sup> Lukas Vischer, ed., *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1963), 9.

<sup>158</sup> Some would have preferred a wider content than others e.g. Francis J. Hall, Friedrich Gogarten, and Nicolas Arseniew. *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 101-102, 104. Contrast Arseniew’s demand for the church as part of the gospel with Monod’s somewhat different view *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 92. Some others would have loved emphasis to be placed on some point of doctrine, e.g. Dr. Samuel Zwemer, Dr. Nicholas Arseniew, Rev. D. N. Furnajieff and Bishop Cannon. *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 104-105. Yet others saw it a more thorough synthesis between individual salvation and social change, e.g. Dr. Lofthouse. *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 105. But no significant disagreement was expressed on the fact that the gospel concerns the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and its implication for human salvation.

<sup>159</sup> See Leonard Hodgson, H. N. Bate, Ralph W. Brown, eds., *Convictions: A Selection from the Responses of the Churches to the Report of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Held at Lausanne in 1927* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1934). Some comments about additions that would have been preferred were noted by some churches, especially the Society of Friends, the Lutherans in both Germany and America and the Church of Norway. Cf. pp. 28, 141, 147, 167, etc. The Church of Scotland considered

Lord” and “He Himself is the Gospel.” He has revealed “the fulness of the living God” and, in love, calls humankind to serve both God and humanity.<sup>160</sup> The work of God’s Spirit in all humanity in the ages and cultures before Christ, especially in Judaism, was acknowledged only as “a preparation” for Christ’s coming.<sup>161</sup> What the Spirit is doing now among non-Christian humanity was neither expounded upon nor pursued, but the gospel was declared to be “a gracious invitation to the non-Christian world, East and West, to enter into the joy of the living Lord” and was “the sure source of power for social regeneration,” being no mere “programme for material betterment.”<sup>162</sup> The gospel is adequate for “the longing for intellectual sincerity, social justice and spiritual inspiration” of the time,<sup>163</sup> and by means of it, and through the church, God summons all to “the new life of faith, self-sacrifice, and devotion to His service and the service of men.”<sup>164</sup>

Whereas Lausanne has been said to accomplish “[v]ery little” in its efforts to reconcile the churches’ views,<sup>165</sup> it was no failure in the ecclesiological shaping of the Winner model. At Lausanne, the church emphasized the importance of pursuing unity

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the conference’s affirmation of only one gospel “the notable achievement of the Lausanne Conference.” p. 84.

<sup>160</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 462. This does not mean that the participating churches all agree on the meaning of each of these affirmations, (no human affirmation, even within the most conservative of denominations, has the same meaning for each and everyone). But it does mean that the conference did not remain unclear about what was to be shared with the world as the Christian message. To claim lack of clarity in the sense that people differed in details is to trivialize the point being made. See in its implication with reference to this matter, Wilfred Monod’s first sentence in his delivery at Lausanne. *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 88-89.

<sup>161</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 461-462.

<sup>162</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 462.

<sup>163</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 463.

<sup>164</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 462.

for its mission. The old idea which emphasized comity and did not face the church's division in faith and order was now being transcended at Lausanne. As the new humanity within the world, the church is to be the leaven which leavens the whole of humanity and draws persons of all nations and races into its one fellowship. It is to do this by the power of the Holy Spirit, by whom it is to present Jesus to the world as its gospel and as the world's one and only savior. In Lausanne's emphasis on unity as essential to mission and in its spelling out of the one gospel which the church bears to all humanity, it added to the shaping of the Winner model ecclesiologically.

#### **B. Edinburgh 1937: The Church as the Sphere of Redemption**

The attempt to understand the church's divisions at Lausanne 1927 was furthered at the Faith and Order conference at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1937, which clarified and elaborated on the implications of Lausanne's findings.<sup>166</sup> Lausanne 1927 had seen the need to highlight the church's one message to the world and Edinburgh 1937 was faced with the problem of defining how the church stands with reference to God's redemption in the world. The ecumenical family had been freshly confronted by the socio-cultural setting in which the church was to bear its witness to Jesus Christ, and it expressed its understanding of the church's relation to the world in terms that recognized that socio-economic and cultural issues were important to the Christian life and message. It regretted that in spite of the deepened intercourse between different parts of the world, the world was still experiencing "growth in the evil of racialism and of nationalism based upon race," "the paradox of poverty in the midst of an attainable plenty," "the universal

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<sup>165</sup> Soper, *Lausanne: the Will to Understand*, 135.

fear of impending war,” and other such evils. In the context of these evils, the church’s witness could only be effective when done in unity and by the power of God.<sup>167</sup> Hence Edinburgh’s fresh probe into the issues of faith and order confronting the churches and its attempt to relate them to its time.

Edinburgh 1937, while still affirming Lausanne’s position that the church’s divisions are to a large extent the result of different understandings of the church, went on to see the church as “the household of God, the family in which the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is to be realized in the children of His adoption.”<sup>168</sup> Like earlier conferences, Edinburgh 1937 stressed the unity of humanity and found this possible only through Christ. Thus, Dr. Leiper could say that for the church “the unity of humankind is not an aspiration but a fact.”<sup>169</sup> The church’s place in the world is unique because through its life and witness Jesus reveals God’s purpose for humanity. Thus, rather than locating redemption in all places with the name of religion, the church was declared as “the sphere of redemption” apart from which humans “cannot normally attain full knowledge of God nor worship Him in truth.”<sup>170</sup> This does not mean that there is no truth about God which may be found outside the church but that in the church this truth exists in fullness. Thus, although the grace of God is most clearly manifested in the redemption in Christ, it is also manifested “in our creation, preservation and all the

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<sup>166</sup> Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 102.

<sup>167</sup> *Edinburgh 1937 Report*, 42-49 – The statement of the Continuation Committee read by Dr. Henry Smith Leiper.

<sup>168</sup> *Edinburgh 1937 Report*, 230.

<sup>169</sup> *Edinburgh 1937 Report*, 47.

<sup>170</sup> *Edinburgh 1937 Report*, 231.

blessings of this life.”<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, “all the truth of God’s redemptive purpose for men is fully and sufficiently contained” only in Christ and it is this “one truth revealed in Christ” which the Holy Spirit applies to the different circumstances of each age.<sup>172</sup> Apart from the Christian gospel which “has in trust the Truth,” “there is no other truth on which mankind can live;” it is this gospel “which alone can help and heal” the need of the world.<sup>173</sup>

Evidently, then, Edinburgh 1937 continued the Winner model. It defined the church as the sphere of redemption and clearly asserted the uniqueness of Christ and of the church. It saw human unity as possible only in Christ. It also held to the superiority of Christianity over non-Christian religions and ideologies including the totalitarian states. It continued the tradition of seeing non-Christian religions as a *praeparatio evangelica* (a preparation for the gospel) of Christ. Some did object to the possibility of this idea in non-Christian religions, convinced that revelation is present only in Jesus Christ as witnessed to in the Christian Scripture. This was one clear evidence of Barthian influence within the ecumenical thinking of the time. Nevertheless, like earlier conferences, and like the Barmen Declaration of 1934, Edinburgh 1937 denied that “there is a revelation *outside* Christ which can be put on the same level as the revelation *in* Christ.”<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *Edinburgh 1937 Report*, 224.

<sup>172</sup> *Edinburgh 1937 Report*, 234, 235.

<sup>173</sup> *Edinburgh 1937 Report*, 47 – Dr. Leiper.

<sup>174</sup> *Edinburgh 1937 Report*, 228f. cf. *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:178. E.g., the view was expressed that “[f]rom a doctrinal standpoint . . . the most important *praeparatio evangelica* is to be found along the lines of Hindu Theism” tracking it back to the Rig Veda. Also, some held that “the non-Christian religions are not wholly of man,” being places where some “elements of truth” may be found, though

Thus, whereas the ethical and socio-political aspects of the Winner model were especially shaped by the conferences at Liverpool (1912), Stockholm (1925), and Oxford (1937), the understanding of the church which is to be involved in mission was pursued at Lausanne (1927) and Edinburgh (1937). In both of these latter conferences the place of the life, ministry and unity of the church for the unity of humankind was undeniably clear. And in both the place of the church in the mission of God in the world was also clear. At Lausanne 1927 the church was seen as the bearer of the one and only gospel, and at Edinburgh 1937 the church was pronounced as the sphere of redemption. Also, the revelation of God in Christ given to the church was believed to be the fullness of truth that God reveals to humanity. In these ways both Faith and Order conferences emphasized the place of the church and its unity in the realization of the ultimate unity of humankind. By this clarification of the church's role in human unity, both Lausanne 1927 and Edinburgh 1937 shaped the Winner model ecclesiologically. This idea of the church already developing at Lausanne and Edinburgh would later be brought into a new emphasis at the IMC at Madras 1938.

#### **IV. Evangelistic Shaping of the Winner Model**

The model of the relationship between the church and the world which Edinburgh 1910 inherited from the ecumenical missionary movements of the nineteenth century, and which it bequeathed to the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century, was not only shaped ethically and ecclesiologically, but it was also shaped evangelistically. By

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“mixed up with folly and superstition,” and therefore evidences of the “gift of God” among them, “preparations for the coming of His fuller revelation in Jesus Christ” and, like Judaism, “shadows of the good things to come” *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:94-96; cf. The Barmen Theological Declaration, article 1, in Rolf Ahlers, *The Barmen Theological Declaration of 1934: The Archeology of a Confessional Text*, Toronto Studies in Theology, vol. 24 (Lewiston/Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 40.

evangelistic shaping we refer to the missionary and evangelistic understanding that was emerging in the ecumenical movement. It was primarily in the International Missionary Council (IMC) that this evangelistic shaping took place. The IMC's contributions to the Winner model in the pre-Amsterdam 1948 years were mainly in its meetings at Jerusalem (1928), Tambaram in Madras (1938), and Whitby, Ontario (1947). In these conferences, not only was the idea of mission changing but the tensions that had begun to arise in missionary thinking were made clear. At Jerusalem 1928 the fact of secularism had shown clearly that it was not only the non-Western nations that were in need of the gospel but also the Western nations. The divisions between "Home missions" and "Foreign Missions" had also begun to crumble. The emphasis of Jerusalem in the face all these realities was its dependence upon Lausanne 1927 to make its own unique declaration of the one gospel for the whole world. At Madras 1938 the place of the church in the mission of God was freshly rediscovered and emphasized, but this church was reminded to stand under the kingdom and not to be an end in itself. At Whitby 1947, there was a fresh call to the missionary movement to return to the Word of God and to Jesus Christ for renewal if it is to be an effective witness in community. In these and many other respects, Jerusalem 1928, Madras 1938 and Whitby 1947 further shaped the Winner model.

#### **A. Jerusalem 1928: One Gospel, One World**

Whereas Lausanne was concerned about matters of faith and order, the International Missionary Council meeting which was held at Jerusalem in 1928 resolved

not to be concerned with such matters.<sup>175</sup> It resolved, rather, to humbly and prayerfully consider “subjects which world-wide inquiry had revealed as generally desired.”<sup>176</sup> The belief of the planners of the meeting was that through this choice, “the larger Will of God for the witness and service of the church in relation to the whole world might be more clearly discerned and more adequately interpreted to the whole body of Christian people.”<sup>177</sup>

In different ways participants heralded the universality and seeming evenness of the Jerusalem meeting, revealed especially in the choice of delegates “from all parts of the world, of an almost infinite diversity of tradition,”<sup>178</sup> and in the blending of “the various races of mankind” with representatives of the older and younger churches meeting “on a fifty-fifty basis” in a reciprocal relationship.<sup>179</sup> However, expectations were also high. First, it was hoped that Jerusalem would further “the movement toward closer and more effective international cooperation initiated at Edinburgh.”<sup>180</sup> Second, it

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<sup>175</sup> *Minutes of the International Missionary Council* (London: International Missionary Council, 1921ff.), (Hereafter cited as *Minutes of the IMC*) Minutes of Lake Mohonk Meeting, October 1-6, 1921, 34, minute 33, and 40, minute 39. See also Frank Lenwood, “The International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk, October, 1921,” *International Review of Mission* 11(1922): 36. This resolution had also been taken at Oxford, 1923. See *Minutes of the IMC*, Minutes of Oxford, 1923, 37-38, minute 64. Or see reprint in *International Review of Mission* 12 (1923): 491-492.

<sup>176</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:5.

<sup>177</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:3-4.

<sup>178</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:9. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 244, 245, 246.

<sup>179</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:15, 12 - Mott. Cf. *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:51, 68 - David Z. T. Yui; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:278f. - Robert E. Speer; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 3:165. The issue of race relations had been discussed in the previous year by the Honolulu meeting of the Institute of Pacific Relations and A. Frederick Whyte had reflected on its bearing to the Jerusalem meeting. See A. Frederick Whyte, “Honolulu and Jerusalem: The Problem of Race Relations,” *International Review of Mission* 17 (1928): 257-265. Others had also reflected on the issue of race relations. See Webster E. Browning and W. Aidan Cotton’s articles in *International Review of Mission* 17 (1928): 266-277, 327-341.

<sup>180</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:16 - Mott.



was hoped that Jerusalem would “mark a dividing line in Christian missions,” in which the church moved beyond the attacks on it and its own uncertainties especially with respect to non-Christian religions.<sup>181</sup> Third, it was hoped that Jerusalem would, more than any other influence, “usher in or accelerate the coming of the day characterized by the new and true conception of the Christian missionary undertaking as a sharing enterprise.”<sup>182</sup> Fourth, it was hoped that Jerusalem would include “within the orbit of missionary work some of the most urgent issues in social and national life,” thus maintaining in an intensely prayerful meeting the balance between “personal evangelism” and “the redemption of the social order.”<sup>183</sup> This latter expectation was considered to be apt in view of the rise of secularism,<sup>184</sup> with its systematic elimination of the religious from life, and also in view of the council’s observation of “a sense of insecurity and instability” present everywhere at the time. As the meeting observed, “world-wide suffering and pain” were leading to disregard of “all higher values” in addition to the increasing nationalism of especially the non-Christian nations (and thus increasing appreciation for ancestral religions) and race consciousness.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:99-100 – E. Stanley Jones.

<sup>182</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:13 - Mott.

<sup>183</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:9, 16; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 2:9 – Luther A. Weigle and J. H. Oldham; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 2:212; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 5:142; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 4:195, 196, 201-202; 5:141, 142, 150; 6:245, etc. See also William Paton, “The Jerusalem Meeting – and After,” *International Review of Mission* 17 (1928): 443-444.

<sup>184</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:230 – Rufus M. Jones; Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 249; D. S. Cairns, “The Christian Message: A Comparison of Thought in 1910 and in 1928,” *International Review of Mission* 18 (1929): 323; Shivute, *The Theology of Mission*, 43; William Paton, “What is Secularism?” *International Review of Mission* 18 (1929): 346-357; John A. Mackay, “The Ecumenical Spirit and the Recognition of Christ,” *International Review of Mission* 18 (1929): 334.

<sup>185</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:401.

All these led to changes of emphasis in missionary thinking. Whereas since Liverpool 1912, the integral nature of social work to the gospel had been noted, it had not been specifically spelled out as belonging to the content of salvation. Now, at Jerusalem, the traditional understanding of salvation was expanded to include the social: “the revolt of youth, the discontent of labor, the conflict between employer and employee, the need for better understanding and relationship among the nations” – all these matters of the world’s “unrest” were seen as “indications of the world’s longing and waiting for deliverance” and as a “loud cry of the world for salvation.”<sup>186</sup> Without neglecting the traditional position, there was a conscious addition of the social into the missionary message: “[o]ur fathers were impressed with the horror that men should die without Christ – we share that horror; we are impressed also with the horror that men should live without Christ.”<sup>187</sup>

Depending upon the formulation of Lausanne 1927, the message of the church was declared to be Jesus Christ who is himself “the Gospel;” this message is “more than a philosophical theory,” “a theological system” or “a program for material betterment,” but is “the sure source of power for social regeneration.”<sup>188</sup> Christ is no mere continuation of any human tradition, being “always more, and other” than the desires and aspirations of human hearts and nations.<sup>189</sup> In all these affirmations, the continuation of the Winner model can be clearly noticed, but the emphasis of both the social and evangelistic

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<sup>186</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:36 – Cheng Ching-Yi.

<sup>187</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:406.

<sup>188</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:406.

<sup>189</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:411.

preaching and the understanding of salvation as not only involving the “soul” but the entire social fabric received in Jerusalem a fresh emphasis.

However, some significant changes in the missionary community were also beginning to become more prominent. For many missionaries, as the meeting noted, a dilemma was arising between the “glorious message of the Gospel” and “the spiritual values in other religions.”<sup>190</sup> And the “dread,” “danger and confusion”<sup>191</sup> of this were discussed both before<sup>192</sup> and during the Jerusalem meeting.<sup>193</sup> Evidently, some validity for non-Christian religions and cultures was becoming a common place. They confessed to finding “rays” of Jesus’ light “where He is unknown or even is rejected,” and they recognized “as part of the one Truth that sense of the Majesty of God and the consequent reverence in worship” in Islam. In Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism and other religions, many such qualities were admired and admitted as part of “the one Truth.”<sup>194</sup> However, the council’s position clearly pronounced these “spiritual values” in non-Christian religions as non-salvific; and a Christian, they noted, can receive no “new

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<sup>190</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:284. Oliver Quick thinks that there was a conflict between the views of the old school and the new school; whereas the former tended to overemphasize Christian uniqueness, the latter tended to see Christianity as merely furthering what was present in other religions. “The Jerusalem Meeting,” 445-447.

<sup>191</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:285 – Canon Gould of Canada.

<sup>192</sup> This worry was expressed by the Continental delegates to the Jerusalem Meeting who met at the Y. M. C. A., Cairo, on March 16, 1928. See: *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:345-348 for a report by Robert E. Speer; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:6.

<sup>193</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:286, 8:83 – Karl Heim; 1:287 – G. Simon; 1:287-8 – D. Julius Richter; 1:289 – M. Tarkkanen; 1:352-355, 367 – Robert E. Speer; Stephen Neill, *The Unfinished Task* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1957), 152.

<sup>194</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:410f. – Statement of the council.

religious values” from these religions.<sup>195</sup> Jesus Christ is the desperately needed but unique gift of the church to the world<sup>196</sup> in all ages: “as in the past so also in the present, the Gospel is the only way of salvation.”<sup>197</sup> The Christian is to study other religious systems chiefly for effective Christian witness to persons of these religions.<sup>198</sup> By 1926 some had begun to argue that the missionary should give up all superiority claims for the Christian civilization as earlier held and that superiority should only be claimed for the heart of the gospel, for the redemption in Christ Jesus.<sup>199</sup> In this respect A. K. Reischauer contended that if it cannot be practically demonstrated that the Christian life and thus the Christian civilization is superior to non-Christian ways of life, it will be difficult to claim that the heart of the Christian message is superior to the non-Christian message. He suggested, therefore, that the missionary should not be concerned with questions of superiority, but rather with the adequacy of the essential elements of the Christian faith for life’s deepest needs.<sup>200</sup>

It is clear here that tendencies previously absent or at least silent had begun to emerge in ecumenical discussions. However, at Jerusalem not only was the Christian message declared to be adequate for humanity’s greatest needs, but non-Christian

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<sup>195</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:289 – M. Tarkkanen; 1:315 – Stanley Jones; Cf. 8:23 for Bishop Donaldson’s comparatively more humble approach.

<sup>196</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:36 – Cheng Ching-Yi; 8:85 – Karl Heim; Walter Marshall Horton, *Christian Theology: An Ecumenical Approach* (New York: Harper & Brothers Pub. 1955), 20.

<sup>197</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:404; Quick, “The Jerusalem Meeting,” 454.

<sup>198</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:411-12, 407-8. For other forms of contact with non-Christian religions see *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:120-122 – William Ernest Hocking.

<sup>199</sup> E.g. Heinrich Frick, “Is a Conviction of the Superiority of His Message Essential to the Missionary?” *International Review of Mission* 15 (1928):625-646.

religions were invited not only to share Christianity's knowledge of Christ but also to cooperate with Christianity "against all the evils of secularism" and in respecting freedom of worship.<sup>201</sup> It was hoped that in this the non-Christian religions would discover, with Christians, that Christ is the fulfillment of all the good in humanity, and that "of no human tradition is He merely the continuation" being "always more, and other" than the desires and aspirations of human hearts and nations.<sup>202</sup> The point being made here is that whereas at Jerusalem 1928 there were voices that thought differently from the traditional position in which superiority of Christianity was affirmed over non-Christian religions, the official position of the Jerusalem meeting was still along the lines of the tradition. This is a most important point to note as tendencies that deviate from the norm will be continuously seen in ecumenical gatherings. And while it is important to note these patterns, it would be unfair to a gathering if these tendencies are declared to be those officially adopted by the gathering in spite of clear pronouncements of the gathering to the contrary.

One modification to the Winner model that Jerusalem 1928 manifested was the need to work with non-Christian religions and non-church organizations against societal evils, but this was not to be done at the expense of Christian uniqueness. Thus, in his opening address John Mott expressed hopes that in Jerusalem would occur a synthesis "in which many of the so-called secular organizations, movements, and forces as well as those commonly called Christian, are made tributary to the realization of God's

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<sup>200</sup> A. K. Reischauer, "The Christian Message and the Non-Christian Religions," *International Review of Mission* 17 (1928): 119-133.

<sup>201</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:411.

<sup>202</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:411.

purpose.”<sup>203</sup> Similarly, the council hoped that the churches would show that the missionary enterprise is inseparably related to “the great world movements of our time,” especially “those which are finding expression in national aspirations.”<sup>204</sup> Furthermore, the council agreed to bring “into advisory relationship representatives of non-church agencies interested in human welfare throughout the world,” in trust that it would further “closer integration and coöperation between church and non-church agencies which are alike governed by principles which are Christian.”<sup>205</sup> All these show that there was beginning to develop an understanding of commonality, to some extent, between Christian systems on the one hand and non-Christian and non-church systems on the other hand. But this commonality did not preclude Christian uniqueness or set aside the traditional Winner model which was still in place at Jerusalem. Non-Christian and non-church systems were to be worked with to alleviate the world’s problems while being invited to faith in Christ. This shows that the Winner model did not necessarily involve lack of cooperation with non-Christian religions for social and societal change.

The Winner model, in fact, found a clearer expression at Jerusalem than at Lausanne perhaps because of the missionary nature of Jerusalem’s meeting. That the winner model was still in operation at Jerusalem is to be maintained in spite of David Bosch’s view that at Edinburgh the “royal stature” of Christ was prominent with the cross as a symbol of conquest, in Constantinian terms, while at Jerusalem the “priestly office”

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<sup>203</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:16-17.

<sup>204</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 3:176-177.

<sup>205</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 3:183.

was prominent with the church as living for the service of the world.<sup>206</sup> This is an oversimplification which may blur the prominence of the Winner motifs that continued throughout the Jerusalem conference. The Christian message about Christ was seen as that which would win all the world for Christ. Participants at Jerusalem 1928 spoke of “the opportunity to go in and win new worlds for Christ,” of “winning others to intimate fellowship with God,” of “the portrait of the winning Christ,” of people “who are out to win their fellow men to the Lord Jesus Christ,” of God’s ability to “win the Muslims to Christ,” of “winning the Jews for Christ,” of “the conquering gospel of the New Testament and of the early church,” and of Christ as “conqueror.”<sup>207</sup> Christian education was the “winning of recruits . . . to the Christian life itself,” and the church was described as having “a world-conquering courage.”<sup>208</sup> The world was to be conquered for Christ by means of the gospel because the Christian gospel is not characterized only by uniqueness but also by universality.<sup>209</sup> The problem of secularism called for a united Christian action in combating its effects. As John A. Mackay put it, “[t]he consciousness that secularism is the chief foe of Christianity is without doubt one of the potent factors tending towards Christian ecumenicalism with its ideal of a united Christendom.”<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> David Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 163f.

<sup>207</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:24, 36, 37, 98, 99, 126, 140-141 – respectively Bishop Donaldson, Cheng Ching-Yi, Bishop James Henry Linton, James MacDougall Black, Robert E. Speer. See also, *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 6:245. Yet also see Cairns, “The Christian Message,” 330.

<sup>208</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 3:177; 135 – Nathan Söderblom.

<sup>209</sup> Cairns, “The Christian Message,” 330-331.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Mackay, “The Ecumenical Spirit and the Recognition of Christ,” *International Review of Mission* 18 (1929): 334; cf. William Paton, “The Jerusalem Meeting – and After” *International Review of Mission* 17(1928): 439-440.

However, as already noted, this Winner model was beginning to have a wider application; it was no longer the heathen nations alone that needed to be conquered for Christ but the so-called Christian nations also, which were neck-deep in secularism. Thus, though the world was still divided into the two broad categories of “Christian” and “non-Christian,”<sup>211</sup> mission to non-Christian nations was not because they “are the worst of the world and they alone are in need,” but “because they are part of the world and share with” the Christian nations “in the same human need” of redemption from self and sins and of abundant life.<sup>212</sup> Here secularism was allowing a better appreciation of the common need of all humanity for the gospel. Humankind is united in its need for redemption, life and Christ-likeness, since humankind is “made for Christ and cannot really live apart from Him.”<sup>213</sup> This was one of the most significant changes in the missionary thinking of the time as traditional understanding of mission as a Western enterprise was being surpassed for a concept of mission as “partnership” between older and younger churches, a concept that would later emerge more clearly at Whitby 1947.

It is this understanding of the commonality of human need for grace that shaped the idea of the unity of humankind operative at Jerusalem. As the council affirmed, “all men are brothers, because all men are children of one Father, and that they owe to each other the service which is the expression of their common sonship.”<sup>214</sup> Dealings with

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<sup>211</sup> Wolfgang Günther, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City, Die ekklesiologischen Bemühungen der Weltmissionskonferenzen (1910-11963)* (Stuttgart: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1970), 69.

<sup>212</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:406.

<sup>213</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:406. It is the sense of universalism as Christianization that Mackay defends in his essay, “The Ecumenical Spirit and the Recognition of Christ,” *International Review of Mission* 18 (1929): 332-345.

<sup>214</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 5:142.



persons of other faiths should thus involve “respect for human personality, love for men, and a determined opposition to all forces that hinder their full salvation.”<sup>215</sup> Here, as is obvious, are elements we have shown to belong to the Winner model.

Like earlier conferences, Jerusalem articulated its understanding of human oneness in the doctrine of the kingdom of God without resolving the different views that were emerging in this understanding, views already evident at Stockholm 1925.

However, Rufus M. Jones may have represented the dominant understanding of the meeting in his position that the kingdom of God is a present reality that involves “the practical task of building the City of God down here where we live.”<sup>216</sup> This kingdom has not yet come to its maximal fruition, but is already realized in Jesus Christ and “will extend its boundaries to include all humanity” and shall be consummated in the final triumph of good over evil.<sup>217</sup> Meanwhile, it is the “task” of the church to “create a Christian civilization within which all human beings can grow to their full spiritual stature.”<sup>218</sup> Thus, the Jerusalem meeting condemned racial, class and economic discrimination, affirmed equality of all humankind and of both men and women.<sup>219</sup> It

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<sup>215</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:326.

<sup>216</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:273.

<sup>217</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:293-94 – T. C. Chao; cf. *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:38f. – Cheng Ching-Yi; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:99 – Bishop James Henry Linton.

<sup>218</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 5:141, 143, 144.

<sup>219</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 4:195-202; 5:141-151. Says the council, “[b]y the message of divine love revealed in the Incarnation the division between the spiritual and the material is overcome, and all human relations are transfigured. In the light of that revelation His followers have learned they cannot love God unless they also love their fellow men with a love that transcends differences of race and class and economic position. It is in that love, Christ taught them, that they will find the Kingdom of Heaven.” *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 5:141. See also, Archibald G. Baker, “Rethinking Foreign Missions,” *Religious Education* 23 (December, 1928):1025, who draws attention to the “general and non-committal terms” of the council’s statements.

also found to be “in sharp contradiction to the spirit of Christianity” all the forces against human society – “war, economic oppression, the selfish pursuit of profits, the neglect of the immature, the aged, the sick, or the weak”<sup>220</sup> – and committed itself to the improvement of rural communities.<sup>221</sup> “We believe in a Christ-like world,” the council declared; “[w]e know nothing better; we can be content with nothing less. . . . We desire a world . . . where His Spirit reigns.”<sup>222</sup>

In summary, therefore, it is doubtless that Jerusalem was one of the firmest affirmations of the Winner model. But here a number of changes both in emphasis and in missionary thinking had begun to take place. The holding together of the social and the “spiritual” not only as integral parts of the gospel but also as included in the understanding of salvation is a new emphasis in missionary theology. The breakdown of the division between “Foreign Missions” and “Home Missions” had already resumed in spite of the fact that the world was still divided between Christian and non-Christian nations; but now, the need of all humanity for the gospel – those in the Christian civilizations and those who were not – had encountered the missionary movement. Voices questioning the superiority of Christianity and the Christian civilization over non-Christian religions and civilizations had begun to be raised, but the meeting still stood along the traditional Winner understanding. Many missionaries had begun to be in a

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<sup>220</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 5:143. Baker reminds of plans of unofficial representatives of the various religions to meet in 1930 to remove the scourge of war and further international peace. “Rethinking Foreign Missions,” 1029.

<sup>221</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 6:245-255.

<sup>222</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:406, 407. William Ernest Hocking finds as the “ultimate objective of all missionary enterprise, the creation of a common spiritual life among men,” noting that “it is the hope of the world that men shall not ultimately be apart in the deepest sources of their motivation.” See how

“dilemma” between the Christian message and the spiritual values in non-Christian religions. But the meeting neither found these spiritual values as salvific nor did it shift from its understanding that Jesus is the one and only savior of the world or that the gospel is the one message for the world’s salvation. At Jerusalem had also emerged early signs of the need to work with non-Christian and non-church systems to counter societal evils but without compromising the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. At Jerusalem the Winner terminologies were not at all lacking from the lips of the speakers. In all these ways Jerusalem significantly shaped the Winner model without departing from it.

### **B. Laymen’s Foreign Mission Enquiry: The Gospel on Trial**

Apart from stimulating some Asian movements concerned with holistic Christian witness,<sup>223</sup> the events at Jerusalem have also been noted to have had an influence on the formation of the American “Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry” (LFMI).<sup>224</sup> Under the chairmanship of Albert L. Scott the LFMI, a group of thirty-five laypersons<sup>225</sup> from seven denominational missionary boards, set itself to critically examine the mission work in India, Burma, China and Japan. In 1931, William Ernest Hocking led a “Commission of

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Hocking uses this to justify the contact with non-Christian religions which merely seeks mutual understanding. *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:121-122.

<sup>223</sup> E.g., the Kingdom of God Movement in Japan and the Five Year Forward Movement in China. See Kenneth Scott Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* 1:369; cf. Michio Kozaki, “Dr. KaGawa and ‘The Kingdom of God Movement’,” *International Review of Mission* 18 (1929):573-583.

<sup>224</sup> Shivute, *The Theology of Mission*, 61-62.

<sup>225</sup> They were not all strictly lay or even men; some clergy and women were among them. The denominations from which they came were Baptist (Northern), Congregational, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian Church in U.S.A, Protestant Episcopal, Reformed Church in America, and United Presbyterian. The Appraisal Commission had three women in it. See *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen’s Inquiry After One Hundred Years by the Commission of Appraisal* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Pub., 1932), xv for the names of the members of the commission. See also Robert E. Speer, *Re-Thinking Missions” Examined: An Attempt at a Just Review of the Report of the Appraisal Commission of*

Appraisal” (we shall call this Hocking Commission) to examine the mission work in these countries. This committee presented its report to the board of these seven denominations, and held to the following position:

To some of our members the enduring motive of Christian missions can only be adequately expressed as loyalty to Jesus Christ regarded as the perfect revelation of God and the only Way by which men can reach a satisfying experience of Him. To others, this motive would best be called the spirit of altruistic service, the desire to share with all mankind the benefits and the ideals of a Christian community. To still others, it would best be named the desire for a deeper knowledge and love of God, seeking with men everywhere a more adequate fulfillment of the divine possibilities of personal and social life.<sup>226</sup>

For the first time in the official missionary circles of the churches, there appeared a document which cast doubts on the traditional understanding of the missionary motive and theology, and therefore, on the relation of the church to the world. The missionary motive as in the Winner model, which arises out of a sense of the lostness of the unreached and which insists upon the way of Christ as the only way, was condemned.<sup>227</sup> The horror of any people dying without Christ, which Jerusalem balanced with the horror of living without Christ, was apparently unfelt by this commission.<sup>228</sup> The missionary’s task was now “to understand and fulfill the religious life of the Orient,” to live with them as “brothers in a common quest” and not bearers of any salvific message of redemption in Christ.<sup>229</sup> Rather than the age-old notion of the “conquest of the world by Christianity,” the missionary was now to be in relation to the world as a bedfellow in “a common

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*the Laymen's Foreign Mission Inquiry* (New York, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1933), 9-11.

<sup>226</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, xiv.

<sup>227</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, 8, 35.

<sup>228</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, 19 cf. *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:406.

<sup>229</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, 16, 31.

search for truth,” as “a co-worker with the forces which are making for righteousness within every religious system,” standing with them upon “the common ground of all religions.”<sup>230</sup> It is not exclusively in Jesus Christ and in Christianity that the final truth exists, this appraisal committee claimed. “All fences and private properties in truth are futile: the final truth, whatever it may be, is the New Testament of every existing faith.” Christianity is to co-exist with all other religions “each stimulating the other in growth toward the ultimate goal, unity in the completest religious truth.”<sup>231</sup>

This view is different from Jerusalem 1928’s decisions in all respects but one, namely, the idea of working together with non-Christian and non-church systems. But even this working with non-Christian religions, as Jerusalem understood it, was not to be done as a common search for truth, but as a common task of alleviating the world’s problems, since that was considered to be in keeping with the spirit of Christ. Jerusalem’s coinage clearly failed to affirm the “truth” elements of these faiths as salvific or as of same essence with Christianity.<sup>232</sup> These viewpoints were now being voiced for the first time in ecumenical documents, even though only in American ecumenical life. These views, as would be expected, were strongly opposed. J. T. Addison noted that the views expressed by the Hocking Commission do not speak for missionaries but rather represented merely the positions of “academic observers, not as sharers in an enterprise which has depended for nineteen centuries upon deeper and more ardent convictions as to

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<sup>230</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, 35, 47, 40, 33.

<sup>231</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, 44; cf. G. H. Anderson, “American Protestants in Pursuit of Mission: 1886-1986” *International Review of Mission* 12/3 (July 1988):107.

<sup>232</sup> The Jerusalem council declared that Christ is always alone the Savior of the world in all ages and cultures and no mere continuation of any human tradition but “always more, and other,” than the desires and aspirations of human hearts and nations. *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:409, 411.

the meaning and destiny of Christianity.”<sup>233</sup> Robert E. Speer found the work to lack both a good missionary background and comprehensiveness and to be untrue to early missionary history, especially in such early pioneers as William Carey and Jeremiah Evarts. He also found it to be biased and exclusive, and to be founded on the theological basis of the old Protestant liberalism “which has been already superseded in Europe by a deep evangelical wave.” More so, all this work of the Hocking Commission saw of Christianity, in the view of Speer, was the life and teachings of Christ, and it lacked ground in the uniqueness of Christ as revealed in the Scripture and believed by historic Christianity.<sup>234</sup> While the approach of the Hocking Commission did not triumph in ecumenical meetings prior to the formation of the World Council of Churches, several persons with this persuasion variously contributed to ecumenical conferences, as will be seen in, for instance, Madras 1938.

This much is clear about the LFMI. It questioned the traditional missionary method and message represented in the Winner model. It clearly rejected the sense of superiority of Christianity over other religions. It specifically rejected the winner notion expressed in the idea of conquering the world for Christ but called rather for the missionaries to see themselves as bedfellows “in a common search for truth” with persons of other religions. This view, as has been noted, was strongly rejected though

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<sup>233</sup> James Thayer Addison, “The Changing Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions,” *International Review of Mission* 27 (Jan. 1938):120.

<sup>234</sup> Speer, “*Re-Thinking Missions*” Examined, 29-35. J. A. Mackay found this work simply as “the sunset glow of the nineteenth-century romanticism caught and prolonged.” “The Theology of the Laymen’s Foreign Mission Inquiry,” *International Review of Mission* 22 (1933):174-188, at 177f.

there were those who stood by it.<sup>235</sup> Here, some of the attitudinal elements of what later emerged as the Sign model are present even though, as we shall see later, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ which the Hocking Commission rejected was a strong part of the Sign model and even foundational for the model.

### C. Madras 1938: One Church, One Witness

Whereas Jerusalem 1928 was faced with the problems of the then emerging secularism, Madras 1938 was confronted by “the outstanding event” since Jerusalem 1928, namely, “the rise of the ‘new paganism’ – new faiths with new gods,” which paganism was “itself a reaction against secularism and demands the religious devotion of its adherents.”<sup>236</sup> This new paganism was seen chiefly in the nationalism, communism and scientific skepticism of the time and it was believed that it “creates for every religion a new situation.”<sup>237</sup> While each of these has positive elements, they have all been corrupted by sin. God’s gift of nationality is infected by sin when “devotion to the nation is made the source and standard of absolute authority, and so the life and destiny of the nation usurp a divine status.”<sup>238</sup> Marxist communism in its orthodox philosophy is

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<sup>235</sup> A form of this view was expressed by A. G. Baker in *Christian Missions and a New World Culture* (Chicago & NY: Willett, Clark & Co., 1934).

<sup>236</sup> *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 1938* (London & New York: International Missionary Council), 1939, 17 – Report of Group I; cf. 13, 30, 40-43 – Reports of groups I, III, V (All groups indicated here and hereafter are as published in the chapters of *The World Mission of the Church*. See also *Addresses and Other Records: Meeting of the International Missionary Council, at Tambaram, Madras, India December 12<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 1938*. “*The Madras Series*” VII (London & New York: International Missionary Council, 1939), 168-169 (Hereafter cited with all others in “*The Madras Series*” as *The Madras Series* with indications of the appropriate volumes and pages. E.g. *The Madras Series*, 7:168-169.); *The Madras Series*, 1:139-141.

<sup>237</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 17-20 – Report of Group I.

<sup>238</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 18 – Report of Group I.

“atheistic in its conception of ultimate reality and materialistic in its view of man and his destiny;” its “utopian view of history” lacks “the essential Christian notes of divine judgment, divine governance, and eternal victory” and its view of humankind lacks the element of “the sacredness of personality.”<sup>239</sup> Scientific skepticism is corrupted by a rationalism that is detached from all personal touch and disregards mystery and faith in the living God.<sup>240</sup> All this was in addition to the general conflict, chaos and fear of an impending war experienced everywhere.<sup>241</sup>

These matters re-emphasized the need for the mission of the church to be so defined that the meaning and place of human life and destiny are clearly stated and the place of the church in the purpose of God for humanity is unambiguously stated. It is in these two points of emphasis that Madras continued the shaping of the Winner model. Thus, like Oxford 1937, Madras understood human life as having its meaning only in its relatedness to God. Humankind, created to be in fellowship with God, broke this fellowship through sin. In Christ God calls humanity back to Godself and offers to humanity the life and gospel of Jesus Christ as the solution to its many problems and fears.<sup>242</sup> Thus, as H. H. Farmer observed, at Madras, compared to Jerusalem 1928, was “a more piercing and profound sense of the power and pervasiveness of sin” and its corrupting nature of everything.<sup>243</sup> Similarly, J. A. Scherer pointed out that in the

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<sup>239</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 18f. – Report of Group I.

<sup>240</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 19f. – Report of Group I.

<sup>241</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 14 – Report of Group I.

<sup>242</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 14-15 – Report of group I.

<sup>243</sup> H. H. Farmer, “The Faith By Which the Church Lives,” *International Review of Mission* 28 (April 1939): 176.



positions of Hendrik Kraemer, among others, there was a re-presentation of Jesus Christ as the answer to the world's needs with concepts like "conversion," "forgiveness," and "regeneration" revived.<sup>244</sup> This means that the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ was again reaffirmed at Madras as a way of confronting the problems and needs of humanity. Also, the realization of the sin of humankind, especially in its manifestation in the neo-paganism within the Western culture, led to a climax of the understanding that the gospel is universally needed, an understanding which Jerusalem 1928 had already highlighted. At Madras it was reemphasized that it is not in non-Western nations alone that paganism exists but also in the Western nations. Hence exists the equal need of the gospel by all nations and therefore the importance of mission for all the world.<sup>245</sup>

The realities of Madras' context led, yet also, to a refocusing of the place of the church in pointing humanity to God through Christ and to thereby realizing the unity of humankind. Thus, as Madras stated, the church is the bearer of the "vision and power that are essential for the basic solution of the problems of our troubled world," and is, as such, "under God" humanity's "greatest hope."<sup>246</sup> It is in the work of Christ through the church that "the hope for the redemption of mankind"<sup>247</sup> is centered. No earthly institution which claims human allegiance is able to witness to the reality that humankind belongs to God in Christ; this is the witness that the church alone can bear uniquely, being the fellowship with the knowledge of the revelation of God in Christ, the gifts of

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<sup>244</sup> J. A. Scherer, "Ecumenical Mandates for Mission," in *Protestants Crosscurrents in Mission*, ed. Normen A. Horner (Nashville & New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), 34-37.

<sup>245</sup> Günther, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City*, 35-41.

<sup>246</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 19 - Report of group I.

<sup>247</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 15 - Report of group I.

the Word and Sacraments, and the promises of Christ.<sup>248</sup> The church is thus a unique body that God has placed upon the earth to redirect humanity back to its creator and to become on earth the small picture of this reconciliation with God. In this sense the church is, in its present experience, “a foretaste of the redeemed family of God which He has purposed humanity to be.”<sup>249</sup> Here and now it is “the assembly of the citizens of the Kingdom of God summoned by and obedient to His call.”<sup>250</sup> It is the fellowship through which Christ “carries forward His purpose for mankind,”<sup>251</sup> and as such, is God’s “instrument for a yet greater extension of His Kingdom.”<sup>252</sup> Thus, for Madras the church is indispensable in the understanding and realization of God’s purpose for humanity. And this purpose for humanity is its becoming one redeemed family of God. It is to this purpose that the church is a foretaste and unique instrument. The Winner motifs here expressed cannot be denied.

This high view of the church was challenged by some at Madras. As early as 1934 William Temple had argued for a position in which the universe is seen as in sacramental relation to God. This means that God’s Spirit is at work in the whole of creation and leading it back to God.<sup>253</sup> Thus, as Oldham summarizes this view, if God is present in the world, and active there, the world ought to be seen as having “a religious

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<sup>248</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 23, 24 - Report of group II.

<sup>249</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 16 - Report of group I.

<sup>250</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 22 - Report of group II.

<sup>251</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 23 - Report of group II.

<sup>252</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 39 - Report of group IV.

<sup>253</sup> William Temple, *Nature, Man and God: Being Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Glasgow in the Academical Years 1932-1933 and 1933-1934* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd.; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964, c.1934), 473-495.

significance of its own as the corrective of all ecclesiastical or priestly pretensions” and serving as “a standing protest against the claim of any church to be, as an institution, the sole channel of God’s grace.”<sup>254</sup> E. Stanley Jones challenged Madras’ view of the church on a different ground from Temple’s. He said Madras neglected the concept of the kingdom of God and, therefore, had “no absolute conception from which it worked its human problems” but rather moved from the church as “one relativism to other relativisms in human affairs,” thus resulting in “confusion.”<sup>255</sup> He held that the church should be “humble enough to rejoice that God was using other instruments to bring in the Kingdom in greater or lesser degree,” including the scientific movement, Gandhi’s movement and other movements of socio-economic justice, but that this acknowledgment was not present at Madras.<sup>256</sup> Similarly, but even in a stronger and different emphasis from Jones, Albert R. Ashley rejects Van Dusen’s and Madras’ notion that it is mainly through the agency of the church that the kingdom is to be manifested on grounds of the church’s present divisions and its ill-equipment organizationally and otherwise for the purpose of realizing the kingdom.<sup>257</sup>

Henry P. Van Dusen questioned the appropriateness of Jones’ critique of Madras, noting that Madras’ stress on the church should be read against the background of the totalitarianism of the time and not be seen as a neglect of the kingdom. In view of the

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<sup>254</sup> Oldham, *The Church and its Function in Society*, 128; cf. William Temple, “Christian Faith and the Common Life,” in *Christian Faith and the Common Life*, 47-65.

<sup>255</sup> E. Stanley Jones, “Where Madras Missed Its Way,” *The Christian Century* 56/11 (March 15, 1939): 351-352.

<sup>256</sup> E. Stanley Jones, “What I Missed at Madras,” *The Christian Century* 56/22 (May 31, 1939): 707. Jones thinks that Madras makes the church the only means of manifesting the kingdom.

totalitarian states, the church, both as “a message and a movement,” is “the medicine” for the world’s cure. According to Van Dusen, though Jones’ critique proclaims social ideals and objects, it lacks any concrete social instrumentalities for their manifestation and spread in society. This Van Dusen finds in the church alone.<sup>258</sup> Therefore, for Van Dusen and for Madras the church is the only concrete movement and chief instrumentality of the kingdom of God. But for Jones, though the church is both “the chief means” and “the chief instrument” for the realization of the Kingdom of God,<sup>259</sup> there are other movements which are part of “the Kingdom-of-God movement” and extend beyond the church; this movement “includes within itself those elements in the churches which embody the kingdom-of-God life and everything outside the churches which works for Kingdom-of-God ends.”<sup>260</sup> The differences in these views depend on whether or not one believes that redemption is possible outside the church. Madras’ official position evidently limited redemption to the church.

Partly through Jones’ critique Madras’ final documents did not completely eliminate the ideal of the kingdom but placed its greater stress on the church’s uniqueness. Madras explicitly stated that in order for the church to fulfill its calling in relation to the world, it must “stand ever under the ideal of the Kingdom of God which alone can guard it against becoming an end in itself and hold it true to God’s purpose for

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<sup>257</sup> Albert R. Ashley, “Church and Kingdom,” *The Christian Century* 56/16 (April 19, 1939): 518 (emphasis his).

<sup>258</sup> Henry P. Van Dusen, “What Stanley Jones Missed at Madras,” *The Christian Century* 56/13 (March 29, 1939): 410-411. The closeness of this position to that of Karl Barth is to be noted. See: *Church Dogmatics*, eds. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-75), 4:1.

<sup>259</sup> Jones, “What I Missed,” 705, 707.

<sup>260</sup> Jones, “What I Missed,” 705f.

it.”<sup>261</sup> The church’s task was also to be kingdom directed, the church was “to be the ambassador of Christ, proclaiming His Kingdom,” and pointing to him.<sup>262</sup> Like Albert R. Ashley, Madras regretted the church’s divisions but was convinced that God wills to uniquely use the church for God’s glory and purpose on earth.

Throughout Madras’ deliberations the Winner model was clearly in operation. Apart from the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ and of the church already noted, Madras also used the winner language. The church was to “win” the secular world “for Christ,” the church “exists to win the world;” many are “constantly challenged by the need of winning men for Christ;” denominational differences in many countries paralyze the church’s efforts “to win men for Christ;” and the gospel is to be presented in “a persuasive and winning manner” to non-Christians.<sup>263</sup> And, “[t]he end and aim of our evangelistic work is not achieved until all men everywhere are brought to a knowledge of God in Jesus Christ and to a saving faith in Him.”<sup>264</sup> Yet also, in keeping with the previous ethical reshaping of the Winner model, Madras emphasized social actions as integral to the gospel. Without social actions Christian witness is “incomplete,”<sup>265</sup> and

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<sup>261</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 16 – Report of group I. Jones asserts that it was due to his critiques on the floor of the meeting that the thoughts quoted were added to the report.

<sup>262</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 26-27, 31-33; cf. 43 – Reports of groups II, III, cf. V.

<sup>263</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 28, 31, 36, 38, 45. – Reports of groups III, IV, V.

<sup>264</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 43 – Report of group V.

<sup>265</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 36 – Report of group IV; cf. 98-99 – Report of group XII.

the “evil soul” of the individual as well as the “evil system” of the society are equally important.<sup>266</sup>

One of the clearest manifestations of the continuation of the Winner model is in the position of the council with respect to non-Christian religions. Like Jerusalem 1928 and other earlier conferences, Madras also held to the superiority of Christianity over non-Christian religions. While finding some truths in other faiths, Madras held that the church was “to call men of all faiths by word and deed into the one life of the Beloved Community,”<sup>267</sup> since “in Him alone is the full salvation which men need.”<sup>268</sup> There were however some in the meeting at Madras with different opinions from the official position of Madras on non-Christian religions.<sup>269</sup> One of these views being more strongly expressed was represented by A. G. Hogg. This view did not see Christianity alone as the religion with God’s revelation. It saw Christianity’s uniqueness only in the unique content of its records and interpretation of God’s revelation. The conviction of this view was that “[w]ithout the revealing initiative of God there would be *no* religions.”<sup>270</sup> By this view other faiths were seen as containing God’s revelation in spite of any errors with

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<sup>266</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 106ff. It is important to note that for the German delegation, the idea of the kingdom of God has more stress on the final crisis than on its present reality. See p. 150.

<sup>267</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 40.

<sup>268</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 20; cf. 44f. It is important to note the apparent dissent by the German delegation in pp. 150-151.

<sup>269</sup> For differences on the Christian approach to non-Christian religions see the various positions at Madras in *The Madras Series*, I, especially the contributions of Hendrik Kraemer, A. G. Hogg and Walter Marshall Horton, among others. It is important to highlight the fact that in spite of the differences among contributors to the meeting on the religious values of other faiths, the uniqueness and absolute indispensability of Christ and Christianity still triumphed in the official findings and statements of the conference.

<sup>270</sup> *The Madras Series*, 1:94-116, esp. 115-116 – A. G. Hogg (emphasis in the text).

which this revelation may be mingled. Another view expressed was that which wanted to see all religions, including Christianity, as in a common search for the one truth.<sup>271</sup>

Madras would not endorse any of these views but held, over against them, the position of the Winner model in which Christianity is the one and only unique revelation of God.

The scriptures of non-Christian religions are not to “take the place of the Old Testament as introductions to the Christian Gospel.”<sup>272</sup> Non-Christian religions are to be studied in order to ease Christian witness to non-Christians.<sup>273</sup> They were probably also included in Madras’ call to “all who care for the peace and health of mankind” to “lend their aid to the Church” in healing “the shattered fragments of humanity” evident in the nations of the world.<sup>274</sup>

Madras contributed to shaping the Winner model evangelistically by emphasizing the essential relatedness of humanity to God and pointing out the indispensability of the church’s role in directing humanity to Christ. It stated that it is only by a return to God through Christ and by conversion, forgiveness and regeneration that humanity may be healed of its brokenness and human destiny may be realized. It saw the church as indispensable for this purpose and as called by God specifically to be a unique vehicle of God in the realization of this purpose. Madras therefore emphasized a church-centered mission. As W. A. Saayman noted, at Madras “Church and mission truly found each

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<sup>271</sup> See, e.g. *The Madras Series*, 1:137-149 – Walter Marshall Horton.

<sup>272</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 21, cf. 44ff.

<sup>273</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 44ff.

<sup>274</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 16 cf. 116. See also practical relations between church and state in pp. 122-127.

other.”<sup>275</sup> Yet also, Madras was a climax of the realization of the common need of all humanity, the Western nations included, for the gospel, and therefore, the understanding that mission is not only from the Western nations to the non-Western nations but also vice versa, a step which was later to be solidified at Whitby 1947.

#### **D. Whitby 1947: The Church in Partnership**

The ecumenical understanding of the mission of the church which was emerging in the IMC was shaped evangelistically not only by Jerusalem 1928 and Madras 1938, but also by its meeting at Whitby, Ontario, in 1947. The IMC could not meet as a full council but only as an enlarged committee of the council because of the financial drain caused by the Second World War.<sup>276</sup> It was the first meeting of the Council possible after Madras 1938. There were at least two ways in which Whitby contributed to the missionary shaping of the Winner model. One was in its call for the church to be renewed by a return to the Word of God and to its Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This was a great concern of Whitby in view of the frustrations with the church’s failures in the context of the Second World War. Whitby held that the church is to be constantly “reconverted” and renewed by a return to the Bible and to its Lord, Jesus Christ.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> W. A. Saayman, *Unity and Mission: A Study of the Concept of Unity in Ecumenical Discussions Since 1961 and its Influence on the World Mission of the Church* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1984), 11.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. See, e.g., E. J. Bingle’s article “The Church in its World Setting,” which examines the conditions of the world in Russia, Germany, the Middle East, India, China, South-East Asia, Korea, Japan, the South Pacific, Africa, the West Indies, and Latin America. *Renewal and Advance*, 23-61. On some of the effects of the Second World War on ecumenical and missionary movements, see Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1:370-373 where the “orphaned missions” project of the IMC to take care of German missionaries who lost ties with their home base during the war proved both the importance of the ecumenical tie and its transcendence over national ties.

<sup>277</sup> *The Witness*, 11, 14f.



Whitby has, therefore, been described as “Word-centric,” and in this respect as a reflection of the influence of Karl Barth.<sup>278</sup>

But this call for the church’s re-conversion does not by any means imply that the place of the church in God’s mission was minimized. On the contrary, it was because of the high view of the church that this renewal was important. Thus, Whitby thought of the church of its time as called to be a revolutionary church in a revolutionary world.<sup>279</sup> This description is meant to express the church’s self-understanding as a body living in a time of crisis and undergoing the crisis itself, yet called in spite of this crisis to witness to a world which is “athirst for life” and seemingly “sinking down into death without hope.”<sup>280</sup> The church’s role in such a world would be to heal the “weaknesses, miseries, and desolations”<sup>281</sup> of the world with its “essential Gospel,” namely, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” until the coming of the kingdom of God in its fullness.<sup>282</sup> The church is therefore “the soul of the world.” These were the words of “The Letter to Diognetus” brought to

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<sup>278</sup> Shivute, *The Theology of Mission*, 96, 106; cf. also the various articles by several of the speakers on “the given Word,” “the articulate Word,” and “the dynamic Word” in *Renewal and Advance*, part II, 85-172.

<sup>279</sup> The entire meeting was planned under the theme, “Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World,” and the published title of the Madras Papers was *Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1948); cf. the title of the committee’s “Statements,” *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church: Statements Issued by the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Whitby, Ontario, July 5-24, 1947* (New York & London: IMC, 1947). Cf. also James Chamberlain Baker’s title, *The Church in a World in Ferment: A Study Guide Based on the International Missionary Meeting held at Whitby, Canada, July, 1947* (Glendale, CA.: The Church Press, s. n.). See particularly Stephen C Neill’s article on “A Revolutionary Church” in *Renewal and Advance*, 62-84.

<sup>280</sup> *The Witness*, 19.

<sup>281</sup> *The Witness*, 12.

<sup>282</sup> *The Witness*, 15.

Whitby's attention by Stephen C. Neill.<sup>283</sup> In its task in relation to the world the church is to be strengthened by God, who works through the church in spite of its weaknesses, by means of the Word and the Holy Spirit.<sup>284</sup> Christ renews the church to live in the world as "ruler by the Word of God."<sup>285</sup> In this position Whitby shows its belief in the centrality of the church for the life of the world.

The centrality is further expressed by relating the church's being and task to the unity of humankind. This relation was present in the view that the church experiences here and now the "life of the age to come"<sup>286</sup> and in the view that the church's citizenship in the kingdom of God leads it to a responsibility for and solidarity with the world and humanity.<sup>287</sup> Van Dusen particularly makes this connection in noting that the church has in this world begun to be "an earnest" and "a foretaste" of the future community of nations.<sup>288</sup> In all these views is expressed the belief that in the church's present life is a token experience of the unity of humankind in the community of nations. This stands in the tradition of the Christocentric understanding of human oneness and also shows the presence of the eschatological dimension at Whitby.<sup>289</sup> But as Walter Holsten has pointed out, the eschatological dimension was the major area of controversy at Whitby in

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<sup>283</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 62 – Neill; cf. "The Address to Diognetus" chapter 6, in Edgar J. Goodspeed, trans. *The Apostolic Fathers: An American Translation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 278.

<sup>284</sup> *The Witness*, 11-12; cf. the articles of John A. Mackay and Loofty Levonian in *Renewal and Advance*, 148-172.

<sup>285</sup> *The Witness*, 37.

<sup>286</sup> *The Witness*, 15.

<sup>287</sup> *The Witness*, 37, 12.

<sup>288</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 197 – van Dusen.

view of the many views of the kingdom of God present in ecumenical discussions.<sup>290</sup> Nevertheless, the church's place for human life and destiny was not in doubt. Van Dusen's view that the church was at "the very centre of the world's life"<sup>291</sup> properly captures Whitby's understanding. Hence the need for the church's constant re-conversion and renewal.

The second way in which Whitby contributed to the shaping of the evangelistic and missionary aspects of the Winner model was by emphasizing the place of evangelism in the church's witness.<sup>292</sup> Many of its speakers were so clear on this thought that John Mackay could note that there was no dissenting voice in the gathering with respect to the "proposition that evangelism is the greatest need of the hour in every land."<sup>293</sup> In Mackay's way of expressing the evangelistic frontier we notice the continuation of the Winner model. Mackay spoke of the frontier in which the church was to do its evangelism as "a flaming revolutionary frontier" where "[c]ontending crusading forces shout their slogans and engage in violent conflict," and where there is the "struggle" which "concerns the ultimates of thought and life."<sup>294</sup> This flaming frontier is "on the edge of darkness and anarchy" and offers "unprecedented opportunity to the Christian

<sup>289</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 10-11.

<sup>290</sup> Walter Holsten, "Mission als eschatologisches Geschehen," in Liemar Henning, ed., *Theologie und Liturgie: Eine Gesamtschau der Gegenwärtigen Forschung in Einzeldarstellungen* (Kassel: Johannes Stauda Verlag, 1952), 189.

<sup>291</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 195.

<sup>292</sup> The editors of *The Witness* noted that the Statements of Whitby are "less comprehensive" when compared to earlier IMC meetings, but that they are not "less important" as they "supplement" particularly Madras 1938 "at a most vital point – in the clearer definition of the central purpose of the church's mission to the world." *The Witness*, 7.

<sup>293</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 201 – John A. Mackay.

missionary forces,” which are called upon to intensify evangelistic efforts at the very frontiers.<sup>295</sup> The Winner motifs that are here revealed seem obvious. In addition winner language was explicitly used: the church is that community of all persons empowered by the Spirit to “to win men and to give them victory over the world.”<sup>296</sup>

Whitby’s evangelistic emphasis however had a number of respects in which it may be distinguished. First, it was a return to the evangelistic zeal and urgency of the John Mott era at the turn of the twentieth century. Whitby’s call was virtually an echo of the Mott-led Student Volunteer Movement’s missionary watchword, “the Evangelization of the World in this Generation.” Whitby, like the Mott generation, thought it possible to preach the gospel to all humans in its generation, noting, again in a distinction that Mott did not fail to make, that this does not mean the conversion of all, but the communication of the gospel to all such that faith or disbelief in Jesus Christ is made clear to all.<sup>297</sup> Thus, while in a sense Whitby was rightly considered as being in the post-Mott era<sup>298</sup> since it transcended several thoughts previously held in the missionary thinking of the early John Mott era, in this sense of evangelization it was a re-awakening of the Mott passion.<sup>299</sup> This revived slogan, as a preparatory document for the first assembly of the

<sup>294</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 200 – John A. Mackay.

<sup>295</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 200-201 – John A. Mackay.

<sup>296</sup> *The Witness*, 15; cf. also Stephen Neill’s position in *Renewal and Advance*, 83 – Stephen Neill.

<sup>297</sup> *The Witness*, 19. Cf. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 340; Latourette and Hogg, *Tomorrow is Here*, xi; cf. Mott’s Speech on the subject at the New York 1900 Ecumenical Missionary Conference. See *New York 1900 Report*, 1:95-103.

<sup>298</sup> Latourette and Hogg, *Tomorrow is Here*, 53f; Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundation*, 336; Shivute, *The Theology of Mission*, 92f.

<sup>299</sup> John Alen McIntosh notes that the difference between this optimism of Whitby and that of nineteenth century was that while at Whitby there was a church in almost every part of the world, it was not

WCC at Amsterdam in 1948 pointed out, was “often discounted as the expression of youthful enthusiasm and visionary ardour.”<sup>300</sup> But for Whitby it was a way to express the call of the gospel. Thus, the gospel was to be taken to all persons of all cultures and all religions with the goal of their conversion. As the meeting affirmed, it was a “defeatist spirit” to assume that the Brahminist, the Moslem or the Communist cannot be converted to Jesus Christ. Thus, in this respect Whitby called the church again to the importance and urgency of evangelism for its life and witness. And this, as is clear, was in the Winner model.

A second respect in which Whitby’s evangelistic thrust was significant was in the concept of “expectant evangelism.”<sup>301</sup> By this phrase, Whitby expressed its belief that evangelism was to be done “by life as well as by word,” with relevance to the mind, eyes and feelings. This was the way the church was to preach its message to the world. And in this it was to be expectant of God bearing fruit through its witness. Mere preaching without a lived experience or mere activity without an interpretation are both defective expressions of the gospel. When the church is true to itself, it shall be engaged in social justice, righting wrongs, educating the young, healing bodies, caring for orphans and the aged, all of which are “integral and inseparable parts of the proclamation of the Kingdom

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so in the 1880s. “Church and Missions, 1910-1961: A Study in the Theological History of the International Missionary Council” (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary), 128f.

<sup>300</sup> “The Church’s Witness to God’s Design,” in *Man’s Disorder and God’s Design*, 120.

<sup>301</sup> On expectant evangelism arising out of the lived experience at Whitby see: Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1:373; Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 339; J. C. Baker, *The Church in a World of Ferment*, 17. As to whether or not this phrase is eschatological, see: Günther, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City*, 69; cf. Hans Jochen Margull, *Theologie der missionarischen Verkündigung: Evangelisation als oekumenisches Problem* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959), 28f.

of God.”<sup>302</sup> But the church can only be true to itself, as Mackay put it, when it is not an end in itself but rather becomes “the missionary instrument of God’s will.”<sup>303</sup>

In a third respect Whitby’s evangelistic emphasis was significant, namely, in the idea of evangelism as “partnership in obedience.”<sup>304</sup> By this phrase Whitby sought to state that it was not only the older churches which were to take the gospel to the younger churches but also vice versa, and this in a partnership which involves all in united mutual service.<sup>305</sup> As F. C. Carino notes, this phrase “was not just a suggestive description of what the relationship between older and younger churches should be” but “the all embracing framework” of future ecumenical missionary activities.<sup>306</sup>

It is clear, then, that Whitby had two major ways in which it freshly affirmed the Winner model. One was by noting the need for the church’s continued re-conversion for effective mission. This was important because of the church’s indispensable role for human destiny, which role cannot be fulfilled without constant re-conversion and renewal in the source of its life. The church’s place in human destiny was expressed, as in earlier conferences and meetings, in the relation of the church’s life and ministry to the unity of humankind. In this way the church was shown to be at the “centre” of the world’s life. The other way was by emphasizing the place of evangelism in the church’s mission. This was significantly done in three respects. In the first there was a call to evangelism in the

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<sup>302</sup> *The Witness*, 15f.

<sup>303</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 203 – Mackay.

<sup>304</sup> *The Witness*, 23-34; cf. Latourette and Hogg, *Tomorrow is Here*, 98-113.

<sup>305</sup> It is important to note that for Whitby, the distinction between “older and younger churches” has become largely obsolete. *The Witness*, 24 cf. *Renewal and Advance*, 25 – E. J. Bingle.

zeal and urgency of the Mott era. In the second, the concept of expectant evangelism was brought up to emphasize that evangelism involved the whole of life and was done with expectancy. In the third, the concept of “partnership in obedience” was coined as a conscious way of transcending the division between older and younger churches and emphasizing the mutuality of missions between them.

In this section we have tried to show how the International Missionary Conferences at Jerusalem 1928, Madras 1938 and Whitby 1947 contributed to the evangelistic shaping of the Winner model that was operating in ecumenical thought. Jerusalem highlighted the common need of all humanity for redemption from sin. Hence the idea of mission as an activity of Western nations in taking the gospel to non-Western nations began to crumble at Jerusalem 1928 and was furthered at Madras 1938 and finally led to the concept of mission as partnership at Whitby 1947. The church’s one message to the world which Lausanne 1927 contributed to ecumenical discussion was taken up by Jerusalem and applied to the context of the secularism of the time. Thus the uniqueness and superiority of Christ was consistently affirmed even though there were already strong voices claiming revelation for non-Christian religions at Jerusalem and Madras and in the report of the Laymen’s Foreign Mission’s Inquiry. It was also consistently declared that it is the task and calling of the church to present the gospel to people of all faiths and thereby win them for Christ. Yet also, Christians may work with non-Christians in the alleviation of human sufferings. Through the meetings the clear connection of the church’s mission to the unity of humankind was made; it was through the church’s ministry of Christianization that humanity was to be one. The church was the sphere of

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<sup>306</sup> F. C. Carino, “Partnership in Obedience,” *International Review of Mission* 67/267 (July 1978):

redemption and God's unique agent in realizing the kingdom. At Madras the integral relatedness of humanity to God was seen as the ground to deny the claims of totalitarian powers upon humanity. In all these ways these IMC conferences shaped the Winner model evangelistically.

## V. Conclusion

It is the thesis of this work that the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century has shifted in its understanding of the church-world relations and that this change may be shown by means of two models, "the Church as Winner of the World" (Winner model) and the Church as Sign for the World (Sign model). In this chapter we have attempted to trace the shaping of the Winner model from Edinburgh's inheritance of it from the nineteenth century through the three major streams of ecumenical activity that emanated from Edinburgh. We have shown that this model as inherited involves the affirmation of the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ as God and Savior. Because of this unique revelation all other religions were false and Christianity alone was the one true religion. Christ was therefore to be preached to all the world in order that all may be won for Christ. Winner terminologies – winning, conquest, army, and other such expressions – were therefore used to express the church-world relation. The preaching of the gospel was primarily verbal and secondarily social. The mission of the church was seen as integrally related to the unity of humankind, but this ultimate human unity was to be achieved only by means of the Christianization of the world. This was the original form of the model as inherited by Edinburgh 1910.



Edinburgh 1910 began the initial directions of the ethical, ecclesiological and evangelistic shaping of the model. Ethically, preaching and social work were drawn closer together as inseparable aspects of the one gospel. Ecclesiological, the need for unity in faith as necessary for the church's effective witness began to emerge and as such a deeper unity than comity was stressed. Evangelistically, the understanding of non-Christian religions improved especially in terms of their true values. Also, the global relevance of non-Christian civilizations for the future of the nations was realized. The connection of the church's ministry to the unity of humankind began to be expressed more clearly in the concept of the kingdom of God, which was seen as both a social conception and one founded upon redemption. The subsequent shapings of the model from Edinburgh 1910 to Whitby 1947 were simply modifications or fresh emphasis of the original dimensions. At Liverpool 1912 the criterion of 'humanity' was emphasized for mission and ethics. At Stockholm 1925 the church's socio-ethical uniqueness was shown to lie in the spiritual ideal of the kingdom of God. At Oxford 1937 the context of totalitarian states led to the emphasis on humanity's true worth as existing in relationship with God. Also, the church's unavoidable ambivalent appropriation of the ethical ideal of the kingdom as a result of its sinfulness was noted, and the need for interdisciplinary studies in ethics was underscored. At the meetings of Faith and Order at Lausanne 1927, in spite of differences in the church's nature, the one gospel that the church has as its message was highlighted to be Jesus Christ. At Edinburgh 1937, the church was seen as the sphere of redemption. At the IMC meeting at Jerusalem 1928 the universal need for the gospel was freshly affirmed, and that began to shape mission in such a way that the idea of mission as what the Western nations did alone was dropped. This continued

through Madras 1938 and Whitby 1947, when the concept of mission as “partnership in obedience” between the older and younger churches came to stay. Also at Whitby, the place of evangelism in mission was highlighted.

Thus, in spite of the calls by the American Hocking Commission and some others which demanded radical modifications in missionary “motives, methods, message and aims,”<sup>307</sup> the Winner model still emerged as the ecumenical approach to missionary work. This model, as it emerged at the formation of the WCC at Amsterdam, retained several elements of the original formulation. The universal relevance of Christ and Christ’s uniqueness has survived all the stages of the shaping of this element. The uniqueness of Christianity was still maintained, but not as an exclusive possession of the Western churches and no longer as part of the Western civilization, whose secularism and neo-paganism have enabled the church to clearly spell out the differences between the church and the state. This uniqueness was still claimed for the institution of the church as it existed historically, especially in the context of totalitarian movements. In this respect the church was the sphere of redemption and the only place where humanity can be told that it belongs to God in Christ. The church that was to be involved in the missionary task was to seek unity not only in terms of comity, but also in terms of a common faith and a common sacramental life. The obligation to preach the gospel was still there, but no longer only in terms of evangelistic preaching but also in terms of social work, even though the church was not to be directly involved in social and political matters. In this preaching the world and people of all religions were still to be ‘won’ over to Christ. Whereas the church may cooperate with secular organizations and non-Christian

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<sup>307</sup> Anderson, “American Protestants in Pursuit of Mission,” 106-108.

religions, the church was not to give up its call to witness to Jesus Christ that all may be saved and that churches may be planted.

In all this, the life and unity of the church was integrally related to the life and unity of humankind. At Edinburgh 1910 the church was seen as the body by means of which the Spirit “might have free course to fashion a new humanity.”<sup>308</sup> At Liverpool 1912 it was noted that the church has become the “earnest of a new world” by means of the resurrection.<sup>309</sup> At Lausanne 1927 the church was called the “new humanity” given the gospel in trust for the whole of humanity.<sup>310</sup> At Oxford 1937 the church was called “‘a colony of heaven’ in a fallen world exemplifying by contrast the true way of human living.”<sup>311</sup> At Madras 1938 the church was called “a foretaste of the redeemed family of God which He has purposed humanity to be.”<sup>312</sup> At Whitby 1947 the church was seen as “an earnest, a foretaste of the community of nations which could be and some day must be.”<sup>313</sup> For this reason the church stands, in the words of Van Dusen, at “the very centre of the world’s life.”<sup>314</sup> This unique task of the church makes it consider itself, under the light of the kingdom of God, as the most important agent in the world’s hope of the unity of humankind. And this can only be a reality when the church itself is united and carries

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<sup>308</sup> *Edinburgh 1910 Report*, 4:228.

<sup>309</sup> *Christ and Human Need*, 188 – Cairns.

<sup>310</sup> *Lausanne 1927 Report*, 79 – Brown.

<sup>311</sup> *Oxford 1937 Report* 187-188 – Additional Report of Section I.

<sup>312</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 16 – Report of Group I.

<sup>313</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 197 – van Dusen.

<sup>314</sup> *Renewal and Advance*, 195.

on the message of the kingdom by both word and action to the end that it may win the world for Christ and thereby realize the unity of humankind.

It was in the framework of this understanding of “the Church as Winner of the World” model and this double commitment to word and deed that the World Council of Churches was formed at Amsterdam in 1948. Between the first assembly at Amsterdam in 1948 and the fourth assembly at Uppsala in 1968, this model was in tension with the emerging “the Church as Sign for the World” model. The theological processes in this tension shall engage us in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **MODELS IN TENSION: WINNER VERSUS SIGN**

In the previous chapter we considered the ecumenical movement's understanding of the church-world relation in terms of a model we called the Church as Winner of the World (Winner model). In the Winner model the church seeks to win the world for Christ and thus to unite humanity by means of its missionary activity. Here, church and world, in varying degrees, stand over against each other until the church wins the world by means of the gospel. We traced the shaping of this model through a series of ecumenical gatherings from Edinburgh 1910 through the first post-World War II meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1947, a year before the formation of the World Council of Churches and its first assembly at Amsterdam in 1948. Through all these conferences, as we saw, the Winner model remained intact in spite of modifications which were made to some of its elements. Amsterdam 1948 inherited and kept this model of ecumenical church-world relations.

However, a number of emphases within ecumenical discussions between Amsterdam 1948 and Uppsala 1968 raised tensions with respect to several elements of the Winner model. At the same time elements of a new model, which I have called the Church as Sign to the World were introduced into these discussions. At Amsterdam 1948 and Lund 1952, the Christological element of the Winner model was accented, but this raised questions for the church's responsibility in the world and the nature of the church's

historical existence respectively. At Willingen 1952 the idea of *missio Dei* was highlighted. This attention and focus on the world as the sphere of the action of the Trinitarian God ran the risk of being interpreted in such a way as to underemphasize the distinctive redemption in Christ and also raised questions about the nature of the church's mission. At Evanston 1954 Christ as the hope of the world raised questions for the relationship between the world and the eschaton, between the redemption in Christ and the redemption of the world. It also raised questions on how both the church and the world relate to the kingdom of God. The change in perspective introduced by the concept of *missio Dei* along with the Christological universalism which came to a height at New Delhi 1961 gave a new emphasis to the world and humankind. This new emphasis on the world and the resultant theological interpretations associated with it led to chaos at Montreal 1963, as many of the previously unquestioned assumptions on God's relation with the world and history and the unity of the Christological witness in the New Testament were challenged. At Mexico City 1963 the secular society and non-Christian world received new attention, and at Geneva 1966 science, technology and the revolutionary movements along with the criterion of the *humanum* were highlighted. These all raised fresh challenges for the church's relation to the world. The study on The Missionary Structure of the Congregation was an epitome of these issues that were emerging. Bristol 1967 reviewed the studies on Christ's relation to the world and the church and raised further questions about the relationship between the unity of the church and that of humankind and about what the criteria should be for evaluating secular catholicities. Uppsala 1968 manifested a triumph of the Sign model over the Winner model by letting the world write its agenda. It shall be my concern in this chapter to

demonstrate all these emphases in ecumenical thought and show how they raise tensions for the Winner model while at the same time revealing the emerging elements of the Sign model.

## **I. Christological Accenting of the Winner Model**

The World Council of Churches, launched in 1948 at Amsterdam, inherited the dominant Winner model of the previous half century. The Amsterdam assembly and the third conference of the Faith and Order Movement at Lund in 1952 also retained this model but gave it a Christological accent. Amsterdam 1948 directed emphasis to Christ as the winner rather than the church as the agent of this winning. At Lund 1952 Christ and the church were so indissolubly linked that Christ is never without his church and the church is never without Christ. This raised questions about the implications of this union for the church's historical existence.

### **A. Amsterdam 1948 and the Christological Accenting of the Winner Model**

Amsterdam retained the Winner model it had inherited, but it laid a new stress on the Christological element of the model. The ecumenical movement had always been Christological in its thinking<sup>1</sup> and, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Winner model has the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ as one of its elements. The Winner model discussed in the previous chapter focused on the church and its duty to win the world for Christ. After Amsterdam the role of the church was not denied, but the emphasis was more on Christ as winner rather than the church. Section II of the

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<sup>1</sup> For a short demonstration of this in Amsterdam see Conrad Simonson, *The Christology of the Faith and Order Movement* (Leiden/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1972), 59-66.

Amsterdam assembly, *The Church's Witness to God's Design*, put the stress on God's design in Christ rather than on human disorder.<sup>2</sup> Amsterdam emphasized the already won victory of Christ, holding that the claim of the gospel is that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death God "has won a victory in history itself against the forces which oppose Him."<sup>3</sup>

This accent on Christ at Amsterdam was likely the influence of Karl Barth.<sup>4</sup> Barth called upon the assembly to shift emphasis to God in Christ rather than on the church's activities. That is, the assembly should give up every thought that "the care of the church, the care of the world, is *our* care." God's design, he noted, was not the church's activities of Christianization but the redemption in Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> Christ has "already robbed sin and death, the devil and hell of their power, and already vindicated Divine justice in His own person,"<sup>6</sup> said Barth. He also noted in his contribution to the preparatory documents that God calls the church to witness to this "victory that He has

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<sup>2</sup> The section was on "The Church's Witness to God's Design." See W. A. Visser't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches Held At Amsterdam August 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 64-73 (hereafter cited as *Amsterdam Report*). Dr. Walter Horton is said to have worried that there was not enough reference to humanity's sin in the section report. *Amsterdam Report*, 71. This book is volume 5 of *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, 5 vols. (New York: Harper, 1949), Hereafter volume 5 shall be cited as *Amsterdam Report* and other volumes as *Man's Disorder*.

<sup>3</sup> *Man's Disorder*, 1:14 – Introduction. Hereafter cited as *Man's Disorder*.

<sup>4</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue: A Study of the Methodological Development in the Commission on "Faith and Order" of the World Council of Churches* (Bangalore, India: Dharmaram Publications, 1981), 46, 295ff. Conrad Simonson, *The Christology of the Faith and Order Movement* (Leiden/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1972), 67f., 73f.; cf. *Amsterdam Report*, 32. See also Barth's address at Amsterdam published as "No Christian Marshall Plan," *Christian Century* 65/49 (Dec. 8, 1948):1330-1333. As H. Paul Douglas records, Barth's influence at Amsterdam was considered by some Americans like Edwin Aubrey, Harold Fey and Reinhold Niebuhr as significant. See H. Paul Douglas, "Some American Reactions to Amsterdam," *The Ecumenical Review* 1 (1948/1949): 285-294 at 288-290.

<sup>5</sup> Barth, "No Christian Marshall Plan," 1331-1332, italics in the text; cf. *Amsterdam Report*, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Barth, "No Christian Marshall Plan," 1331; cf. *Amsterdam Report*, 32 – Plenary Session.



already won.”<sup>7</sup> The church, then, in this coloring of the model, is not the winner of the world as such, but only the result of, the place of nurture for, and the witness to, this already won victory in Christ. Thus, to millions of people the church is “the place where they receive the grace of Christ and are given strength to live by the power of His victory.”<sup>8</sup>

This accent of the model, however, did not eliminate the use of the Winner terminology at Amsterdam.<sup>9</sup> But it raised a crucial problem for some participants at Amsterdam. The problem was well formulated by Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr thought that Barth’s view in which he insisted that “the care of the world is not our care” could lead to a neglect of the church’s evangelistic and prophetic function in the world. Niebuhr suggested that whereas such a view may prevent from the “vainglorious belief” that humans can realize the kingdom of God by their own virtues, it does not remind them that “they are workers together with Him.”<sup>10</sup> Further exchanges between Barth and Niebuhr<sup>11</sup> underscored the problem that an emphasis on Christ’s initiative in mission could be interpreted as undermining the church’s mission.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Karl Barth, “The Living Congregation,” in *Man’s Disorder*, 1: 68.

<sup>8</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 66 – Report of Section II.

<sup>9</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 68 – Report of Section II; 162 – Report of Committee IV on Concerns of the Churches; 94 – Report of Section IV; 178-179 – Richard Niebuhr.

<sup>10</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “We are Men and Not God,” *Christian Century* 65/43 (Oct. 27, 1948):1138-1140, citation at 1139.

<sup>11</sup> For Barth reply see: “Continental vs. Anglo-Saxon Theology: A Preliminary Reply to Reinhold Niebuhr,” *The Christian Century* 66/7 (Feb. 16, 1949): 201-204; for Niebuhr’s response to Barth’s reply see: Reinhold Niebuhr, “An Answer to Karl Barth,” *The Christian Century* 66/8 (Feb. 23, 1949):234-236.

<sup>12</sup> A similar move was taken by the study on “The Biblical Doctrine of Man” where the church’s responsibility to the world “before” its Lord was placed over against the church’s responsibility for the world. See, G. Ernest Wright and an ecumenical committee in Chicago, eds. *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*

The problem with which Niebuhr was concerned was avoided by the Amsterdam 1948 assembly's final report which emphasized Christ's centrality and the church's role in taking the gospel to the world at the same time. Following the Winner model, Amsterdam took seriously the church's place to Christianize the world and, in that way, related the church's life and mission to the destiny of humankind. On the floor of the Amsterdam assembly Dr. Alan Walker insisted on "the priority of making men Christians," noting that the trouble with the world was that there were "too few Christians."<sup>13</sup> The obligation to preach the gospel to all the world was a strong emphasis of the assembly.<sup>14</sup> "If the Gospel really is a matter of life and death," the assembly's Section II reasoned, "it seems intolerable that any human being now in the world should live out his life without ever having the chance to hear and receive it."<sup>15</sup> Amsterdam, therefore, saw the church as called to serve humanity by its witness to the gospel through word and deed,<sup>16</sup> to be God's unique gift to the world for its salvation<sup>17</sup> and, therefore, to

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*in Society* (London: SCM Press for the Study Department of the World Council of Churches, 1954), 129f, 133f.

<sup>13</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 71 – Plenary Discussion of Report of Section II; cf. Bishop Eivind's point about the impossibility of a de-Christianized world because God has spoken in human history. *Amsterdam Report*, 182 – The third public meeting on the Christian Witness in the International Order.

<sup>14</sup> Although the draft constitution of the WCC adopted at Utrecht in 1938 did not mention evangelism, Amsterdam made it one of its main themes and also created The Secretariat for Evangelism. The intention was evangelism might be the work of all departments and not just of any one department. *The First Six Years 1948-1954: A Report of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches on the Activities of the Departments and Secretariats of the Council* (Geneva: WCC, 1954), 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 70 – Report of Section II; cf. "The Church's Witness to God's Design," in *Man's Disorder*, 120. This was in spite of the accusations by the International Council of Churches of the WCC as being "anti-biblical" and a group of "religious negatives." Cf. David P. Gaines, *The World Council of Churches: A Study of Its Background and History* (Peterborough, New Hampshire: Richard R. Smith Co., 1966), 257. Also, this was in spite of differing opinions on the Word of God expressed on the floor of the assembly especially by Karl Barth and C. H. Dodd. See *Amsterdam Report*, 32-33 cf. Gaines, *The World Council*, 245-246, 256-257.

<sup>16</sup> *Man's Disorder*, 1: 55 – Florovsky.

be “the minister of the redemption wrought by Christ.”<sup>18</sup> In keeping with the Winner model, especially as expressed at Edinburgh 1937 and Madras 1938, Amsterdam was clear on the uniqueness of the church as the sphere of redemption. It saw the church as the one and only body with the privilege of making Christ known, the body “in which, and in which alone He [God] is pleased to reveal Himself and His redemptive purpose in Jesus Christ.”<sup>19</sup> For Amsterdam, therefore, the emphasis on Christ as the winner did not dim the commitment of the church to reach out with the gospel to the world; neither did it affect the church’s understanding of itself as the sphere of redemption. The church’s being and mission were related to human destiny through the church’s efforts of Christianization. However, G. Müller-Fahrenholz has rightly pointed out that the unity of the church was not directly connected to the unity of humankind.<sup>20</sup> But the church’s being and mission, as we have seen, was connected to human destiny. The church is to so present Christ to humanity that all are confronted with the solemn personal decision of a “yes” or “no” which has a great bearing on their destiny.<sup>21</sup>

The church’s task, for Amsterdam, was not only that of preaching the gospel, but also of living out the gospel. For Amsterdam Christian witness was by Christianization in the true sense of the word, which involved, along with the preaching of the gospel, the

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<sup>17</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 53, 54 – Report of Section I.

<sup>18</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 66 – Report of Section II.

<sup>19</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 64, 66 – Report of Section II.

<sup>20</sup> Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *Unity in Today’s World: Faith and Order Studies on: “Unity of the Church – Unity of Humankind”* (Geneva: WCC, 1979), 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 64 – Report of Section II.

permeation of the life of society with the Christian ethic.<sup>22</sup> In socio-economic ethics Christian principles meant the subordination of all economic activities to social ends.<sup>23</sup> Emil Bruner spoke on the “de-personalization of man in modern society” as reflected in both capitalism and communism. These, as he noted, could only be corrected in Christian teachings when the church lives at its best as “a pioneer of true community life and the conscience of the nations.”<sup>24</sup> In the judgment of the assembly it was only in the renewal of the church through a return to the Bible that social problems could be solved, since an inner renewal of the church involves a clearer grasp of the meaning of the gospel for the whole life of humans.<sup>25</sup> The church’s social influence, however, was not primarily in the formation of political parties, but primarily in its influence upon its members in teaching them responsibility both to God and humans.<sup>26</sup>

In accord with the Winner model Christian ethics was to be guided by the eschatological ideal of the kingdom of God. And at Amsterdam this was also the position. The “judgment and mercy” of the kingdom reveal the sins which corrupt the communities and institutions of every age. The coming kingdom assures us of sin’s and

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<sup>22</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 67 – Report of Section II. On Amsterdam’s social ethics see: Duff, *The Social Thought*, 93-94 cf. Oldham’s distinctions in W. A. Visser’t Hooft and J. H. Oldham, *The Church and Its Functions in Society* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1937), 217-238; Gaines, *The World Council of Churches*, 339; Douglas, “Some American Reactions to Amsterdam,” esp. 285-294; John C. Bennett, “The American Churches in the Ecumenical Situation,” *The Ecumenical Review* 1/1 (Autumn 1948): esp. 62-63; Chandran Devanesan, “Post-Amsterdam Thought from a Younger Church,” *The Ecumenical Review* 1/2 (Winter 1949): 142-148. See also: the differences in the positions of John Foster Dulles and Josef Hromadka. *Amsterdam Report*, 38-39, cf. G. K. A. Bell, *The Kingship of Christ: The Story of the World Council of Churches* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1954, 1979), 54. *The Christian Century* 66 (1949) has also published several articles in this respect.

<sup>23</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 76f. – Report of Section III.

<sup>24</sup> Emil Bruner, “And Now,” in *Man’s Disorder*, 3: 176-180.

<sup>25</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 185, 196 – Report of the Youth Delegation.

evil's ultimate defeat. The present calling of the kingdom leads to practical efforts in overcoming, eliminating or controlling the specific disorders of every age "which aggravate the perennial evil in human society."<sup>27</sup> Amsterdam thus clearly continues the eschatological motif of Christian witness and ethical commitment which we have seen to be characteristic of the Winner model. Thus, all the actions and activities of the church were to be "signs which point to the coming victory"<sup>28</sup> of Christ in the kingdom of God in human history. Karl Hartenstein was therefore on target when he noted that "the sight of the ruins" of the world with which Amsterdam was confronted would have been unbearable without an eschatological motif which combines "repentance and hope."<sup>29</sup> By the guidance of this eschatological ideal the church was to transcend communism and laissez-faire capitalism for a "responsible society" in which justice and freedom exist.<sup>30</sup>

To summarize: Amsterdam 1948 continued the Winner model inherited from the ecumenical streams that preceded it but accented it Christologically by directing attention

<sup>26</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 81f. – Report of Section III.

<sup>27</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 74 – Report of Section III.

<sup>28</sup> *Amsterdam Report*, 11 - Message to the Churches.

<sup>29</sup> On this, see: Karl Hartenstein, "The Third Way: an Interpretation and Criticism of Amsterdam," *The International Review of Missions* 38 (1949): esp. 85. Hartenstein points out Amsterdam's care in finding a third way between the extremes of Confessionalism and Relativism, nationalism and nation-less internationalism, capitalism and socialism, and between the East and the West. The notes of eschatology were in the various references to the hope of Christ's second coming. See pp. 77-87.

<sup>30</sup> For the history of the concept of a "responsible society" as an ethical determinant in ecumenical thought and the subsequent ecumenical departure from it in the post-Uppsala years, see Paul Abrecht, "From Oxford to Vancouver: Lessons from Fifty Years of Ecumenical Work for Economic and Social Justice," *The Ecumenical Review* 40/2 (April 1988): 147-168; idem. "The Predicament of Christian Social Thought after the Cold War," *The Ecumenical Review* 43/3 (July 1991): 318-328. See also Charles West, "Ecumenical Social Ethic Beyond Socialism and Capitalism," *The Ecumenical Review* 43/3 (July 1991): 329-340. West shows the content of the "responsible society" as involving the effort to render individuals and all centers of power responsible in communities, the search for the balance of personal freedom with just social order and the instilling of the hope of the kingdom of God in society. P. 329.

to Christ as the winner rather than the church. Nevertheless, it continued the use of the Winner language. Thus, its emphasis on Christ rather than the church did not distract from its continuation of the Winner model's commitment to the realization of human destiny by means of Christianization through the preaching of the gospel and permeation of society with the Christian ethic. The church was seen as the minister of the redemption in Christ and the gift of God to the world for its salvation. For Amsterdam, as is in the Winner tradition, the kingdom of God proclaimed by Christ is the ideal ethics by which the Christian life and human community are shaped.

#### **B. Lund 1952: Christological Ecclesiology**

The Christological accent in the framework of the Winner model at Amsterdam 1948 was perhaps most strongly expressed in the third Faith and Order conference at Lund, Sweden in 1952. Here the attempt to articulate an understanding of the church through the church's relationship with Christ raised questions both for the church's historical existence and for the cosmic significance of Christ. Lund's driving force was the church's given unity in Christ rather than the churches' many divisions. This was because the comparative method, which characterized Faith and Order discussion from Lausanne 1927 to this point, in which the churches compared their agreements and disagreements, could no longer serve ecumenical interests. It had reached its "natural limit" being only a "starting-point," and the churches could no longer proceed along its path.<sup>31</sup> A new method which penetrated behind the churches' divisions "to a deeper and richer understanding of the mystery of the God-given union of Christ with His Church"

was called for.<sup>32</sup> This led Lund to a fresh attempt at restating the church's nature and its relation to Christ, its head. And in almost every affirmation of Lund the uniqueness and centrality of Jesus for the church, for humanity and for salvation was made obvious.

Lund linked the church explicitly and indissolubly to Christ. Although for Lund Christ is the one and only savior of humanity and the Lord of the church and of all life,<sup>33</sup> its treatment of the Lordship of Christ did not go beyond the church. Christ was seen as “the King of the new People of God” who is inseparably united with them through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, “Christ is never without His Church; the Church is never without Christ;”<sup>34</sup> and “[w]hat happened to Christ uniquely in his once-and-for-all death and resurrection on our behalf, happens also to the Church in its way as his body.”<sup>35</sup> When the church's pilgrimage on earth is ended Jesus will return “to meet His Church in order to complete His work of redemption and judgment” and “consummate the union between

<sup>31</sup> Oliver S. Tomkins, ed., *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order Held At Lund, August 15<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, 1952* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 157 – Edmund Schlink (hereafter cited as *Lund Report*).

<sup>32</sup> *Lund Report*, 15 - “A Word to the Churches” being a short message to the churches after the conference; cf. Leonard Hodgson, “The Task of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order,” in *Lund Report*, 121-122; Edmund Schlink, “The Pilgrim People of God,” *Lund Report*, 156-157; Oliver S. Tomkins, “Implications of the Ecumenical Movement,” *Lund Report*, 162, 166ff.; see also *Evanston to New Delhi, 1954-1961: Report of the Central Committee to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1961), 37. Lund is therefore sometimes seen as both an end of the comparative method and a beginning of a new method of Faith and Order discussions. See John E. Skoglund and J. Robert Nelson, *Fifty Years of Faith and Order: An Interpretation of the Faith and Order Movement* (New York: 1963), 68. Kuncheria Pathil calls this new method one with “a Christological and Biblical approach.” The actual method that replaced the comparative method is called the “dialectical method.” Here the church's accepted agreements are examined to see what disagreements they conceal and the disagreements are examined to see what agreements they contain. This method was first introduced into ecumenical discussion by Karl Barth at Amsterdam. Kuncheria Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue: A Study of the Methodological Development in the Commission on “Faith and Order” of the World Council of Churches* (Bangalore, India: Dharmaram Publications, 1981), 46, 295ff.; Simonson, *The Christology*, 67f., 73f.

<sup>33</sup> *Lund Report*, 23 – Report on “Continuity and Unity.”

<sup>34</sup> *Lund Report*, 17-18 – Report on “Christ and His Church.”

<sup>35</sup> *Lund Report*, 18 – Report on “Christ and His Church.”

Christ and His Church in the eternal kingdom of God.”<sup>36</sup> In this way Lund stressed the Christological bearing of the church.

Lund’s ecclesiology, therefore, is one in which the church and Christ are so indissolubly linked together that Christ is never without his church and the church is never without Christ. This would mean, as Conrad Simonson observes, that “it is not possible to compose a Christology that is not consciously rooted in the experience of the church” and it is not possible to apprehend Christ in some other place, effectively bypassing the church.<sup>37</sup> The only way in which Lund spoke of the work of Christ in the world was through the agency of the church. It is through the witness of the church that “Jesus Christ is at work among men as Saviour, and brings all things in subjection under Himself as Lord and King of the world.”<sup>38</sup> Although Christ indeed will return “to judge the quick and the dead and to consummate the eternal kingdom of God in the whole creation,”<sup>39</sup> Lund did not make it clear whether or not this is simply equivalent to Christ’s consummation of his union with the church. However, no other humanity was spoken of as being part of the kingdom except the church. Kuncheria Pathil’s position, which sees “the unity of the whole creation in Jesus Christ” as part of Lund’s thought, is hardly reflected in the official report that emanated from Lund;<sup>40</sup> rather, as is evident from its

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<sup>36</sup> *Lund Report*, 20 – Report of Section II.

<sup>37</sup> Simonson, *The Christology*, 74-75.

<sup>38</sup> *Lund Report*, 19 – Report on Christ and His Church.

<sup>39</sup> *Lund Report*, 19 – Report on Christ and His Church.

<sup>40</sup> Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 47. This is in spite of the papers presented by Henry Smith Leiper, Rajah B. Manikam, D. T. Niles, Farid Audeh and others. See Tomkins, ed., *Lund Report*, 204-224. Even the followings statement of the Enlarged Committee of the IMC at Willingen which was communicated to Lund did not surface at Lund’s official reports: “In Christ we see God’s redemptive



official report,<sup>41</sup> Lund was pre-occupied with Christ's relation to the church rather than to humankind. This effort to define the doctrine of the church from Christology may be another reflection of the influence of Karl Barth on the ecumenical movement.<sup>42</sup>

This intimate connection between Christ and the church was troubling to some churches. The Disciples of Christ, for instance, thought that the identification of Christ with the church stretched the meaning of the concept of the church as the body of Christ from a metaphorical sense to a realistic sense. Also, Lund's opinion in which Christ is never without his church and the church never without Christ seemed to them to operate with a pre-historical view of the church. The reasoning here was that since Christ is pre-historic, to say that he is never without his church and the church is never without Christ would make the church pre-historic and, therefore, compromise the church as a historical institution begun at Pentecost.<sup>43</sup> Others saw a drift towards Christomonism and were led to call for a more Trinitarian understanding of the church's relation to God. This resulted in the inclusion in the final plenary of the need to study the doctrine of the church in

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action; in Christ God is still at work reconciling all things in Himself in one restored humanity." *Lund Report*, 223 – "The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity."

<sup>41</sup> The section reports dealt with Christ and His Church, Continuity and Unity, Ways of Worship, Intercommunion, and Where Do We Stand? (this last section explains where the conference stands on the issues of the church's faith and witness).

<sup>42</sup> Simonson, *The Christology*, 73f. The drafters of the report of this section, as Michael E. Putney lists them are: Thomas T. Torrance, E Staehelin, Paul S. Minear, Kenneth Riches, C. Bergendoff, Edmund Schlink, and W. R. Cannon. Putney also indicated the prominence of Torrance in the outcome of these deliberations. See, Michael E. Putney, *The Presence and Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in the Studies of the Commission on Faith and Order (1927-1983)* (Rome, 1985), 107, and note 226.

<sup>43</sup> *Responses of the Churches to the Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order Lund 1952* (Geneva: Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches, 1957), esp. 8-10; cf. p. 6 for the view of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

relation to both the doctrine of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> But even this inclusion, as Michael E. Putney points out, was from the early stages of the recommendations geared towards the priority of Christology over pneumatology.<sup>45</sup> Lund's position may thus be seen as a Christological ecclesiology in so far as the church's being was expressed almost exclusively in Christological terms. This further reveals that at Lund Christology was highlighted.

Lund's Christological ecclesiology took place, however, within the framework of the Winner model. The uniqueness of Christ was evidently not in question and Christ's necessity for humanity's salvation was insisted upon; without Christ, humanity was "lost," said Lund.<sup>46</sup> The "Winner" terminology was present: Christ is "the mighty Victor" who has "overcome sin and death" and "brought the ungodly powers to nought."<sup>47</sup> The church is by nature and through its unity destined "to triumph over all enemies of the nations."<sup>48</sup> The church's being and mission were intimately related and separating them was declared as "a false antithesis."<sup>49</sup> Human destiny was also understood by means of a Christological ecclesiology. It is through the church's participation in Christ's mission that Christ "brings all things in subjection under Himself

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<sup>44</sup> *Lund Report*, 22 – Report on "Christ and His Church." Cf. other calls for the church's relation to Christ, the Holy Spirit and eschatology by Oliver S. Tomkins, Edmund Schlink, Robert L. Calhoun and D. T. Niles. See *Lund Report*, 165-167, 172f., 156, 246, 299.

<sup>45</sup> Putney, *The Presence and Activity of the Holy Spirit*, 114.

<sup>46</sup> *Lund Report*, 17 – Report on "Christ and His Church."

<sup>47</sup> *Lund Report*, 17 – Report on "Christ and His Church."

<sup>48</sup> *Lund Report*, 23 – Report on "Continuity and Unity."

<sup>49</sup> *Lund Report*, 18 – Report on "Christ and His Church." Cf. 209f. – Rajah B. Manikam, "The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity."

as Lord and King of the world.”<sup>50</sup> The church is “God’s gift for the salvation of the world” and “created by God as the realm of redemption by the Sovereign grace of God.”<sup>51</sup> The concept of the kingdom of God as an eschatological motif was present, but it was clearly stated that humans do not realize God’s kingdom but God alone.<sup>52</sup> This trend of caution with respect to the church’s place in the realization of the kingdom may be traced to Whitby 1947, although even before Whitby William Temple had described as Pelagian any thought that humans have the power to create or extend God’s kingdom.<sup>53</sup> All these elements of the Winner model show the model’s continuation at Lund. But like Amsterdam, Lund’s continuation of the model highlighted Christology.

In summary of the section, we have tried to show that the Winner model was continued at Amsterdam 1948 and Lund 1952 but that the Christological element of the model was accented in both places. Amsterdam, through the influence of Karl Barth, gave prominence to Jesus Christ as the winner rather than the church as the conquering agent. Though some feared that the concentration on Christ’s initiative in the care of the world would impede the church’s prophetic role in the world, Amsterdam avoided this problem. It emphasized the church’s responsibility to Christianize the world through the preaching of the gospel and Christian influence in society and thereby to realize human destiny. Lund 1952 retained the Winner model by highlighting the place of Christology

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<sup>50</sup> *Lund Report*, 20 – Report on Christ and His Church; cf. 61-62 – The Report, “Where Do We Stand?”

<sup>51</sup> *Lund Report*, 60 – Report on “Where Do We Stand?,” 31, 25 – Report on “Continuity and Unity.”

<sup>52</sup> This thought cuts across the entire Report on “Christ and His Church.”

for ecclesiology. Through an inseparable union between Christ and the church, Lund 1952 presented the church as indispensable for the redemption of the world. Lund's position, however, was found to be problematic by some as it tended to shift the concept of the church as the body of Christ from a metaphorical meaning to a realistic one and seemed to operate with a pre-historical view of the church and, as such, compromised the church's understanding as a historical event which began at Pentecost. Also, Lund was considered by some as lacking in its relation of the church to the Holy Spirit and to the Trinity.

## II. *Missio Dei* as a Challenge to the Winner Model: Willingen 1952

The International Missionary Council at Willingen in 1952 was perhaps the most significant of the conferences of the IMC in terms of its implications for the Winner model. It was at this meeting that the seeds were sown which were later to germinate into the most determining elements of the Sign model. Some of the seeds sown at Willingen were also to be later "hijacked"<sup>54</sup> in directions unintended by Willingen. Willingen emphasized the priority of the Trinitarian God in mission to the world. The new emphasis raised tensions in the Winner model in three respects. If the triune God was already at work in the world by Godself: 1) what is the place of the redemptive work of Christ for human life and history? 2) what is the place of the church in God's purpose for the world and in God's plan of redemption? 3) what is the value of the world in God's view and what is to be its value in the view of the church? In Willingen's response to all

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<sup>53</sup> William Temple, "The Christian Faith and the Common Life," in *The Christian Faith and the Common Life*, by Nils Ehrenstrom, M. F. Dibelius, William Temple [and others] (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1938), 61f.

these implications it showed evidence of having been influenced by the concerns that gave rise to a new emphasis in church-world relations, which we have called the Sign model.

Whereas at Amsterdam 1948 and at Lund 1952 there was a strong accenting of the Christological element of the Winner model, at the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Willingen in 1952, which took place a little earlier than Lund 1952, the emphasis was on the Trinitarian nature of God and the priority of this God in mission.<sup>55</sup> The point in this emphasis was to state that the triune God was already in mission to the world, already acting in the world and already fulfilling the purpose of God in the world even before the church came into being. The church is itself the result of the mission of God in the world. And it is in this mission of God in the world that the church has its own mission. Thus, according to Willingen,

[t]he missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself. Out of the depths of his love for us, the Father has sent forth his own beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, "Reply to Konrad Raiser," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18/2 (April 1994): 52.

<sup>55</sup> Some delegates at Willingen went there directly from the Lund conference. Cf. Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology: 1948-1975 Years of Worldwide Creative Tension Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), 36.

<sup>56</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 189 – "A Statement on the Missionary Calling of the Church." Cf. H. H. Rosin, *Missio Dei: An Examination of the Origin, Contents and Function of the Term in Protestant Missiological Discussion* (Leiden: Inter-University Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, 1972), 6. Jürgen Moltman, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64. Wilhelm Anderson, "Further Toward a Theology of Mission" in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), 300-313; Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission*, trans. by Gilbert A. Thiele and Dennis Hilgendorf (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 4-11.

In this idea the classical understanding of Trinitarian mission in which the Father sends the Son, and the Father (and the Son) sends the Spirit was expanded to include another sending, namely, the triune God's sending of the church to the world to participate in this mission of God towards humanity.<sup>57</sup> The church, thus, has no mission of its own but is merely a bearer of and participator in God's mission towards humanity. Or put differently, the church has a mission only insofar as it participates in the divine turning towards humanity.<sup>58</sup> In this formulation of the church's mission the priority of the triune God was highlighted and the church's mission was redefined in the light of this priority. Because of this new emphasis on the priority of God in mission, Willingen has sometimes been associated with the concept of *missio Dei*, but the exact term was not used at Willingen. The term was perhaps first coined by Karl Hartenstein, but the idea may be traced to Karl Barth who, from the early 1930s, had begun to speak of mission as the work of the Trinitarian God.<sup>59</sup> It was, however, at Willingen that the idea of mission as the work of the Trinitarian God received prominence in missionary thinking.

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<sup>57</sup> Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 8-11, etc. David J. Bosch notes that "Willingen's image of mission was mission as participating in the sending of God." David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 390. It is to be noted that while the idea of *missio Dei* runs through the documents of Willingen, the exact term was not used. Rosin, *MISSIO DEI*, 6, 17-19. Anna Marie Aagaard finds the innovation of the *missio Dei* in the linking of mission with the triune God. "Missio Dei in Katholischer Sicht," *Evangelische Theologie* 34 (1974): 420.

<sup>58</sup> Josef Schmitz, *Die Weltzuwendung Gottes: Thesen zu einer Theologie der Mission* (Freiburg: Imba-Verlag, 1971), 25. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 64; Anderson, "Further Toward a Theology of Mission," 304. J. C. Hoekendijk warns that the church as center of mission is an "illegitimate" center. J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Church in Missionary Thinking," *International Review of Missions* 41/163 (1952): 332.

<sup>59</sup> Karl Barth spoke of the missionary nature of God in his 1932 paper delivered at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference and later published as "Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart," in *Theologische Fragen und Antworten* vol. 3 (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1957), 100-126. Karl Hartenstein used the term "*missio Dei*" in a report, "Theologische Besinnung" to the Willingen Conference. See Walter Freytag, ed., in cooperation with G. Brennecke, Karl Hartenstein, C. Ihmels, A. Lehmann, and E. Verwiebe, *Mission zwischen Gestern und Morgen: Vom Festaltwandel der Weltmission der Christenheit im Licht der Konferenz des Internationalen Missionsrates in Willingen*

The discussions of Willingen revealed three possible implications of this new emphasis. First was the implication it has for the redemptive work of Christ. The reasoning was apparently that since God was in mission to the world in God's Trinitarian being, the redemptive work of Christ cannot but take a secondary place. In point of fact, no one actually took such a position, but the concentration upon the centrality of Christ in the understanding of the Trinitarian mission at Willingen suggests that this was a possible fear. The North American study, had called for missionary theology, strategy and obligation to move from "vigorous Christo-centricity to thoroughgoing trinitarianism," adding that "the freedom of God to come to men wherever they are, and just as they are," is the emphasis of the Trinitarian ground and framework of the missionary task.<sup>60</sup> People come to experience this God differently, this report said, and "[t]he Christian mission accepts this diversity in gratitude, humility, and praise," as the work of the triune God.<sup>61</sup> Also this study had used its Trinitarian concept to challenge what it called "the Unitarianism of the Son," describing it as "that excessive pre-occupation with Jesus

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(Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1952), 54. Hartenstein speaks of the source of mission as the "triune God himself" (der dreieinige Gott selbst), an expression that seems to have been used in almost exactly the same words in Willingen's Statement on the Missionary Calling of the Church, in which Hartenstein was one of the drafters. In addition, Hartenstein wrote that the mission of the church comes from the mission of God alone [*Aus der 'Missio Dei' allein kommt die 'Missio ecclesiae'*], 62. Rosin, following Wolfgang Günther, has however argued that Hartenstein's paper did not intend to highlight the *missio Dei* concept but was rather interested in the relationship between salvation history and eschatology. Rosin, *MISSIO DEI*, 7 cf. Wolfgang Günther, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City, Die ekklesiologischen Bemühungen der Weltmissionskonferenzen (1910-11963)* (Stuttgart: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1970), 88-91.

<sup>60</sup> *Preparatory Studies for the Missionary Obligation of the Church, Why Missions?* Prepared by the Committee of Research in Foreign Missions of the Division of Foreign Missions and the Central Department of Research and Survey, The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC), (Mimeographed, February, 1952), 6, (emphasis in the original text) (hereafter cited as *Why Missions?*).

<sup>61</sup> *Why Missions?*, 6. According to the Report: "There are those whose response to Jesus Christ presupposes a deep and delicate sensitivity to divine majesty; others whose faith in God, laggard or confused or altogether gone, leaps into life upon encounter with the incarnate Son of the Most High; and still others, in whom the intimate immediacy of the spiritual reality anticipates the transforming power of the Sovereign Lord of life."

Christ, which can easily be content with the experience of ‘being saved,’ . . .”<sup>62</sup> Perhaps in fear that such positions would be misinterpreted to mean a denial of the centrality of Christ in the divine mission,<sup>63</sup> Willingen emphasized that God’s mission to the world cannot bypass the cross of Christ.<sup>64</sup> It is in the cross that the world’s real questions and answers exist, and it is through “the hidden power of the Cross” that God rules the revolutionary forces of history and works out God’s real purpose for the world.<sup>65</sup> Thus, as Max A. C. Warren put it, the cross of Christ is “the illuminating center of the mystery of God’s redemptive purpose.”<sup>66</sup>

A second implication raised by the emphasis on the priority of the Trinitarian God in mission concerns the importance of the church in mission. The reasoning here was that because God was at work in the Trinitarian being in human history, the church was irrelevant or unnecessary for this purpose. The North American study had also noted that

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<sup>62</sup> *Why Missions?*, 6-7.

<sup>63</sup> This can only be a misinterpretation because the North American Report did not fail to show that Christ is central to its understanding of the Trinitarian mission. For instance it held that: “The lordship of the living Christ is thus the point of departure for the missionary activity of the Church whose Head Christ is;” also that: “the missionary obligation is to give a plain and persuasive witness in the world to God, as he is revealed in Jesus Christ; and that the ground of this obligation is the triune nature and activity of God.” *Why Missions?*, 3, 7. In fact the entire report is Christo-centric in its focus. It would seem then that the work of God beyond the church which the North American Report sees is not a work apart from Christ but a work in which the church is not primary and may be even completely absent.

<sup>64</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 193 – A Statement on the Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity; cf. Anderson, “Further Toward a Theology of Mission,” 302. The official report at Willingen was published as *Missions Under the Cross*. Goodall notes in his introduction to *Mission Under the Cross* that “the moments at which the whole gathering felt itself most surely under the leading of God and held in the power of His Spirit were those in which the Cross and its ‘hiddenness’ were the focus of worship and the theme of exposition.” p. 14.

<sup>65</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 188 – A Statement on the Missionary Calling of the Church.

<sup>66</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 25 – Max A. C. Warren; cf. Paul Tillich, “Missions and World History,” in G. H. Anderson, ed., *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, 282-3. He says: “the moment in which the meaning of history becomes fully manifest is to be called the center of history, and . . . this center is the New Being in Jesus Christ.”



the church's missionary obligation "grounded in the reconciling action of the triune God" involves "the sensitive and total response of the Church to what the triune God has done and is doing in the world."<sup>67</sup> Here the world was seen as the locus of God's activities. Helmut H. Rosin thinks this idea of the triune God in mission was the "Trojan horse" of this American study for sneaking in its ideas into the ecumenical discussion at Willingen.<sup>68</sup> But this was not only the American position; it was a position already strongly defended by the Dutch theologian, J. C. Hoekendijk, who insisted that the world rather than the church was the true context of mission and that the true sequence of God's dealings with the world was kingdom-gospel-apostolate-world. The church was only an occurrence or happening of the apostolate and has no fixed place in this sequence. It has no substantive existence; it is only a means of God's redemptive "shalom" in the world which it is to witness to by its word and life. It was not intended for permanence in God's plan for the world.<sup>69</sup> The study on "The Missionary Obligation of the Church" reflected these views in which the world is the locus of God's work.<sup>70</sup> The interim report

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<sup>67</sup> *Why Missions?*, 6. The full text is the following: "Missionary obligation, grounded in the reconciling action of the triune God, is not the duty to save souls (after all only God does that, ubi et quando visum est Deo) but the sensitive and total response of the Church to what the triune God has done and is doing in the world. It is the business of the Christian Missionary to 'make straight in the desert a highway for our God,' (Is. 40:3) not blow Gabriel's horn. Obviously this does not mean that theological formulae, secretarial administration, and the saving of souls are expendable. It means only that they are peripheral and must remain so, if the missionary movement is not to become something else."

<sup>68</sup> Rosin, *Missio Dei*, 26 cf. *Mission Under the Cross*, 238-248, which contains the interim report of the major study on the missionary obligation of the church; cf. Günther, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City*, 225.

<sup>69</sup> Hoekendijk, "The Church in Missionary Thinking," 332-324; idem, "The Call to Evangelism," *International Review of Mission* 39/154 (1950): 170f.

<sup>70</sup> This was a study undertaken with inputs from Walter Freytag, M. A. C. Warren, Johannes C. Hoekendijk, among others, and by study groups in the Netherlands and North America. Some of these papers include Walter Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *International Review of Mission* 41/154 (1950): 153-161; J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," 162-175; idem, "The

from this study was only received at the Willingen meeting but not accepted as the official position of the meeting. In its place a short statement which eliminated the aspects that dealt with Christ's cosmic and eschatological redemption vis a vis the church was adopted.<sup>71</sup>

Not all at Willingen preferred this way of Hoekendijk and the North American study. Rather the Official Report declared the church as "essential"<sup>72</sup> in God's purpose for the world, having been called to witness by word and deed to Jesus Christ's redemptive work and to the "Gospel of the Kingdom."<sup>73</sup> But whereas at Edinburgh 1937, Madras 1938, Amsterdam 1948, and later at Lund 1952, the church was the one and only agent of God's redemptive work, at Willingen, the church's role did not sound so absolute; at least elements which emphasized the absoluteness of the church were eliminated or dissolved. The church was now "an organ" rather than "the organ" of God's "cosmic redemptive purpose."<sup>74</sup> Rather than the church being the sphere of God's redemption, now it was only "an essential witness to the cosmic reach of God's redemptive activity."<sup>75</sup> While acknowledging "the sovereign rule of Him who is Saviour and Judge of all men" in contemporary events, in increased knowledge and power, and in contemporary political and social movements, it also added that this rule is "in countless

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Church in Missionary Thinking," 324-336; Max A. C. Warren, "Eschatology and History," *International Review of Mission* 41/163 (1952): 3337-350; and the North American study, *Why Missions?*

<sup>71</sup> Those who prepared this statement were Lesslie Newbigin, Paul Lehmann, Russell Chandran and Karl Hartenstein.

<sup>72</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 209 – Missionary Vocation and Training.

<sup>73</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 193 – A Statement on the Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity.

<sup>74</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 208 – Missionary Vocation and Training.

<sup>75</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 209 – Missionary Vocation and Training.

personal experiences of which the inner history cannot be revealed until the Last Day.”<sup>76</sup> Instead of the previous way of limiting the nature and extent of these wider “personal experiences,” Willingen simply admits that their full import will have to await the “Last Day.” Here are apparent indications of less exclusivity for the church as the sphere of redemption.

Willingen thought itself incompetent for a mission theology and took its activities as an experimentation and “stock taking.”<sup>77</sup> It therefore made no definite departure from older ecumenical thinking, but it did open the door for such departures. It therefore tended to speak in two voices. On the one hand, it saw the church as an essential witness empowered by “the Spirit of Jesus” “for the continuance of His [God’s] mission as His witnesses and ambassadors.”<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, the cross of Christ was admitted as operative even behind the revolutionary forces of history.<sup>79</sup> That these were still issues of tension at Willingen is revealed by the many unanswered questions it raised. Norman Goodall summarized these questions to include: the relation between the history of salvation and general or cosmic history, especially, the relation of God’s activities in creation to God’s redemption in grace; the relation of the Christian hope to the Christian missionary message and the practice of mission, in particular, the eschatological dimension of the church’s mission; the bearing of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit on the

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<sup>76</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 192 – The Missionary Calling of the Church.

<sup>77</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 13 – Norman Goodall.

<sup>78</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 189 – A Statement on the Missionary Calling of the Church.

<sup>79</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 188 – The Missionary Calling of the Church; cf. 240f. – The Missionary Obligation; 192 where the church is said to still have the duty to work to bring all things in subjection to Christ.

nature of the Church and the Christian ministry.<sup>80</sup> These questions were to reappear again and again in later ecumenical discussions.<sup>81</sup>

In spite of the new door being opened by the emphasis on the world as the locus of redemption, Willingen still operated primarily with the Winner model. Terminology that placed the church over against the world was used: “battle,” “army,” “conflict,” etc.<sup>82</sup> The uniqueness of Jesus Christ was declared: he was presented as the “one Saviour, one Shepherd,” and “one Redeemer” and to be so affirmed in spite of the relativism and syncretism of the time.<sup>83</sup> Christianization was not abandoned: the church was to witness to the world that people may become Christians and the churches were to seek to fill cultural forms with the Christian substance.<sup>84</sup> And, finally, there was a connection

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<sup>80</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 20f. – Norman Goodall.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. e.g., Ronald Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held in Mexico City December 8<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, 1963* (London: Edinburgh House Press, for the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, 1964), 157; *Evanston Report*, 70-71 – The Statement on the Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme; cf. Tomas Shivute, *The Theology of Mission and Evangelism in the International Missionary Council from Edinburgh to New Delhi* (Helsinki: Finnish Society for Missiology and Ecumenics, 1980), 148. The Ghana assembly of the IMC did not further the theological questions raised by earlier ecumenical conferences especially Willingen because its primary concerns were administrative. Nevertheless, the speech delivered by John A. Mackay seems to have touched nearly every important point of earlier missionary finding. Cf. Johannes Aagaard, “Some Main Trends in Modern Protestant Missiology,” *Studia Theologica* 19 (1965): 238-259, esp. 252; Don W. Holter, “Madras and Ghana,” *The Christian Century* 75/5 (1958): 134-135, esp. 134; For Mackay’s speech, see: Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1957 to 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1958: Selected Papers, with an Essay on the Rôle of the I.M.C.* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958), 100-124; etc.

<sup>82</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 188, 189, 191, etc. – The Missionary Calling of the Church.

<sup>83</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 189, 196, etc.

<sup>84</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 209, 189. “It is the duty of the Church to remind men and women that the call of God comes to all to serve Him as Christian witnesses wherever they may be.” p. 209.

between the church's life and unity and the destiny of humankind.<sup>85</sup> In all these affirmations the Winner themes are clearly discernible.

Yet, this new Trinitarian emphasis had begun to reveal elements of the emerging "Church as Sign to the World" model, which would later be further developed in ecumenical history. It will be recalled that in our definition of this model the church does not stand over against the world to win it for Christ, but in solidarity with it as a sign to it of God's redeeming activity in the world. The new emphasis at Willingen highlights at least three emerging elements of this model which contrast clearly with the Winner model. A first element of the Sign model emerging was the emphasis on the world as the realm of God's activities and a call to respect it as such. Rather than standing over against the world to conquer and win it for Christ, the church was now to be in solidarity with it, because God was already at work there judging and redeeming it, as the study on "The Theological Basis of Missionary Obligation" put it.<sup>86</sup> Willingen was somewhat influenced by this view hence its call for "solidarity" with the world in which the church was not to stand "over against the world, detached from it and regarding it from a position of superior righteousness and security."<sup>87</sup> This position of Willingen meant that David Bosch is incorrect in asserting that Willingen held the view that the church was

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<sup>85</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 193.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *Missions Under the Cross*, 241 – "The Theological Basis of the Missionary Obligation." It is to be noted that this statement was received by Willingen only for further studies. But for Willingen's agreed position on this, see e.g. p. 209 – Missionary Vocation and Training.

<sup>87</sup> *Missions Under the Cross*, 191 – The Missionary Calling of the Church.

“an entity completely separate from the human community.”<sup>88</sup> A second element of the Sign model whose elementary symptoms were being noticed was a broader locus of redemption. While this matter was not settled conclusively at Willingen, it was clear that it was a concern of some. As already cited, the study on “The Theological Basis of the Missionary Obligation” finds God in the world judging and redeeming it. Willingen had to refer this for further study. A third element of the Sign model which may be noticed is the freedom of God to act as God chooses. While God chooses to use the church and while the church is “essential” to God’s mission in the world, God was not bound to the church in such a way that God could not act in the world apart from the church as was later to be developed at Lund 1952. This new emphasis of the Trinitarian initiative in mission simply gives God freedom and emphasizes the church’s God-given important but not absolute role in the mission of God in the world. Willingen’s Trinitarianism was not a concept adopted to sidetrack Christocentricism. As will be seen in the course of this study, the ecumenical movement did not depart from Christocentricism.

In summary, then, the emphasis on mission as the work of the Trinitarian God came with implications for the redemptive work of God in Christ, the church’s mission and the cosmos, and in all these three areas raised challenges for the Winner model. Willingen responded to the first by emphasizing the centrality of the work of Christ which led to the cross in God’s mission. To the second, Willingen maintained that the church still has a part in God’s mission and is an essential part of God’s mission of redemption in the world. To the third, the cosmos was seen as the sphere of God’s

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<sup>88</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 388. Willingen clearly held that “Christians do not live in an enclave separated from the world; they are God’s people in the world.” *Missions Under the Cross*, 191 – The Missionary Calling of the Church.

actions. While the traditional view in which the church is the exclusive realm of redemption seemed to have been softened, the categorical affirmation of redemption outside the church was still not the official position even though it was clearly the position of some. Nevertheless elements of this latter view had begun to emerge. However, all God's actions in the world within and outside the church were seen as the operation of "the hidden power of the Cross."

### III. Eschatology as a Challenge to the Winner Model: Evanston 1954

The tensions in the Winner model in the 1950s were not only the result of the accent on its Christological element and the emphasis on the priority of the Trinitarian God in mission to the world. The church's eschatological faith itself raised challenges to the Winner model of church-world relations. The emphasis on the Trinitarian initiative in mission which came into prominence at Willingen resulted, as we have noted, in a new interest in the world and in the cosmic reach of Christ's redemption. These new interests raised questions about the meaning of the world and history. The second assembly of the WCC at Evanston, Illinois, USA in 1954 was an attempt to address these questions, hence its theme "Christ – the Hope of the World."<sup>89</sup> This theme raised the question of how the hope of Christ for the world is related to Christian hope of redemption. It is within this framework that the accepted assumptions of the Winner model were placed in tension.

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<sup>89</sup> The official Report of the Evanston assembly is published as *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1954* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), hereafter cited as *Evanston Report*. For some interpretations of Evanston see: James Hastings Nichols, *Evanston: An Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954); Gaines, *The World Council of Churches*, 563-721; *The Christian Century* 71/38 (Sep. 22, 1954): 1124-1134; Robert L. Calhoun, "Evanston – An American Evaluation," *The Christian Century*, 72/1 (Jan. 5, 1955): 14-15.

Through its theme Evanston affirmed its mission in terms of eschatology and showed that the purpose of human history is Jesus Christ. This meant that foundational to Evanston was the conviction that the cosmological significance of Christ can only be understood in terms of eschatology. It claimed that Jesus Christ in his life, death and resurrection is “the center of world history” and in Him is also revealed “the end toward which the world is moving.”<sup>90</sup> It is this gospel that Evanston proclaimed confidently to the world. According to Evanston the world’s tragedy is in knowing no judge or lord of history, while to the church is given to know that human life is not “an endless succession of meaningless nights and days, to never completed toil, to uncomforted mourning or ever disillusioned hoping.”<sup>91</sup> The world has meaning in Jesus Christ who will return to fulfill it.

But Evanston 1954 also confessed Jesus Christ as the hope of the church, to which he is inseparably joined and is, therefore, the source of the church’s unity. This unity of the church with Christ will only be fully manifested in the eschaton. The church is essentially an eschatological community having its citizenship in heaven but with a responsibility to the world.<sup>92</sup> Its responsibility to the world is to “witness to the Kingship of Christ and the unity of all mankind,” and through participation in social and political action to secure justice, freedom and peace for all “as a foretaste of that Kingdom into which the faithful shall be gathered.”<sup>93</sup> Rather than escaping from responsibility to this

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<sup>90</sup> *Evanston Report*, 112 – Report of Section III.

<sup>91</sup> *Evanston Report*, 107 – Report of Section II.

<sup>92</sup> *Evanston Report*, 83-85 – Report of Section I.

<sup>93</sup> *Evanston Report*, 153 – Report of Section V; cf. also the Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme of the assembly Christ – The Hope of the World” in *The Christian Hope and the Task*



world the church's eschatological hope makes it engaged in the world, especially its brokenness, because Jesus' ministry involved the cross.<sup>94</sup> Evanston, therefore, united eschatology and ethics<sup>95</sup> and presented the church as an eschatological sign.

Whereas at Evanston there were different eschatological emphases in the speeches by Edmund Schlink and Robert L. Calhoun they did not reflect any essential disagreement, as Conrad Simonson has pointed out.<sup>96</sup> Schlink emphasized eschatology as future judgment and Calhoun emphasized eschatology as present limits and boundaries of human existence. Both aspects were present in both Schlink and Calhoun but with varying emphases.<sup>97</sup> The real issue of tension at Evanston, however, was the relationship between the world and the eschaton, between general history and redemptive history, between the here and the hereafter. The assembly was worried that the report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme had "certain important *omissions*" which

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*of the Church: Six Ecumenical Surveys and the Report of the Assembly prepared by the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme 1954* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 21 (hereafter cited as "Advisory Commission Report." It is important to note that the Advisory Commission Report was not adopted by the assembly though recommended to the churches for study. See Nichols, *Evanston: An Interpretation*, 87f. This should be borne in mind in all citations of this report.

<sup>94</sup> *Evanston Report*, 85 – Report of Section I; cf. 100 – Report of Section II.

<sup>95</sup> cf. Paul S. Minear, "In Whom Do We Hope?", *The Christian Century* 71/4 (Jan. 27, 1954): 107, 106; Daniel Day Williams, "Hope and Mystery in the Christian Faith," 71/5 (Feb. 3, 1954): 139.

<sup>96</sup> Edmund Schlink and Robert L. Calhoun in *The Christian Century* 71/34 (August 25, 1954): 1002–1007, 1010–1011. For a discussion of the different views and the lack of consensus at Evanston see Duff, *The Social Thought*, esp. 140–149. Simonson, *The Christology*, 78–79. The eschatological divergences at Evanston have been variously described: e.g. as that between "'humanistic' and Biblical ways of hoping" (James Hasting Nichols), as that between Continental and American ways of doing theology (cf. Charles M. Crowe). See: James Hastings Nichols, *Evanston: An Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 88; for many months before the assembly, the worry was expressed about these conflicts in theological temperaments. See, e.g., Charles M. Crowe, "Nothing to Fear at Evanston," *The Christian Century* 71/19 (May 12, 1954): 583–4.

<sup>97</sup> The responses from the churches indicated that since Evanston, "[h]ard and fast lines, especially around questions of eschatology, no longer exist." *Response to Evanston*, 62. This work cites page 3 of the Editorial to *Social Action*, November 1954, pointing out that the Continental insistence "on man's sinfulness and powerlessness to 'build the Kingdom of God'" was only misinterpreted since its real

included “the present work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the world; specific reference to “signs of hope”; adequate treatment of the theme of creation and cosmic redemption.”<sup>98</sup> Participants were not in agreement on “the relationship between the Christian’s hope here and now, and his ultimate hope,” or on “the correct definition” of Christian hope “as it applies to all who, while believers in God, do not know Him as revealed in Christ” and on the distinction which ought to exist between the church and the world.<sup>99</sup> These were once matters of clear positions in the Winner model but now they were issues of debate. The eschatological awareness of the church gave rise to many unanswered questions at Evanston 1954 just like it did at Willingen 1952.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps *The Christian Century* was right in noting that Evanston needed to have first settled the “the prior issues of theology, Christology, anthropology, soteriology” before it delved into eschatology.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, the operating model was still the Winner model. The uniqueness of Christ and his universal relevance was admitted especially in the face of non-Christian religions: Jesus Christ was “the true Light – ‘the light which lightens every man’,” and it was in him alone that “God has given to man the full and only-sufficient revelation of

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aim was not a denial of “human instrumentality” but a stab at “human pride and self-assurance, and consequent neglect of man’s ultimate reliance on divine grace.”

<sup>98</sup> *Evanston Report*, 70-71 – The Statement on the Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme.

<sup>99</sup> *Evanston Report*, 70-71 – The Statement on the Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme.

<sup>100</sup> This was in spite of the calls issued by many before the assembly that these issues be faced. See: Paul S. Minear, “In Whom Do We Hope?”, *The Christian Century* 71/4 (Jan. 27, 1954): 107, 106; Lesslie Newbigin, “The Present Christ and the Coming Christ,” *The Ecumenical Review* 6/2 (Jan. 1954): 118-123, etc.

<sup>101</sup> *Christian Century* 71/38 (Sept. 22, 1954): 1127.

Himself,” with his cross as “the sole hope of mankind.”<sup>102</sup> Uniqueness was also claimed for Christianity while non-Christian religions were seen as only humankind’s efforts to “master his own destiny” and, as such, essentially different from Christianity which is God’s revelation.<sup>103</sup> The value of non-Christian religions consisted in their being sometimes “effective bases of social reform,” in their “determination to interpret and change oppressive conditions of life” and “not so much the truth of these systems of thought and feeling.”<sup>104</sup> This is further supported by the high place given to the evangelizing of all persons, winning them over to Christ, and making them join the Christian community.<sup>105</sup> The “winner” terminologies were used, but with greater emphasis on Christ’s victory over “death and evil,”<sup>106</sup> the universe,<sup>107</sup> and disobedience<sup>108</sup> than of the victory of the church in winning men for Christ. Thus the “winning of the hearts and lives of men by Christ” is one of “the tokens of hope” in the present time.<sup>109</sup> Through the Holy Spirit the church participates in Christ’s victory.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Evanston Report*, 106, 107 – Report of Section II.

<sup>103</sup> *Evanston Report*, 106 – Report of Section II.

<sup>104</sup> *Evanston Report*, 106 – Report of Section II.

<sup>105</sup> *Evanston Report*, 100-101 – Report of Section II.

<sup>106</sup> *Evanston Report*, 99 – Report of Section II; See also “Advisory Commission Report” 1, 5-7, 23-25, etc.: “God in Jesus Christ has entered into the tangled web of earthy history and met and mastered evil in all its forms. By His life, death and resurrection He became for us both sin’s Victim and at the same time sin’s Victor.”

<sup>107</sup> Edward Schlink’s address to the assembly in *The Christian Century* 71/34 (August 25, 1954): 1003.

<sup>108</sup> *Evanston Report*, 71 – Statement on the Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme.

<sup>109</sup> *Evanston Report*, 71 – Statement on the Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme.

This victory motif dominated the thought of Evanston especially as it contemplated the whole of human history.

In summary, Evanston was an assembly in which the ecumenical movement emphasized the eschatological dimensions of its mission. It affirmed Christ's universal Lordship over history and all life, Christ's uniqueness, and related the church's unity and mission to eschatology. While still operating with the Winner model, it left unanswered the questions of the relationship between general history and the history of redemption, and therefore, the relationship between the church and the world and that between Christian hope and non-Christian hopes. Evanston highlighted additional tensions in the Winner model emerging from eschatological considerations. The questions put to the Winner model revealed some of the elements of the emerging Sign model.

#### **IV. The Cosmos as a Challenge to the Winner Model**

If Christ indeed has a cosmic relevance, if the Trinitarian God is already in mission to the world by Godself, and if the church is itself part of this mission of God to the world, the world, then, must be an important object of theological reflection. This was one of the considerations which led to a heightened interest in the world in the 1950s and 1960s. Other considerations also played a role. The Western world which had been the base for world missionary activity had experienced major crisis such as the two World Wars, and the churches had been unable to prevent the resulting disintegration. Political realities were also significant: the rise of Communism ending China as a mission field and bringing two Superpowers (the USA and the USSR) into potential global destroying conflict. The rising of nationalisms called attention to the issue of world

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<sup>110</sup> "Advisory Committee Report," 5.

unity. All this led to the need to reshape missionary strategies.<sup>111</sup> With this new interest in the world came an increasing questioning of the church's place in mission, the need for redefinition of secularization, the need to take a different view of non-Christian religions, and the need to dialogue more realistically with science, technology and the revolutionary forces in order to maintain peace and justice for all.

Attempts within the WCC to understand how the church relates to the world were undertaken in what has been called "the Lordship Studies"<sup>112</sup> of the 1950s and early 1960s: the study on "The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church" which was begun in 1955 and completed in 1959 and the post-New Delhi study on "Christ and the Church" presented to Montreal 1963. At New Delhi 1961 the cosmological relevance of Christ was raised to a height by J. A. Sittler's concept of "cosmic christology." By the Faith and Order conference at Montreal in 1963 these new challenges arising from cosmological awareness led to "chaos," as old assurances were challenged, especially in the relation of God to the world. The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism at Mexico City in 1963 considered the cosmological challenges of secularism and dialogue with people of non-Christian faiths while the Church and Society conference at Geneva 1966 discussed the effects of science and technology with the concept of the "*humanum*," emerging as a cosmological criterion for Christian witness. Several Faith and Order Studies of the sixties and the New Delhi 1961 approved study on "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation" led up to the Uppsala assembly of 1968. As we shall see,

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<sup>111</sup> W. A. Visser't Hooft, *No Other Name: The Choice between Syncretism and Christian Universalism* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 103-113; Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, 37; Hendrikus Berkhof, "Berlin versus Geneva: Our Relationship with the 'Evangelicals,'" *The Ecumenical Review* 28/1 (Jan. 1976): 80-86, esp. 83, etc.

<sup>112</sup> Simonson, *The Christology*, 83ff.

the discussion at these gatherings regularly dealt with cosmological challenges to the Winner model.

*Challen* —

**A. Understanding the Cosmological ~~Awareness~~**

**1. The Lordship Studies**

The study on “The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church” begun in 1955, and which produced documents in 1956, 1957 and 1959, attempted to deal with issues resulting from the heightened cosmological awareness described above. The 1959 document noted that the relationship between the church and the world can only be properly understood within the context of human sin and evil and the eschatological dimension of Christ’s victorious work. Christ’s Lordship over all is at present “hidden” in the world but is realized in the church, which is, itself, that part of the world conscious of Christ’s Lordship.<sup>113</sup> This double reality of sin and the eschaton means that though here and now there is indeed a “real” distinction between the church and the world, this distinction cannot be unmistakably discerned in this life, as a result of human sin. In the eschaton the present “distinctive and provisional character” of the church and the world will be swallowed up because “the salvation wrought by Christ embraces the whole universe, including the cosmic powers themselves,” and in Christ’s victorious work, “[t]he world and the Church are destined to become the one Kingdom of God, each in its own way.”<sup>114</sup> In the meantime the church is Christ’s agent of mission to the world. This study did not definitely answer the question whether or not there is redemption in the

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<sup>113</sup> “The Lordship of Christ over the World and the Church,” *The Ecumenical Review* 11/4 (July 1959): 437-449; quotation from p. 438-442. Hereafter cited as “The Lordship of Christ.”

world apart from the church; Simonson says that what remained of this study from the earlier drafts and revisions was “bland fare.”<sup>115</sup>

The main ideas of this study were carried on by the post-New Delhi study on “Christ and the Church” presented to the Faith and Order Conference at Montreal in 1963. In the American section of this study the Christ event was seen as “both unique and universal” and “the Holy Spirit, empowering men in response to that event, is both uniquely related to Christ and universal in the range of his activity.”<sup>116</sup> Thus, the church is to be seen as “unique and as integral to the total work of God in history,” even though it is only “provisional or partial.”<sup>117</sup> Yet the church is Jesus’ “instrument” of work in history, and necessarily in, as well as with and for the world; it is the representative human community directed to Jesus and making manifest his Lordship.<sup>118</sup> Because of the uniqueness of Christ’s and the Spirit’s presence in the church, “the Church is not dissolved into the world,” nor “absorbed in the sinful world,” but “is engaged in continual struggle with it in the fulfillment of its mission to redeem.”<sup>119</sup> The church is “essential” and “not merely incidental or accidental to God’s workings in his world” and is in this

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<sup>114</sup> “The Lordship of Christ,” 440-442.

<sup>115</sup> Simonson, *The Christology*, 91.

<sup>116</sup> *Faith and Order Findings: The Final Report of the Theological Commissions to the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal 1963* (London: SCM Press, 1963), part II, 21 – Report of the Theological Commission on Christ and the Church (North American Section), hereafter cited as Study on “Christ and the Church,” North American Section. The European Section’s report is also included in this book and published as part II of the work of this commission. It shall be cited as Study on “Christ and the Church,” European Section.

<sup>117</sup> Study on “Christ and the Church,” North American Section, 21.

<sup>118</sup> Study on “Christ and the Church,” North American Section, 23, 24.

<sup>119</sup> Study on “Christ and the Church,” North American Section, 25.

sense “part of the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ.”<sup>120</sup> At the same time it would be “blasphemous” to assert that God’s work is restricted to the church; God works outside the church in countless ways.<sup>121</sup> However, all these works outside the church lack their true context, proper ordering, right proportion and true name apart from knowledge of Christ. Hence the church’s role is essential in all God’s work in creation.<sup>122</sup>

The European section took on basically the same idea but its rendering of the church-kingdom relationship seemed more restrictive than that of the American section. The church manifests the kingdom of Christ and is “the instrument which he uses to extend his Kingdom to the ends of the earth, until the end of time.” With respect to the world, the church is “the new humanity in the world, the firstfruits of the new creation within the old.” “Until the final consummation, the church on earth is a provisional and proleptic form of the Kingdom of Christ,” but at Christ’s second coming the church “will attain its fulness and will be coincident with the whole Kingdom, spanning the new heaven and the new earth.”<sup>123</sup>

Both of these studies continued the post-Madras 1938 view of the church’s relationship to the world. But the North American view was more generous and attempted a little more clarity on the earlier view by placing the uniqueness of the church side by side with God’s work outside the church. Even though it did not delve into the nature of the work of God outside the church, it did hold the view that gives freedom to

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<sup>120</sup> Study on “Christ and the Church,” North American Section, 25. Johannes Aagaard notes that this idea was the influence of Barthian theology. See: “Some Main Trends in Modern Protestant Missiology,” 243.

<sup>121</sup> Study on “Christ and the Church,” North American Section, 25.

<sup>122</sup> Study on “Christ and the Church,” North American Section, 25.



God outside the church. Nevertheless, God's work outside the church needed the church's mission to give it its proper name. Is the lack of a true context, proper ordering, right proportion and true name the same as lack of redemptive significance? This question was not addressed in so many words. But the lack of previous dogmatic and categorical statements as to the church alone being the place where redemption occurs is to be noticed especially in the North American section. The European section, however, apparently still saw the kingdom as the perfection of the church.

We may summarize these studies by noting that in them the context of human sin and God's promise of eschatology are important in understanding the relationship between the church and the world. The church is seen as distinct from the world, but only temporarily; at the eschaton this distinction will be overcome in the kingdom of God. But here and now, the church is God's instrument of reaching out to the world of which it is also a part, and on behalf of which it has known Christ.

## **2. A Height of Cosmological Awareness: New Delhi 1961**

The awareness of the cosmological dimension, which had begun since, at least, Willingen 1952 was significantly heightened at the third assembly of the WCC, which met at New Delhi from November 19 to December 5, 1961 under the theme, "Christ, the Light of the World." This assembly was significant in many respects,<sup>124</sup> especially in its revision of the Basis of the WCC, making it more explicitly Trinitarian and based on the

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<sup>123</sup> Study on "Christ and the Church," European Section, 45.

<sup>124</sup> It was the assembly in which the International Missionary Council and the WCC were integrated, thus bringing into stronger focus the missionary element of the WCC. It was the assembly in which the Orthodox churches of Russia and Poland, some Pentecostal churches in Chile, and the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria along with ten other churches from Africa among others were admitted into

Scriptures.<sup>125</sup> Some, however, felt that New Delhi was a retrogression rather than an improvement.<sup>126</sup> Perhaps the most significant event at the New Delhi assembly was Joseph Sittler's address in which he emphasized the concept of "cosmic Christology." Through Sittler's address the cosmological awareness was not only heightened but also placed on a broader basis than before. He extended the focus from the world of humanity to the whole created world including nature. If the light of Christ does not enfold and illumine this world of nature, he argued, Christian witness would be unintelligible. Thus, the care of the earth and the ordering of material resources and procedures are "christological obediences before they are practical necessities."<sup>127</sup>

Sittler's viewpoint, however, was not generally well received. Some thought that this concept was too broad, and therefore, unhelpful for unity; others just did not

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the WCC. *New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 9-10, hereafter cited as *New Delhi Report*.

<sup>125</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 6-7 – The New Delhi Story; 152-159 – Report of the Policy Reference Committee; The original basis had the WCC as "a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour" and the revised basis has it as "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." These changes were already pointed out before Evanston. See "The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches" in *Six Ecumenical Surveys: Preparatory Material for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A 1954* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 44-45. See also W. A. Visser't Hooft, "The Rediscovery of Christocentric Universalism in the Ecumenical Movement" in *No Other Name: The Choice between Syncretism and Christian Universalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 103-112 for a rooting of the Christological basis of the WCC.

<sup>126</sup> Gaines finds it to be "largely recastings of previous ecumenical statements," and revealing that "the [WCC] movement had been talking faster than it was growing intellectually and spiritually and so had really nothing to add on evangelism, service, and unity." *The World Council of Churches*, 1010; Simonson called it "the latest in a long series of deteriorating reports of ecumenical assemblies." *The Christology*, 93. Cf. *The Christian Century* in an editorial, "The Light of the World?," hoped that New Delhi shall so review its agenda to quickly dispose of "items of ecclesiastical housekeeping" and face the implications of the main theme. 78/45 (Nov. 8, 1961): 1323. See also the comments of Kyle Haselden, Cecil Northcott and Howard Schomer in *The Christian Century* 79/2 (January 10, 1962): esp. 43, 55-57, 57-59 and compare with Kenneth Slack's opinion that "not a few of the Assembly's declaration were absolutely clear and firm" but they did not "catch and fire the imagination of the world at large" and of "the interested Christian." *Despatch from New Delhi: The Story of the World Council of Churches Third Assembly, New Delhi, 18 November – 5 December 1961* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 105.

understand it or approve of it.<sup>128</sup> Margaret Nash noted that “[c]ritics, including Schlink, accused Sittler of christological imbalance and a failure to take sin and evil sufficiently seriously” but that the Faith and Order studies in the post-New Delhi period could neither adopt it nor neglect it.<sup>129</sup> An Eastern Orthodox delegate asked if attention should not be also given to the unseen world, both of angels and demons, as well as the visible world.<sup>130</sup> Sittler himself did not work out the relation of this cosmic dimension of Christology to the doctrine of soteriology. The Reports of the Sections could only follow Sittler “anthropologically” and thus the unity of all of nature did not feature, or perhaps, only featured marginally in its discussions.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, this idea of cosmic Christology continued to have profound influence on ecumenical thinking in its understanding of the church-world relation. A recognition of the world’s interdependence lent urgency to the conviction that “the peoples of all lands either must solve their problems of living together in peace or must perish together.”<sup>132</sup>

Though New Delhi did not move much beyond the world of humanity it recognized the mission implications of this cosmic Christology. It should result in a passionate concern that the blessings of the gospel of Christ reach every land and all

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<sup>127</sup> Sittler, “Called to Unity,” 183, 186.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. J. Robert Nelson, *The Christian Century*, 79/2 (Jan. 10, 1962): 53 cf. Wilhelm Anderson, “Jesus Christus und der Kosmos,” *Evangelische Theologie* 23 (1963): 471ff.

<sup>129</sup> Margaret Nash, *The Ecumenical Movement in the 1960s* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975), 253f.

<sup>130</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 15-16.

<sup>131</sup> Müller-Fahrenholz, *Unity in Today’s World*, 22 c.f. J. Robert Nelson, *The Christian Century*, 79/2 (Jan. 10, 1962): 53.

<sup>132</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 77 – Report of the Section on Witness, cf. Nash, *Ecumenical Movement in the 1960s*, 253-254.

persons.<sup>133</sup> It should result in solidarity with persons “of every nation, class, color and faith without distinction in our common manhood” because Jesus joined himself to humanity.<sup>134</sup> But for New Delhi, it should also affect witness to people of other faiths, hence its concern to seek an understanding of the way the Christian claim of Christ’s finality relates to people of other faiths.<sup>135</sup> Christ is to be proclaimed “as Lord and Savior to all the nations and in all spheres of life,” it said, because “the reconciliation wrought through Christ embraces all creation and the whole of mankind.”<sup>136</sup> Persons of other faiths are therefore to be approached in knowledge that “God has not left himself without witness even among men who do not yet know Christ.”<sup>137</sup> The Christian was to witness to persons of other faiths because God was already at work in their lives. In this approach the Christian is to be faithful to the truth of Christian conviction “that there is only one way to the Father, namely, Jesus Christ his Son.” On that one way we are bound to meet our brother – “our brother Christian” and “our brother man,”<sup>138</sup> and in this

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<sup>133</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 85-86 – Report of the Section on Witness. However all the examples of these blessings listed by New Delhi pertain only to the external comfort of humans and not to any inner change in redemption: “These blessings include the alleviation of poverty, disease and hunger, and the creating of a true fellowship that relieves the loneliness of modern mass society.”

<sup>134</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 80 – Report of the Section on Witness.

<sup>135</sup> The study on “The Finality of Christ in an Age of Universal History,” was approved as a way to seek Christian understanding and response to the multiplicity of faiths. *New Delhi Report*, 165-167 – Report of the Committee on the Division of Studies. Some two articles with this title by John Marsh and Paul Verghese are published in *The Ecumenical Review* 15/1 (October 1962): 1-25. Verghese said “our major intellectual rivals in Asia are also challenging the Christian message precisely at this point of the Finality of Christ. Both Hinduism and the varieties of Buddhism have now come of age and refuse to be bullied by Christian missionary condemnation of their religions.” 12.

<sup>136</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 81 – Report of the Section on Witness.

<sup>137</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 81 – Report of the Section on Witness.

<sup>138</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 321 – Message of the Assembly.

encounter “Christ addresses them through us and us through them.”<sup>139</sup> And this position was affirmed notwithstanding the differences of opinion about God’s presence in non-Christian faiths and in spite of the general ignorance of the church of “the wisdom, love and power which God has given to men of other faiths and of no faith, or of the changes wrought in other faiths by their long encounter with Christianity.”<sup>140</sup>

The Winner model thus survives but with serious challenges. Even though God was seen as present in other faiths, Christ was still proclaimed as unique and relevant for all people.<sup>141</sup> New Delhi affirmed that “[e]vangelism is necessary in this and in every age” but also that new situations arising from the world’s interdependence or from generational differences call for new strategies, techniques and methods. So, for instance, proclamation alone would no longer do in Christian witness; “dialogue” had to be added to the ways of Christian witness.<sup>142</sup> Dialogue was necessary because Christianity cannot deal with the world’s problems alone; cooperation is necessary with all who share a concern for the welfare of humanity.<sup>143</sup> As early as 1937 J. H. Oldham had maintained the same point, asserting that the church cannot do its work in the world without entering into partnership with other movements that are reshaping human institutions.<sup>144</sup> Discussed at ecumenical conferences since Jerusalem 1928, this thought

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<sup>139</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 82 – Report of the Section on Witness.

<sup>140</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 81, 82 – Report of the Section on Witness.

<sup>141</sup> See for instance the comments of A. T. Houghton, The Bishop of Pretoria, Bishop N. S. Booth all with reference to this matter on the floor of the Conference. *New Delhi Report*, 170.

<sup>142</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 77, 78, 82, 84 – Report of the Section on Witness.

<sup>143</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 94-95 – Report of the Section on Service.

<sup>144</sup> Oldham, *The Church and Its Functions in Society*, 219.

was now applied in the context of religious pluralism as a reason for dialogue with other religions. In addition, dialogue was also judged as necessary for Christians as a way to hear God speak to them through these other faiths. Thus, although still affirming “the changeless Gospel of God’s saving love, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, made known to us through the power of the Holy Spirit,”<sup>145</sup> New Delhi also held to the idea of reciprocal witness.

It may be helpful here to summarize some of the emerging elements of the church-world relation arising from this cosmological awareness. First was a new importance given to the world as the sphere of God’s action. Second was the place of solidarity as a form of witness; witness was not only to involve proclamation of the good news of salvation but it was also to involve standing in solidarity with the world. Instead of taking the posture of an army going for conquest of an enemy, the church takes the posture of identifying with humanity. Third, one-way proclamation from Christians to non-Christians in order to win them for Christ turned into a two-way mutual witness where Christians hear the voice of God through the non-Christian witness to God.<sup>146</sup> Fourth, though lingering elements of the “winner” terminologies still survive,<sup>147</sup> most have been abandoned as the Sign model increasingly emerges.

In summary, New Delhi raised the cosmological awareness of the ecumenical family to a peak and launched into the ecumenical atmosphere a seed that germinated and

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<sup>145</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 78 – Report of the Section on Witness.

<sup>146</sup> It is important to note that this mutuality of witness does not negate the call upon the church to preach to non-Christians in order that they may join the church. See the report on “Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty” approved at New Delhi. See *New Delhi Report*, 151; cf. *From Evanston to New Delhi*, 239-245.

grew to influence ecumenical activities and theology. The whole creation, and not just humanity, was brought under the domain of Christ's Lordship. This cosmic understanding of Christ's Lordship called for the church's solidarity with all humanity and for dialogue with people of other faiths. The church's concern for unity was not an end in itself but a testimony to the unity of the entire human race. It was a sign to the world that the barriers of division in human experience have been broken down in Christ, and therefore, a sign of the ultimate unity of all humanity in Christ. The church's unity was also to be a motivating example to the world to work for just relationships between nations and sexes. With people of other faiths this cosmic relevance of Christ calls for dialogue. But in this dialogue, Christian uniqueness was not to be abandoned. Though the Winner model was dominant, elements of the Sign model had begun to emerge.

## **B. Tensions from the Cosmological Challenge**

### **1. Montreal 1963: A Promising Chaos?**

The Faith and Order conference at Montreal in 1963 clearly exhibited the tensions arising from the new cosmological emphasis in ecumenical thought in at least three ways.

1) It continued discussion on the tricky question of how to relate Christ as Redeemer to Christ as Lord of the world. 2) New Testament scholarship challenged the presupposition that the witness of the New Testament to Jesus Christ was singular rather than multiple. This challenge affected the Christological method of ecumenical discussions which required that Jesus Christ be understood in a uniform way in order to serve as a hermeneutical criterion. 3) The notion that some aspects of relation for the Christian

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<sup>147</sup> E.g., the need to win the spheres of youth, the worker and the intellectual for Christ *New Delhi*

were “non-theological” was rejected. Hence every aspect of life and of human relatedness was seen as sacred and important for the understanding of human relationship with God.

As Montreal wrestled with the pre- and post-New Delhi studies on Christ’s Lordship in relation to the church and the world general agreement could not be found; there was “too much to debate with each other to be able to express a common mind in a single report.”<sup>148</sup> In fact, in its Section I, “The Church in the Purpose of God,” Montreal raised the old questions again.

Is it [i.e., Christ’s lordship over the world] to be identified only with the exercise of his lordship through the Church? Is it a rule *now* exercised even apart from the believing community, and if so, how? How is the tension between the ‘already’ . . . and the ‘not yet’ . . . of Christ’s victory to be understood?<sup>149</sup>

Montreal did not answer these questions. Nevertheless, by raising the questions again it illustrated the tensions in the Winner model as to whether or not redemption is limited to the church. The old assured convictions of the Winner model in which Christ ruled as Lord of the world through the church were no longer able to go unquestioned.

Montreal also raised questions about the assumed uniformity of the New Testament witness concerning Christ. Without denying the centrality of Christ in the New Testament scholars such as E. Käsemann and R. E. Brown insisted that the New Testament had multiple Christologies, ecclesiologies, Pneumatologies, etc. This meant that

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*Report*, 82 – Report of the Section on Witness.

<sup>148</sup> *Montreal Report*, 39.

<sup>149</sup> *Montreal Report*, 43, foot note 1 (emphasis within the original text). See also 43, footnote 2 – Report of Section I. See how these questions surfaced again at Bristol, 1967 in *New Directions in Faith and Order Bristol 1967: Reports - Minutes - Documents* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 131. Section 1 report of Montreal also noted thus: “To some members of our Section it seems debatable whether the governing presuppositions of *Christ and the Church* derive from our doctrine of Christ or from our doctrine of the



the Christological method used at Amsterdam 1948 and Lund 1952 and also in the “Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible” of 1949 (written at Wadham College, Oxford) had become problematic.<sup>150</sup>

One more way in which Montreal manifested the tension arising from cosmological awareness was in the voices objecting to the concept of “non-theological factors” in the church’s unity. David Paton and others rejected this notion because it would mean that humans are “disembodied intelligences” and matter is “outside the concern of theology because it is outside the operations of God’s care.”<sup>151</sup> In this query a new understanding of the church-world relation is discernible. Seeing every sphere of human relation as “theological” and therefore sacred underscored the conviction and emphasis that God was already at work in the world outside the walls of the church.

Consequently, Montreal was seen by some as a total “chaos”, and by others as a “promising chaos”<sup>152</sup> in view of the possibilities it held for a more holistic theology of mission. Even though the officers of the conference were convinced that God was “shaping a world which cannot deny that it is one world, except by self-destruction,” and

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Trinity. Some feel that in so far as a doctrine of Christ has been applied, this doctrine unduly minimizes the significance of the cross.” 42.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 53, 342-345; cf. “Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible as accepted by the Ecumenical Study Conference, held at Wadham College, Oxford, from June 29<sup>th</sup> to July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1949,” in *Biblical Authority for Today: a World Council of Churches Symposium on “The Biblical Authority for the Churches’ Social and Political Message Today,”* ed. by Alan Richardson & W. Schweitzer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), 240-243.

<sup>151</sup> *Montreal Report*, 31.

<sup>152</sup> *New Delhi to Uppsala 1961-1968: Report of the Central Committee to the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 54.

that Christians are being drawn together by God in this world,<sup>153</sup> the tensions indicated above continued to complicate the ecumenical discussions. The Central Committee report to Uppsala noted that Montreal's main importance probably lies "in the fact that it made people realise the extent and the tremendous complication of the ecumenical conversation."<sup>154</sup> It is the awareness of this tremendous complication of ecumenical conversation that had been present but not so apparent in the Winner model that began to shape the emerging Sign model.

At Montreal, then, the emphasis on the multiplicity of the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ broke down the Christological method. It also continued exploring questions about the relation between Christ as Redeemer and his Lordship over the world. Montreal also reflected the new interest in the world by its rejection of the notion of non-theological factors in ecumenical discussion. Yet also, Montreal showed some early signs of the emergence of the Sign model when it asserted that the "freedom of discipleship to the crucified-risen Christ leads to a new solidarity with all God's creatures," and "[t]he love of Christ which is unconditioned, drives us to identify ourselves with all men, "good" or "bad", "religious" or "irreligious"."<sup>155</sup> Whereas earlier

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<sup>153</sup> P. C. Rodger and Lukas Vischer, eds., *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order Montreal 1963* (New York: Association Press, 1964) (hereafter cited as *Montreal Report*), 39 – A Word to the Churches from the Officers of the Conference.

<sup>154</sup> *New Delhi to Uppsala*, 54. However, the sixth assembly of the WCC at Vancouver was later to see Montreal's contribution to the discussion of Christian unity as primarily its determining of the source of the church's unity to be "the Tradition of the Gospel testified to in scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit." See: David Gill, ed., *Gathered for Life: Official Report VI Assembly World Council of Churches Vancouver, Canada 24 July-10 August 1983* (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 44 – Issue Group on Taking Steps towards Unity. Further citations of Vancouver's Issue Groups will be indicated as IG.

<sup>155</sup> *Montreal Report*, 43 – Report of Section I.

this love would have driven the church to win all peoples for Christ, what was now emphasized was being in solidarity with all.

## 2. Mexico City 1963 and the New Challenges

The tensions arising from cosmological challenges to the Winner model were also manifest at the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism at Mexico City in 1963. Here the notion of mission as “witness in six continents” was expressed. This was an idea which Whitby 1947 had expressed as “partnership in obedience,” conveying thereby the understanding of mission as what is mutually shared in by both the older and younger churches.<sup>156</sup> This idea was strengthened by New Delhi 1961’s conviction that Christ is Lord of all nations, which means that all nations and peoples have a witness to bear of Christ, hence Mexico City’s “witness in six continents.”<sup>157</sup> Mexico City highlighted the tensions arising from cosmological awareness in especially two areas - secularization and dialogue with people of other faiths.

Whereas at Jerusalem 1928 the secular was seen as a realm to be conquered by the gospel,<sup>158</sup> at Mexico City it was regarded as a realm with “possibilities of new

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<sup>156</sup> *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church: Statements Issued by the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Whitby, Ontario, July 5-24, 1947* (New York & London: IMC, 1947), 23-34; cf. Kenneth Scott Latourette and William Richey Hogg, *Tomorrow is Here: the Mission of the Work of the Church as Seen from the Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Whitby, Ontario, July 5-24, 1947* (New York: Friendship Press for the IMC), 98-113.

<sup>157</sup> This was an idea that came out clearly in the message to the churches. See *Witness in Six Continents*, 173-175; cf. Lesslie Newbigin, “Mission and Mission,” cf. W. A. Saayman, *Unity and Mission: A Study of the Concepts of Unity in Ecumenical Discussions since 1961 and its Influence on the World Mission of the Church* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 1984), 26-27.

<sup>158</sup> *The Jerusalem Meeting of the of the International Missionary Council, March 24-April 8, 1928* (New York: IMC, 1928), 1: 230 – Rufus M. Jones; Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 249; D. S. Cairns, “The Christian Message: A Comparison of Thought in 1910 and in 1928,” *International Review of Mission* 18 (1929): 323; Shivute, *The Theology of Mission*, 43; William Paton, “What is Secularism?”

freedom and of new enslavement for men.”<sup>159</sup> Mexico City was generally very positive toward the secular, emphasizing its potentials for freedom. In its message Mexico City 1963 held that God calls the church to “a sustained effort to understand the secular world and to discern the will of God in it.”<sup>160</sup> For this reason the secular was to be taken seriously: “we believe that . . . ‘what cannot be assumed cannot be redeemed,’” the conference noted, and as Jesus took on humanity “so he calls his Church to take on the secular world.”<sup>161</sup> The difference of this approach to the secular from the earlier understandings of the Christian relation with the world, as Norman Goodall pointed out, was that “between approaching the secular from outside in order to change or challenge it and learning from the inside its meaning and possibilities.”<sup>162</sup> Thus, Mexico City insisted that the “form” of Christian witness in the secular age “must be that of dialogue.”<sup>163</sup> Here was a clear change in missiological posture with reference to the secular; the Winner model was giving way to the Sign model which expressed itself in solidarity with the world. The rationale behind this change in approach has been noted by Johannes Aagaard: “[i]f the church has to find its Lord in the world and has to hear His word from

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*International Review of Mission* 18 (1929): 346-357; John A. Mackay, “The Ecumenical Spirit and the Recognition of Christ,” *International Review of Mission* 18 (1929): 334.

<sup>159</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 154 – Report of Section II; cf. Norman Goodall, *Ecumenical Progress: A Decade of Change in the Ecumenical Movement 1961-1971* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 34.

<sup>160</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 174 – Message.

<sup>161</sup> *Witness in Six Continents* – 151 – Report of Section II.

<sup>162</sup> Goodall, *Ecumenical Progress*, 37.

<sup>163</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 154 – Report of Section II.

what happens in the world,” then dialogue rather than monologue is called for; and “only so can the church meet its master and hear His voice.”<sup>164</sup>

This dialogue was not only necessary for the secular world; it was also necessary for witness to people of other faiths. Dialogue, as Bishop Sabapathy Kulandran noted in Mexico City, should presuppose “a quest common to both parties.”<sup>165</sup> Still, the message of Mexico City did reject a loose pluralism, the view that “it does not matter what men believe as long as they believe something.”<sup>166</sup> Rather than the earlier apparently arrogant posture of the Winner model Christian witness to people of other faiths was now to be done, as Bishop Hinrich Meyer put it,

like beggars who tell other beggars where the bread can be had freely, like patients, who tell other sick people where they find the right doctor, like ex-convicts who tell other delinquents about the judge who pays the fine himself and lets the delinquent go free.<sup>167</sup>

The church was no longer seeing itself as the sphere of redemption but as the pointer to redemption, the characteristic posture that the Sign model was later to take. By Mexico City, therefore, dialogue, as Norman Goodall says, had become “the key form of Christian witness to men of other faiths.”<sup>168</sup> But it was to be done humbly: “Christian

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<sup>164</sup> Aagaard, “Some Main Trends in Modern Protestant Missiology,” 254.

<sup>165</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 98 – Bishop Sabapathy Kulandran, “Witness to men of Other Faiths.”

<sup>166</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 174 – the Message.

<sup>167</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 105 – Bishop Hinrich Meyer, “Meeting Men of Other Faiths.” Cf. W. A. Visser’t Hooft: “The attitude of the Christian Church to the religions can only be the attitude of the witness who points to the one Lord Jesus Christ as Lord of all men. Where the Church ceases to give this witness, it ceases to have a *raison d’être* for it came into being to proclaim this good news and not to add one more form of spiritual experience to the many which existed already.” *No Other Name*, 116.

<sup>168</sup> Goodall, *Ecumenical Progress*, 30.

witness does not rest on any kind of superiority in Christians” but on Christ’s commission to the church.<sup>169</sup>

That dialogue became the key method of witness to people of non-Christian faiths did not mean, however, that Mexico City 1963 took the Christian and the non-Christian as equal dialoging partners, both with equally authentic revelations from God. Though equal dialogue could be considered as a theoretical activity the dominance of the Winner model helped to retain the notion that other religions were at best preparations for the gospel. Becoming a Christian still required entry into the “the visible, witnessing community of faith” and “every act of witness should be an invitation to Christian discipleship.” Witness to Jews as well as people of other faiths should present Jesus as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Every form of relativism and syncretism, including “loss of conviction as to the finality of Jesus Christ, and the sophistication that likes to feel itself at home in every variety of belief” was rejected because they arose from the assumption that “it is the wisdom of man that establishes the truth.”<sup>170</sup> These are all clear remnants of the Winner model. Dialogue, at Mexico City, was therefore not to replace the witness of Christians to people of other faiths which invites them to faith in Christ. Although the Sign model, as we shall see, would affirm many of these commitments of the Winner model, they would be in a completely different missiological posture from the Winner model. Thus, while already emerging in several ways including the choice of dialogue as an authentic form of witness, the Sign model had not replaced the Winner model at Mexico City. Nonetheless, the Winner motif was now being clothed with

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<sup>169</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 174 – The Message.

<sup>170</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 145-146 – Report of Section I.

humility as Bishop Meyer illustrates: “Shame upon us,” he said, “if . . . we did not do everything, sacrifice everything, to win them [i.e. non-Christians] for Christ . . . by the all conquering, humble love of Jesus.”<sup>171</sup>

By affirming secularization and emphasizing dialogue as the primary form of witness to people of other faiths while still insisting on “humble” invitation to the Christian faith, Mexico City highlighted the growing tension within the Winner model. At the same time elements of the Sign model were already being established especially in the emphasis on dialogue as an authentic form of witness and in the need for humility in Christian attitude to non-Christians.

### 3. Geneva 1966 and the Concept of the “*Humanum*”

Like Montreal 1963 and Mexico City 1963 before it the Church and Society meeting at Geneva in 1966 also manifested tensions in the Winner model resulting from the cosmological challenge. Geneva 1966 was a high point of the interest of the ecumenical movement in working together with non-Christians for the bettering of society, going back as far as Jerusalem 1928.<sup>172</sup> Among the influencing factors must be included Joseph Sittler’s plea for a “cosmic christology” at New Delhi 1961<sup>173</sup> and the impatience of the youth with the church expressed at the World’s Student Christian Federation’s conference at Strasbourg in 1960 on the “The Life and Mission of the

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<sup>171</sup> *Witness in Six Continents*, 105 – “Meeting Men of Other Faiths.”

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Patrick Rodger, “Towards the Wholeness of the Church,” *The Ecumenical Review* 17/2 (April, 1965): 146-156, esp. 154.

<sup>173</sup> Sittler, “Called to Unity,” 183, 186.

Church.”<sup>174</sup> At Geneva 1966 there was an attempt at inter-disciplinary approach to understanding the problems of the world.<sup>175</sup> Radical forces that challenge established institutions were given some credibility by being regarded as having “a solid foundation in Christian tradition” and should be given a place in the church;<sup>176</sup> however, it also pointed out, Paul Ramsey’s observations and radical criticisms notwithstanding, that all such forces stand under the judgment of God, being only relative historical searches for justice.<sup>177</sup> With its four sections concentrating on the world while only a subsection attempted to discuss the place of the church in the socio-ethical change that it addressed, it would seem that interests in the world had become primary.

However, Geneva 1966 did not disregard the place of the church in the mission of God in the world, but upheld it and insisted on the church’s distinctive nature.<sup>178</sup> The church is the community which knows God’s love in Christ and is in one sense “the

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<sup>174</sup> *Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of our Time. World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, July 12-26, 1966. Official Report, with a Description of the Conference by M. M. Thomas and Paul Abrecht* (Geneva: WCC, 1967), 48-49 – Message (hereafter cited as *Church and Society 1966 Report*; Cf. Newbiggin, *Sign of the Kingdom*, 12-13; *Minutes of the Meetings of the Commission and Working Committee held at The University of Aarhus, Denmark, 15-27 August 1964* (Geneva: WCC, 1965), 37 cf. Nash, *Ecumenical Movement*, 244-245. Roger Mehl warned the New Delhi assembly of the danger of losing the youth. See *The Ecumenical Review* 14/2 (Jan. 1962): 238-240, esp. 240.

<sup>175</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 202 – Report of the Working Group on the Theological Issues in Social Ethics.

<sup>176</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 49 – Message. This position on revolutionary forces has been noted to sow the seeds for the departure in ecumenical ethics from the “Responsible Society” of Amsterdam 1948 and the following years to a concentration in liberation ethics in the post-Uppsala years. See: Paul Abrecht, “From Oxford to Vancouver: Lessons from Fifty Years of Ecumenical Work for Economic and Social Justice,” *The Ecumenical Review* 40/2 (April 1988): 147-168; idem, “The Predicament of Christian Social Thought after the Cold War,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/3 (July 1991): 318-328. For Abrecht, however, Geneva 1966 stood by and large in the tradition of a Responsible Society in spite of its role in the socio-ethical change that came later.

<sup>177</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 200 – a statement on “The Theological Understanding of Social Change,” (hereafter cited as *Geneva 1966 Report*); cf. The Zagorsk 1968 position affirming this caution: “Theological Issues of Church and Society,” *Study Encounter* 4/2 (1968): 76; cf. Paul Ramsey, *Who Speaks for the Church?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 72-77.



centre and fulfillment of the world” and in another “the servant of the world and the witness to it of the hope of its future.” The church is “called to be the community in which the world can discover itself as it may become in the future.<sup>179</sup> What this meant was that the world was to look at the church and see what it was to become in the future! Geneva 1966 therefore also expressed the church’s close relation to humanity’s goal most strongly.

In spite of the fact that some in Faith and Order were worried about the consequences Geneva 1966 could have for ecumenical endeavors,<sup>180</sup> Geneva 1966 was no real shift away from the church but a renewed emphasis on the church’s responsibility in society. Geneva 1966 illustrated an important feature of the Sign model, namely, the effort to retain the element of the church’s uniqueness in the church’s solidarity with the world. However, whereas in the Winner model the church was unique as the community in which redemption was exclusively present and into which the world was to be won, in the Sign model the church was unique as that part of the world which is conscious of its knowledge of Christ and which has been called to be a sign to the world, pointing it to its true goal in Christ.

But for Geneva 1966 the conception of the church was changing in at least two respects. The church no longer considered itself alone in the struggles for the “future” of humanity but participates in this struggle, especially in places where Christianity is in the

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<sup>178</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 48-49 – Message.

<sup>179</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 202 – Report of the Working Group on the Theological Issues in Social Ethics.

<sup>180</sup> Saayman also holds to the same view. *Unity and Mission*, 35.

minority, “alongside other religions and secular movements.”<sup>181</sup> And this participation was no longer by means of the gospel alone, as understood by the Winner model (in spite of Oxford 1937’s early recommendations of inter-disciplinary study in ethics),<sup>182</sup> but by means of the gospel as well as the technology and modernism of the secular Western world and the secular revolutionary forces.<sup>183</sup> Though not a shift away from the church Geneva 1966 does seem to be a shift beyond the church. Second, it is not the church alone which renews the world but the world also renews the church. In fact, the church is transformed for the transformation of the world “in contact with the world.”<sup>184</sup> These positions of Geneva 1966 indicate a new interest in the world at odds with the Winner model; the world was not as a realm to be conquered but as a realm in which God was already at work and transforming the church. Geneva 1966 was a conference with faith in the scientific, technological and social revolutions in the world.

But perhaps, Geneva 1966 is best remembered for highlighting the criterion of the *humanum*. According to Geneva 1966, “the understanding of the ‘human’” was to be expounded and defended “as a criterion for judging economic and social change.”<sup>185</sup> This new emphasis in both humankind and the cosmos was in keeping with the papers presented to the Aarhus 1964 Commission of the Faith and Order by Paul Evdokimov,

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<sup>181</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 49.

<sup>182</sup> J. H. Oldham, ed., *The Oxford Conference: Official Report* (New York: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937), 77.

<sup>183</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 202 – Report of the Working Group on the Theological Issues in Social Ethics; cf. the views of Emmanuel Mesthene and Richard Shaull at Geneva 1966. See Richard M. Shaull, “The Revolutionary Challenge to Church and Theology,” *Theology Today* 23 (1967): 470-480 cf. Edmond J. Dunn, *Missionary Theology: Foundations in Development* (Washington: University Press of America, 1980), 183-193.

<sup>184</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 49 – Message, Cf. *The Witness*, 37.

Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, and Wilhelm Dantine.<sup>186</sup> From their different theological perspectives they all emphasized the centrality of humankind in creation along with the inclusion of the whole of creation in God's redemptive work in Christ. Dantine's position could serve as the thesis for all three, namely, that if humankind is bypassed, "we can neither come to a general understanding of the world nor to a theological consideration of creation."<sup>187</sup> Geneva 1966, building upon Aarhus 1964, emphasized the place of anthropology for understanding Christology and the cosmos. For Geneva 1966 it is in the humanity of Jesus Christ that the church learns what it means to be truly human, but it expresses this Lordship of Christ in its dealings with the material world "with a sense of solidarity with all men."<sup>188</sup> The church is "to conserve what is truly human in the present" and to "seek to realize fuller possibilities of human life through the processes of economic growth and social change," urging humans "to say 'no' in the name of their true humanity" to destructive social changes.<sup>189</sup> It is the criterion of the "human" that was to determine every aspect of life, including work, because work was also to lead to

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<sup>185</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 52 – Report of Section 1.

<sup>186</sup> These were published in *Mid-Stream* IV/2 (Winter, 1964): 50-100 and in some other journals. Evdomikov's article is titled "Nature", Lampe's "The New Testament Doctrine of Ktisis" and Dantine's "'Creation and Redemption' III: 'An Attempt at a Theological Interpretation in the Light of the Contemporary Understanding of the World'." It is to be noted, though, that in the discussion at Aarhus, all three papers were seen as not taking seriously enough the magnitude of evil, especially because evil was located solely in human responsibility. Cf. Simonson, *The Christology*, 151.

<sup>187</sup> Dantine, "'Creation and Redemption' III," 86; compare their positions with Karl Rahner's "Theology and Anthropology," in T. Patrick Burke, ed., *The Word in History* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 15.

<sup>188</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 52 – Report of Section 1.

<sup>189</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 53 – Report of Section 1.

“the well-being of the whole man and the ability to help others.”<sup>190</sup> But to know this criterion of the *humanum* is “a discipline exercised in continual dialogue with biblical resources, the mind of the Church through history and today, and the best insights of social scientific analysis.”<sup>191</sup> This idea of inter-relational and inter-disciplinary dialogue also affected the working relations of the Departments of the WCC, leading to inter-departmental relations.<sup>192</sup> This position of Geneva 1966 was a re-awakening and deepening of a similar concept associated with the Student-organized Liverpool 1912 conference on Foreign Missions and Social Problems in which the idea of “the human” had been made the ground for mission and ethics.<sup>193</sup> But in this introduction of the *humanum* there appears to be an attempt to bring ethical criterion into focus in the life of Jesus Christ as the human embodiment and example of the ethical ideal of the kingdom. This came with problems of its own, however, since there was no theological agreement on “the meaning of our humanity in Christ” and the behavioral sciences were not any clearer on the meaning of the human person.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 53 – Report of Section 1.

<sup>191</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 202 – Report of the Working Group on the Theological Issues in Social Ethics.

<sup>192</sup> “The introduction of *humanum* as a central theological focus point for describing church unity and social ethical reflection,” says Peter Lodberg, “revealed the necessity of discussing the issue of ethics and ecclesiology between the department on Church and Society and the secretariat on Faith and Order.” “The History of the Ecumenical Work on Ecclesiology and Ethics,” *The Ecumenical Review* 47/2 (April 1995): 128-139.

<sup>193</sup> *Christ and Human Need: Being Addresses delivered at a Conference on Foreign Missions and Social Problems, Liverpool, Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, 1912* (London: Student Volunteer Missionary Union, s.a.), 74-75 – D. S. Cairns. Geneva 1966’s theological implications were only to be later worked out by the Zagorsk (1968) Consultation. Cf. Robert McAfee Brown, “Uppsala: An Informal Report,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5/4 (Fall 1968): 633-660, esp. 639.

<sup>194</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 52 – Report of Section 1, note 1.

In Summary: Geneva 1966 was a Church and Society meeting in which the concerns of humankind came to the fore and the criterion of the *humanum* was developed in socio-ethical relations. It challenged the Winner model in a number of respects. The church's ministry was expanded to include care for creation, and while the church was the sign of humanity's future, other religions shared in the struggle for the future of humanity. Geneva also promoted an inter-disciplinary approach to ethics challenging a naïve notion that the gospel and church alone could renew the world. It advocated mutual renewal between the church and the world. Finally, Geneva refocused the ethical ideal on the humanity of Jesus rather than on the kingdom of God, without thereby underemphasizing the place of the kingdom in the Christian faith. While the shifts in emphasis noted above pushed the ecumenical movement in the direction of the Sign model, it needs to be noted that in some fashion they were not absent from the Winner model. We see both continuity and discontinuity.

#### **4. The Highpoint of the Tension: The Study on "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation"**

The concerns which we have seen emerging since Willingen 1952 on the importance of the world in God's redemption were taken to a logical conclusion in the study on "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation," commissioned by the third assembly of the WCC at New Delhi 1961 and whose final report was published in 1967.<sup>195</sup> This study worked in two groups, the European and the American. Both

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<sup>195</sup> The preliminary study was published as Thomas Wieser, ed., *Planning for Mission: Working Papers on the New Quest for Missionary Communities* (New York: U.S. Conference for the World Council of Churches, 1966); and the final report was published as *The Church for Others and The Church for the World* (Geneva: WCC, 1967). According to Bassham, this study had access to a number of studies: "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism" by the WCC Department of Evangelism; Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (New York:

sections of the study demanded changes in both the goal of mission and in the understanding of the church's place in mission. The study attempted to bring the goal of mission more concretely to the concerns of the world. Hence, the European working group, following the direction of Hoekendijk, preferred to define the goal of mission as "shalom," understood as referring to "all aspects of the human life in its full and God-given maturity: righteousness, truth, fellowship, peace, etc." This shalom, it was argued, is "not something that can be objectified and set apart" and neither is it "an internal condition (peace of mind) that some can enjoy in isolation;" it is rather "a social happening, an event in interpersonal relations."<sup>196</sup> The North American working group defined the goal of mission as "humanization," convinced that "it communicates in our period of history the meaning of the messianic goal" more than any other concept does.<sup>197</sup> In this view, the humanity of Christ was made the ideal goal of mission and the task of the missionary congregation was to point to it.

The study on "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation" also demanded a radical understanding of the church's place in mission. In 1944 Dietrich Bonhoeffer had stated that "the church is the church only when it exists for others," helping and serving them.<sup>198</sup> This study took this view to an extreme by insisting that the church is

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McGraw Hill, 1962); Hans J. Margull, *Hope in Action: The Church's Task in the World*, trans. by Eugene Peters (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962); D. T. Niles, *Upon the Earth: The Mission of God and the Missionary Enterprise of the Churches* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962); and the WCC study based on the Niles' and Blauw's books, "Theological Reflections on the Missionary Task of the Church," *WCC Division of Studies Bulletin* 7.2 (1961): 1-17.

<sup>196</sup> The Church for Others, 14 – Western European Working Group.

<sup>197</sup> *The Church for Others*, 77-78 – North American Working Group.

<sup>198</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, the enlarged ed. (London: SCM Press, 1971), 382-383. However, Charles C. West has pointed out that this position was held when the West thought it knew what was best for others. *The Power to be Human: Towards a Secular Theology* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), 262.

expendable. It could come to this position because, as Hendrikus Berkhof pointed out, it does not understand the church first of all in terms of its relationship to the Spirit and to Christ but in terms of its functions or apostolicity, thereby making the church a function of its apostolicity rather than its apostolicity one of its many functions.<sup>199</sup> While it was traditional for the ecumenical movement to define the church's role in God's purpose in the world as essential,<sup>200</sup> this study held that missionary structures of the congregation are those which demonstrate that they are "expendable in the interest of humanizing society."<sup>201</sup> The argument here was that since the *missio Dei* is broader than the *missio ecclesia*, and since the missions of the churches are historically conditioned, they should be seen as only "transitory forms of obedience to the *missio Dei*." Both in its view that the "*missio Dei* is at work beyond the churches (and various missions)" and that the church is dispensable because only apostolary, it took the trends since Willingen to a height. It therefore questioned whether it was indeed "God's ultimate plan to incorporate all people into the church." In this view "God's primary relationship is to the world, and it is the world and not the Church that is the focus of God's plan." It therefore took it to be "a form of proselytism" to call people to become members of the church. And because God was already redemptively at work in the world, "[t]he churches serve the

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<sup>199</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, rev. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999, c. 1979, 1986), esp. 417-418.

<sup>200</sup> As in Willingen 1952 or the study on "Christ and the Church" submitted to Montreal 1963,

<sup>201</sup> *The Church for Others*, 16f. – Western European Working Group cf. 69 – North American Working Group.

*missio Dei* in the world when, on the basis of revelation, they point to God at work in world history.”<sup>202</sup>

The view of this study on “The Missionary Structure of the Congregation” is consistent with the view of some who longed for a radical revision of the church’s life and language. Paul

Verghese thought the language of the church’s faith were “all worn thin” if not worn out and needed “a set of fresh concepts which have some relevance to the life of the world.”<sup>203</sup> Harvey Cox’s view in which the secular is seen as the place of God’s

redemption<sup>204</sup> is also consistent with this study. However, others judged that this new search for what God is doing in the world lacks all the “necessary controls (theological, liturgical, canonical) that the church has painfully developed in the course of its history,” and thus, “runs the danger of assuming a ‘second source of revelation’ (in “the world”) uncontrolled by the theological criteria provided by the given revelation in Christ.”<sup>205</sup>

This would seem to agree with Nikos Nissiotis’ view that whereas the Spirit “blows where he wants (John 3:8)” the Spirit first of all “establishes the community of Christ as a link between grace and history.”<sup>206</sup> J. Aagaard thought that the position of the study sacralizes the secular.<sup>207</sup> Rodger Bassham noted that the value of the insight of this study

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<sup>202</sup> *The Church for Others*, 12-18, 44, 51, 54, 62, 75, etc. – both Working Groups.

<sup>203</sup> Paul Verghese, “The Finality of Christ in the Age of Universal History,” 12.

<sup>204</sup> Cox, *God’s Revolution and Man’s Responsibility*, 23, 25, 26-27, 104, etc.

<sup>205</sup> *The Church for Others*, 63-64 – North American Working Group.

<sup>206</sup> Nikos Nissiotis, “The Pneumatological Aspect of the Catholicity of the Church,” in *What Unity Implies: Six Essays after Uppsala*, ed. Reinhard Groscurth (Geneva: WCC, 1969), 17.

<sup>207</sup> Aagaard, “Some Main Trends in Modern Protestant Missiology,” 255.



“tended to overlook completely the meaning and importance of God’s covenant with his people and the call to ‘the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the nations.’ (Rom. 1:5)”<sup>208</sup> As I shall show through this study, the official documents which emanated from the WCC clearly rejected such tendency pointed out by Bassham.

This study, however, though clear and confident on its positions about redemption outside the church and the dispensability of the church and all missionary structures, its views do not represent those of a commission or assembly of the WCC; it was the result of a study authorized by the New Delhi assembly and was not adopted by any official body upon completion. It does reflect a definitive challenge to the Winner model. The new interests in the world continued to raise questions for the relationship between salvation history and general history, between creation and redemption, between the church and the world, and between the world and the eschaton. These questions continued through Bristol 1967 to Uppsala 1968.

##### **5. Bristol 1967 and Some New Questions**

Bristol 1967 was significant in being the last meeting of the Faith and Order Commission in preparation for Uppsala 1968 and in raising questions that directed the Faith and Order studies after Uppsala 1968. Montreal 1963 had revealed the need for several studies within the Faith and Order Commission, especially studies on the relation of redemption to creation and those with a Pneumatological impulse.<sup>209</sup> At Aarhus,

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<sup>208</sup> Bassham, *Mission Theology*, 69.

<sup>209</sup> *Montreal Report*, 44. The Conference notes: “If Christ was flesh and blood and if he is to be the Lord of all creation, how can we, his followers, so often flee into a spirituality that divorces God from earth and its possibilities?” The studies which culminated in the Bristol 1967 studies on the “God in Nature and History” and “the Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church” both emanated from Montreal 1963. These studies will be cited as their titles but the page indicated are from *New Directions*.

Denmark, in 1964 Montreal's study on Creation, New Creation and the Unity of the Church was approved, and then combined at Enugu, Nigeria in 1965 with the post-New Delhi study, *The Finality of Christ in an Age of Universal History*. All this finally resulted in the study, *God in Nature and History*, adopted by the Faith and Order Commission at Bristol.<sup>210</sup> This study set the Faith and Order Commission within the emerging understanding within the ecumenical movement of the unity of humankind.<sup>211</sup> It also set the scene for Uppsala 1968's further discussions and decisions with respect to the unity of humankind. This study held that salvation history and "man's 'profane' history, universal history included," are both "one and indivisible" because in both of them is the one presence of the same God who directs them both to the same goal.<sup>212</sup> Section 1 of Bristol expressed worry about its methodology, especially its salvation history starting point. It commended other starting points as legitimate, including

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<sup>210</sup> *New Directions*, 7, 88-89. See pp. 7-31 for the full text of the report, "God in Nature and History." Hendrikus Berkhof was the initial drafter of this report which was later severally revised cf. *Minutes of the Meetings of the Commission and Working Committee held at The University of Aarhus, Denmark, 15-27 August 1964* (Geneva: WCC, 1965), 43-46; see also *New Delhi to Uppsala* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 50; cf. P. W. Fuerth *The Concept of Catholicity in the Documents of the World Council of Churches 1948-1968: A Historical Study with Systematic-Theological Reflections* (Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1973), 139. Berkhof's initial paper was published in *Study Encounter* 1/3 (1965): 142-160. It was at Aarhus that steps were first begun with respect to combining these studies because they thought that Christ's cosmic relevance would require the study of the nature of the unity of the church with reference to the unity of humankind. Cf. P.C. Rodger, "Towards the Wholeness of the Church," *The Ecumenical Review* 17/2 (April 1965): 154; Lesslie Newbigin is also said to have noted that some think that the church is called today to manifest the unity of humankind rather than the unity of the church, and that this is the rationale behind the move towards secular ecumenism. See his view as cited in Groscurth, ed., *What Unity Implies*, 117.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Nash, *The Ecumenical Movement*, 284-308 cf. Simonson, *The Christology*, 84-87, esp. 87.

<sup>212</sup> "God in Nature and History," 25, 26. Hendrikus Berkhof, the author of the original draft used the same line of argument in his *The Christian Faith* to argue for revelation outside the Israel and the church but insists that this stands in dialectical relationship with the fact that God is revealed uniquely in Christ. According to him, "the revelation in Christ is indeed normative, but not exclusive." Pp. 49-52, citation on p. 50 (emphasis his). See also, p. 82.

creation, the modern situation, and God's existential encounter.<sup>213</sup> In these recommended starting points, Bristol 1967's interest in the world seems quite obvious as it understands God's dealings with humanity, nature and history in terms other than salvation history.

Section I of Bristol also studied the paper, *Creation, New Creation, and the Unity of the Church*,<sup>214</sup> that began with the purposefulness and meaningfulness of creation and whose perspective was different from that of "God in Nature and History." In this paper the church appears as "the community where Christ is known and proclaimed," and therefore, the community in which "the decisive witness to the possibilities of wholeness is maintained." This community "must be open to the possibilities of creation" but this openness requires the church to have "a living experience of unity with God in Christ," and therefore a foretaste of the unity of the world, and also must be looking towards the unity in which all things will be summed up in Christ.<sup>215</sup> The church, as "a servant of the movement of the word to the heathen" lives in the world and is part of it. Having "never had any form of existence which was not determined by that relationship," "it cannot be in Christ without being in the world."<sup>216</sup> In the eschaton, the church is finally to stand aside without ceasing to exist but in finding its own identity swallowed up by the identity of the ultimate reconciled humanity.

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<sup>213</sup> *New Directions*, 130; cf. Simonson, *The Christology*, 157-159; for a summary of some of the various approaches to God in nature and history, see: John D. Godsey, "History of Salvation and World History," in *Christian Mission in Theological Perspective: An Inquiry by Methodists*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Nashville & New York: Abingdon Press, for the Board of Mission of the Methodist Church, 1917), 56 - 76.

<sup>214</sup> This paper was prepared by D. E. Jenkins, G. W. H. Lampe, K. E. Logstrup, G. Wingren. For full text see *New Directions*, 133-140. Hereafter it will be cited as "Creation, New Creation."

<sup>215</sup> *New Directions*, 136.

<sup>216</sup> *New Directions*, 136-137.

What appears to be emerging from these studies is their apparent openness to, if not full acceptance of, God's redemptive work outside the church. The kingdom, in this view, is not the perfection of the church as such, but the totality of all reconciled humanity and the world. Here we see a movement away from the earlier view in which the church-kingdom relationship was understood as "the kingdom equals the church perfected." If salvation was no longer restricted to explicit faith in Jesus Christ, we could see here an evident challenge of the Winner model and an element of the Sign model. In the Sign model, as we formulated it, the church is not to win the world for Christ as if the world itself is distant from Christ but to be in solidarity with it because Christ was already present and at work there.

Bristol 1967 did not consider itself as having concluded the issues concerning the relationship between the church and the world. It was particularly concerned about the relationship between the concept of the church as institution and that of the church as that part of humanity which already lives as God's world. In addition to this it expressed the need to clarify the relationship between the church's quest for unity and the hope of the unity of humankind, and the way to evaluate contemporary movements of peace, social justice and human equality without unduly identifying their secularist goals with the gospel or disengaging Christians from the world's concerns or precluding dialogue with non-Christian religions. Bristol also asked if the doctrine of creation provides a means for the expression of the Christian ethic of love in concrete situations of justice or in relating "secular" morality to Christian obedience.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> *New Directions*, 131-132.

These are clearly questions that arose as a result of cosmological/Christological challenges to the Winner model. Bristol sought some resolution by proposing a study of humankind, Man in Nature and History, parallel to the study, God in Nature and History. It was hoped that this study would generate dialogue between theologians and behavioral scientists within and outside the churches. Influenced by Bristol, Uppsala 1968 approved a study, Unity of the Church-Unity of Humankind, which was to have a major influence in the shaping of the Sign model.

In summary, we have attempted to show how interests in the cosmos challenged the previously dominant Winner model. The Lordship Studies of the late 1950s and early 1960s pointed to God's work in the world apart from the church but did not clearly pronounce it as redemptive. The church bearing witness to Christ was deemed necessary for the world's redemption. In spite of the growing cosmological emphasis, even New Delhi 1961 remained anthropological in its development of Christ's cosmic work. In the meantime the cosmic, Christological emphasis did push ecumenical understandings of the church-world relation increasingly in the direction of the Sign model. Notions of solidarity with the world and reciprocal dialogue with the world's religions rather than unilinear witness became increasingly popular. Montreal 1963's emphasis on the multiple witness in the New Testament made the Christological method problematic and multiple Christologies began to be affirmed for the New Testament, including those with greater emphasis on the historicalness of Jesus. The humanity of Jesus and the *humanum* as the chief criterion for ethical reflection became the emphasis of Geneva 1966. The study on The Missionary Structure of the Congregation took a position which saw the church as dispensable in God's redemptive purpose. Because God was at work in the

world, non-Christian religions were now to be respected as bearers of a witness to the church and as part of the struggle for the future of humanity, along with science, technology, and social revolutionary forces. Redemption was finally acknowledged as possible outside the church. The emerging Sign model with its emphasis on solidarity with all humanity as it is being redeemed by God redefined the church's responsibility with respect to the world as that of witness-bearing to what the world is to become. While this witness of the church is unique, the church is not the only agent of the kingdom. Uppsala 1968 exemplified these elements in its meeting and decisions.

#### V. Uppsala 1968 and the Triumph of the Sign Model

The "Church as Sign to the World" model (the Sign model) of church-world relations which challenged the "Church as Winner of the World" model (the Winner model) in the 1950s and 1960s came to a climax at the fourth assembly of the WCC at Uppsala, Sweden, from July 4-20, 1968 under the theme, "Behold I Make All Things New."<sup>218</sup> While the Winner model was still in tension with the Sign model, it was the Sign model which triumphed at Uppsala 1968. Uppsala continued and, in fact, took to a peak the interest in the world that had been gradually emerging. The assembly was confronted on the one hand by the challenges of secularization, the scientific and technological developments of the 1960s, and the oneness of humanity that they were manifesting most vividly,<sup>219</sup> and on the other hand by the economic, sociological and

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<sup>218</sup> The official report was published as Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), hereafter cited as *Uppsala Report*.

<sup>219</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 45 – Report of Section III.

political crises across the globe.<sup>220</sup> Uppsala was “preoccupied” and at times even “obsessed” with “the revolutionary ferment” of the time, such that “the world was writing the agenda for the meeting” and “the right of the world to do this was taken for granted” by most.<sup>221</sup> As Uppsala saw it, the world is “the place where God is already at work to make all things new, and where he summons us to work with him.”<sup>222</sup>

The one concept with which Uppsala unpacked its understanding of the church’s work with God in the world was the concept of catholicity.<sup>223</sup> Catholicity refers to the “internal dimension” of Christ’s purpose to bring all humanity “into an organic and living unity in Christ by the Holy Spirit under the universal fatherhood of God.”<sup>224</sup> That is, it has to do not only with the horizontal breadth but also with the vertical permeation of all

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<sup>220</sup> E.g. the gap between the rich and the poor individuals and nations, armament expenditure, political assassinations, political crisis in several parts of the world including Nigeria, Vietnam, and the Middle East, racial crisis in South Africa and the United States, etc. *The Uppsala Report*, 5-6 – The message. The addresses in the conference were meant to highlight the world crisis especially of the poorer nations. The topics included: “Rich and Poor Nations,” “Christianity and Human Rights,” “White Racism or World Community,” etc. See: Albert H. van den Heuvel, ed., *Unity of Mankind: Speeches from the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1969). John Gatu, in his response to John Meyendorff’s address at Louvain, was later to say that Uppsala spoke more for Africa than most other conferences. *The Ecumenical Review* 24/1 (1972): 51-54.

<sup>221</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 17 – Goodall. The exceptions include the Orthodox and some Evangelicals. The Orthodox Church queried all the Sections of the preliminary drafts, especially, Section V for their assumption that “only a world-centred and world-oriented Christianity is possible and permissible for Christians to-day.” Cited by Donald L. Edwards in his personal comments on the work of Section V. *Uppsala Report*, 84. The General Secretary’s report defended the need to change with the times. *Uppsala Report*, Appendix II, 285-293. On the idea of the world setting the agenda see Uppsala’s dependence on the report on the study on the “Missionary Structure of the Congregation.” *The Church for Others*, 20.

<sup>222</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 12 – Report of Section I.

<sup>223</sup> This was the contribution of the Faith and Order to Uppsala and was part of its Section I – “The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church.” For the different stages of this draft from Bad Saarow in 1965 to the Uppsala assembly see Putney, *The Presence and Activity of the Holy Spirit*, 305-355. Section I of Uppsala has been seen as “the most important theological statement” at Uppsala and “an attempt to provide a theological basis for the Assembly’s view of mission in social, economic, and political areas. See: Fred H. Klooster, “Uppsala on ‘The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church,’” *Calvin Theological Journal* 4/1 (April, 1969): 51-98, esp. 51, 73f. Rodger C. Bassham sees it as Uppsala’s “distinctive contribution.” *Mission Theology*, 82.

of reality with the life in Christ. As Bishop Karekin Sarkissian put it, it refers to the permeation of each and every part of the earth with “the fullness of life in fellowship with God.” It is not simply, “pan-humanism,” a relationship between humans, races, nations, etc. as such, but “a relationship of this relationship with the Triune God.”<sup>225</sup> Catholicity is thus, for Uppsala, “the quality by which the Church expresses the fullness, the integrity and the totality of life in Christ.”<sup>226</sup> As Nissiotis put it, it is first of all “qualitative” before it is “quantitative;” it is a way of speaking decisively and distinctively of the reality of the church resulting from the act of God within it, in which it is given the fullness of God’s personal revelation.<sup>227</sup> But it is both a “gift” of God to the church and a “quest” of the church in its actual life.<sup>228</sup> With this concept Uppsala unpacked its understanding of the church’s role in the world.

Since the Holy Spirit works out the catholicity of the church, Uppsala could declare that “[t]he Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind.”<sup>229</sup> Whereas Fred H. Klooster thought that the bearing of Uppsala’s view of the catholicity of the church “on the unity of mankind, the unity of the world, and the

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<sup>224</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 13 – Report of Section I.

<sup>225</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 8 – Introduction to the Theme of Section I.

<sup>226</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 13 – Report of Section I; Nikos Nissiotis, “The Pneumatological Aspect,” 12. Nissiotis notes Polycarp’s use of catholicity in which he spoke “of the catholic Church which is throughout the oikumene,” nothing that “[h]ere the Church is qualified as catholic and only as such and because of this qualitative, unique and distinctive sense can she exist and should she be extended in the whole world.” 13.

<sup>227</sup> Nissiotis, “The Pneumatological Aspect,” 13. Nissiotis further argued that it is this fact that catholicity is a way of describing the essence of the church that shows that the catholicity of the church, though in solidarity with all humankind, cannot be in “full identity with all realms of secular life.” 13.

<sup>228</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 12. –Report of Section I.

<sup>229</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 17 – Report of Section I.



social-economic-political programs of the World Council” is by no means evident,<sup>230</sup> it is in Uppsala’s concept of the church as the sign of this ultimate unity of humankind that an answer may be offered to Klooster. Here Uppsala not only describes how the church relates to the world now but also links the church’s life with human destiny. Through the Spirit’s catholicity of the church, the church is enabled to witness in its historical life to the reality God’s ultimate purpose to unite all things in Christ. Rather than the emphasis of the Winner model in which the church sees itself as the agent of this uniting of humanity through the gospel, in this emerging Sign model, the church sees itself as only a sign of God’s active work, but a sign which makes real that reality bigger than itself to which it points. For the Christian, says Uppsala, human unity is grounded not only in creation but also in Jesus Christ who became human and “constitutes the church as a new community of new creatures.”<sup>231</sup> Catholicity refers to this given grace of God in which the purpose of creation is restored and sinful humanity is reconciled to God through Christ. The church is the “form” and “sacramental experience” of this ultimate reconciliation and unity of humankind with God,<sup>232</sup> this ultimate “unity of men in the fellowship of the Triune God for the glory of the everlasting kingdom.”<sup>233</sup> This would be part of Uppsala’s answer to Klooster.

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<sup>230</sup> Klooster, “Uppsala on ‘The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church,’” 83-85, 80.

<sup>231</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 18 – Report of Section I.

<sup>232</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 18. It is possible that Uppsala’s Section I was influenced by the Roman Catholic, J. L. Witte, who presented “Some Theses on the Sacramental Nature of the Church” to the 1967 and 1968 Working Group of Roman Catholics and the WCC on the study, “Catholicity and Apostolicity” in *One in Christ* VI/3 (1970): 390-409.

<sup>233</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 9 – Bishop Sakissian, Introduction to the Theme of Section I; cf. with W. A. Visser’t Hooft’s idea of the oneness of humankind. See *Uppsala Report*, Appendix V, 319 – Address on “The Mandate of the Ecumenical Movement.”

But Uppsala could also add that because the church is called to be the sign of this reconciliation with God, it is to reject in its life and in human society all things that negate this goal. In this way its catholicity would have a bearing on its socio-political commitment. "Since Christ lived, died and rose again for all mankind," Uppsala asserts, "catholicity is the opposite of all kinds of egoism and particularism."<sup>234</sup> The church is therefore to be in the world in solidarity with all who are separated from this experience of reconciliation with God. According to John G. Weller, this "affirmation of Christian solidarity with mankind" is doubtlessly "the main importance" of the Uppsala assembly.<sup>235</sup> Christian solidarity should be manifested in the areas of the world's brokenness where creation is in travail, but it must also be done, in Uppsala's view, "with those forces in modern life, such as the struggle for racial equality, which are drawing men more closely together."<sup>236</sup> The church's solidarity with the world should seek a world-wide "responsible society" with justice for all and not "a provincial, narrow sense of solidarity" because Christ died for all.<sup>237</sup> This sense of solidarity should be instilled into social and economic processes; and the "central issue in development" is to be "the criteria of the human."<sup>238</sup> Solidarity with the world and with all humanity was particularly important because of the unity of humankind to which the Scriptures and

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<sup>234</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 13 – Report of Section I.

<sup>235</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 20 – John G. Weller of the Congregational Church in England and Wales.

<sup>236</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 12 – Report of Section I.

<sup>237</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 45 - Report of Section III. In this concept of "responsible society" Uppsala shows continuity with Amsterdam 1948 in its ethical understanding. Nevertheless this is only a responsible society as colored by the spirit of Geneva 1966 with its emerging liberation tone and the criteria of the human.

<sup>238</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 47, 49 – Report of Section III.

science and technology bear witness.<sup>239</sup> The concept of solidarity with the world became, therefore, the dominant missionary posture at Uppsala, in spite of the fact that Uppsala itself admitted the possibility of speaking in different ways and with different words at different times about the church's ministry of being called out of and into the world (a reference to Lund 1952's double movement).<sup>240</sup> Uppsala's own preference for its own situation was evidently "solidarity." Arne Sovik commended Uppsala's Report of Section II as being, in the words of D. T. Niles, "refreshingly new" because "it places the Christian in and with the world rather than over against it."<sup>241</sup>

Perhaps it is this choice of solidarity as the way to express its witness in its contemporary reality which explains Uppsala's tendency towards a greater emphasis on the socio-political than on the other dimensions of Christian experience. Both from comments made by those who attended the Uppsala 1968 assembly and from the Official Report itself, Uppsala seemed to have given greater emphasis to social and economic change over the "spiritual" needs of humankind, though both aspects were present in its overall position. Uppsala preferred to describe the goal of mission as the realization of a "genuine humanity."<sup>242</sup> Peter Beyerhaus thinks that this was the concept of humanization, understood basically as "humanism."<sup>243</sup> But, as W. A. Saayman and

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<sup>239</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 61 – Report of Section IV. Cf. Visser't Hooft's position that "the unity of mankind is proclaimed in the most definite manner" in the Scriptures. *Uppsala Report*, 319.

<sup>240</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 15 – Report of Section I. Uppsala also held that "there are diverse ways of proclaiming the Gospel and setting forth its mysteries."

<sup>241</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 38 cf. D. T. Niles comments on p. 27.

<sup>242</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 14 – Report of Section I.

<sup>243</sup> Peter Beyerhaus, *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption*, trans. M. Clarkson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971); cf. Saymaan, *Mission and Unity*, 41. Uppsala did not use this term "humanization" but it had, however, been used in the 1959 Lordship study, Geneva 1966 and in the study

Bassham have rightly pointed out, Uppsala's understanding of humanization is related to the true humanity in Jesus Christ.<sup>244</sup> Uppsala, in fact, pointed out that the new manhood in Christ is a goal and a gift and "like all God's gifts it has to be appropriated by a response of faith."<sup>245</sup> However, Uppsala was apparently not worried about the problems of the lack of theological consensus on what it means for humans to participate in the humanity of Christ and the lack of clarity of the concept of the human even in the behavioral sciences, a problem which Geneva 1966 had footnoted. While, then, it may not be possible to deny that Uppsala had a deeper understanding for the goal of mission than humanism, the emphasis on the socio-ethical still dominates its work. The opportunities for mission and especially the priority situations for mission and the criteria for missionary priorities that it listed were almost<sup>246</sup> entirely socio-political.<sup>247</sup>

Rather than reading Uppsala's position as a rejection of the unemphasized aspects, or as evidence of internal contradictions based on the nature of ecumenical

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on The Missionary Structure of the Congregation." See "The Lordship of Christ," 443; *The Church for Others*, 77-78.

<sup>244</sup> Saayman, *Unity and Mission*, 41f.; cf. Bassham, *Mission Theology*, 80.

<sup>245</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 28 – Report of Section II; cf. with John V. Taylor's opinion in this respect, *Uppsala Report*, 23 – Introduction to the theme of Section II. It would also appear, however, that Uppsala held that it was possible for some of those evangelized to experience "a new birth" but their turning point may not "appear as a religious choice at all" but may still issue in a change of life which breaks through racial, national, religious and other barriers that divide the unity of mankind. *Uppsala Report*, 28 – Report of Section II.

<sup>246</sup> Uppsala noted that "[t]he church is rightly concerned for the world's hundreds of millions who do not know the Gospel of Christ. *Uppsala Report*, 32 – Report of Section II.

<sup>247</sup> The "few" priority situations for missions it mentions are: centers of power, revolutionary movements, the university, rapid urbanization and industrialization, suburbia, rural areas, relations between developed and developing countries, the churches as an arena for mission. The criteria for missionary priorities are whether the place the church along with the poor, defenseless, the abused, the forgotten, the bored; whether they allow the church to enter into the concerns of others; whether their structures are vehicles of involvement; whether they are the best situations for discerning with other humans the signs of the times and for moving with history towards the coming of the new humanity. *Uppsala Report*, 30-32.

documents as compromise documents,<sup>248</sup> perhaps, one should be called to caution by Uppsala's own position in which it admits that the church's mission should be differently spoken of in different contexts of mission. Whereas one may query the rightness of a way that may be chosen to speak about the church's mission at a particular point and place, this may not be interpreted as is sometimes done to mean departure from the un-emphasized aspects. Could it be that the sight of the world before Uppsala led it to its socio-political emphasis? And could this, then, be an evidence of what the Berlin evangelicals negatively called ideologizing, but which Hendrikus Berkhof has noted as possible to be positive and legitimate if it is only a temporary expression of one's commitment?<sup>249</sup>

It may be helpful for understanding of the Sign model if we identify some of the elements of church-world relation which Uppsala manifests. First was a positive attitude to the world and to secularization, calling for "a new openness to the world in its aspirations, its achievements, its restlessness and its despair."<sup>250</sup>

Second was the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ, which Uppsala confessed by means of its concept of catholicity. But unlike the Winner model where this

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Bassham believes that these criteria for missionary priorities follow the study on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation. *Mission Theology*, 81.

<sup>248</sup> Basham, *Mission Theology*, 83; cf. also the responses of Eugene L. Smith, David Hubbard, John R. W. Stott and Philip Potter in *The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents, 1964-1976*, ed. Donald McGavran, Expanded Edition of *Eye of the Storm: the Great Debate in Mission, Including Documents on Bangkok and Nairobi* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1972, 1977), 259-272 [and also in *Church Growth Bulletin* 5/2 (Nov. 1968)].

<sup>249</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, "Berlin versus Geneva: Our Relationship with the Evangelicals," *The Ecumenical Review* 28/1 (Jan. 1976): 80-86. We shall return to this in chapter five.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. *Uppsala Report*, 17 – Report of Section I. The generally positive response to secularism was particularly obvious in the work of Section V. The comments of Donald L. Edwards help to paint the picture of what went on the Section's discussions. See *Uppsala Report*, 79-80; 85f. It may be recalled that

led to winning the world for Christ, at Uppsala, it led to being in solidarity with all the world and realizing the humanization of humanity because of God's purpose of reconciliation all things in Christ, to which the church is the sign. The uniqueness of Christ here was not as much that of the winning Lord as it was that of the reconciling and affirming Lord. It was because of the universal Lordship of Christ that the church could speak of its catholicity. Hendrikus Berkhof also affirmed the uniqueness of Christ in his address at Uppsala.<sup>251</sup>

A third element of church-world relation which Uppsala revealed was dialogue with secular society and with non-Christian religions. Clearly, for Uppsala, as for the Winner model, this did not preclude proclamation; as Uppsala noted, "one complements the other in a total witness."<sup>252</sup> Hence in spite of its commitment to dialogue, Uppsala could assert that "[m]ission bears fruit as people find their true life in the Body of Christ, in the Church's life of Word and Sacrament, fellowship in the Spirit and existence for others."<sup>253</sup> Also, while "growth of the Church" in depth and number is "of urgent importance" Uppsala could state that "our ultimate hope is not set upon this progress, but on the mystery of the final event which remains in the hand of God."<sup>254</sup> Though admitting of dialogue as an authentic way of witness, Uppsala was not against conversion into the church and spiritual and numerical growth. Rodger Bassham thinks that this

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this positive attitude to secularism was already evident in the report of Section II of Mexico City. See, *Witness in Six Continents*, 150-155.

<sup>251</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 304-312 – Hendrikus Berkhof, "The Finality of Jesus Christ: Our Common Confession and its Implications for today."

<sup>252</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 29 – Report of Section II.

<sup>253</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 29 – Report of Section II.

<sup>254</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 29 – Report of Section II.

commitment to church growth was the influence of Church Growth movement,<sup>255</sup> but Uppsala's position clearly cautioned that growth should be no measure of the church's hope and that the church should not be "preoccupied with its own numerical and institutional strength."<sup>256</sup> While Bassham is right in noting the various tendencies in the assembly which shaped the report, he follows those who see them as contradictory positions, but fails to consider the possibility that Uppsala's position, rather than a combination of contradictory views, is an ingenious appropriation of the positive elements in otherwise genuinely contradictory tendencies. Uppsala may be here reflecting its own way of appropriating what we have called the Sign model.

Fourth was the concept of mutuality of witness in dialogue, a concept which began to creep into ecumenical discussions more prominently at New Delhi 1961. "The Church's mission to the world will bring an enrichment from the world into the Church," says Uppsala; however, "[o]nly in the fulness of redeemed humanity shall we experience the fulness of the Spirit's gifts."<sup>257</sup>

Fifth was an idea of redemption which was not limited to the church. This, as already noted, seems to be illustrated in the Bristol 1967 studies.<sup>258</sup> While like earlier positions, Uppsala also affirmed a place for the church in God's mission, it did not seem

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<sup>255</sup> Bassham, *Mission Theology*, 82. However, Bassham could not point to any real contradictions in the viewpoints. What Uppsala seemed to have done is to take the strengths of the view points into its fashioning of the Sign model.

<sup>256</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 32 – Report of Section II.

<sup>257</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 18 – Report of Section I; cf. 29 – Report of Section II.

<sup>258</sup> As Putney points out, J. Meyendorff argued concerning the study on the catholicity of the church at Bristol 1967 that "the difference between those who held to a traditional understanding of the Church and those who spoke of a new revelation of the Holy Spirit through secular history and the secular world" has been bypassed. *The Presence and Activity of the Holy Spirit*, 336-337.

to limit God's redemption to the church. All through the document the underlining assumption seems to be clearly a notion in which "the fulness of redeemed humanity" was broader than the church.<sup>259</sup> The history of the world, whatever else it may be, was now seen as redemptive history.<sup>260</sup>

Finally, it would be important to mention here that Uppsala held a clear position against confusing the church's unity and catholicity with "other solidarities and communities."<sup>261</sup> It also rejected any diversity which frustrates the double movement of the church being called out and into the world.

These elements of church-world relation, which constitute the elements of the Sign model, may now be summarized thus: a positive attitude towards the world and its secular culture; the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ; dialogue with other religions and secular society; mutuality of witness; the redeemed community wider than the bounds of the church; and Christian uniqueness in its unity and catholicity. These are some of the elements of the Sign model whose shaping shall be discussed in ecumenical history between 1969 and Canberra 1991.

## VI. Summary and Conclusion: From Winner to Sign

It is our contention that the church-world relation in ecumenical thought shifted during the twentieth century from "the Church as Winner of the World" model (Winner

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<sup>259</sup> See e.g. *Uppsala Report*, 18 – Report of Section I. Also, one of the criteria for evaluating missionary priorities is whether they are the best situations "for moving with history towards the coming of the new humanity." *Uppsala Report*, 32 – Report of Section II.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Saayman, *Unity and Mission*, 38f. cf. G. Müller-Fahrenholz, *Heilsgeschichte zwischen Ideologie und Prophetie: Profile und Kritik heilsgeschichtlicher Theorien in der ökumenischen Bewegung zwischen 1948 und 1968* (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1974), 64.

<sup>261</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 14f. – Report of Section I.



model) to the “Church as Sign to the World” model (Sign model). In the former model the church was to win the world for Christ by means of the gospel and thereby realize the unity of humankind by incorporation into the church. In the latter model the church was to be a sign to the world of God’s ultimate unity of all things to Godself in Christ through solidarity with the world. In the last chapter we showed the shaping of the Winner model from Edinburgh 1910 to Whitby 1947. In this chapter we have shown that Amsterdam 1948 inherited the Winner model from the earlier ecumenical tradition but accented its Christological element by emphasizing Christ as the winner. This was feared to be detrimental to the church’s prophetic witness but Amsterdam did not fall into that error. Rather it emphasized both Christ as the winner and the church’s task of winning the world for Christ through Christianization. Lund 1952 continued this Christological accenting of the Winner model by linking the church and Christ indissolubly together in such a way that Christ’s cosmological relevance was only understood in terms of the church’s mission. The linking of the church to Christ was seen by some as giving a realistic rather than a metaphorical interpretation to the concept of the church as the Body of Christ. Also, Lund’s identification of Christ with the church was found to be problematic for an understanding of the historicalness of the church as an event which began on the Day of Pentecost. Further challenges to the Winner model came from the understanding of the priority of the Trinitarian God in mission at Willingen 1952, from the world’s eschatological bearing at Evanston in 1954 and from challenges highlighted by fresh understandings of world and humanity especially in the 1960s.

At Willingen 1952 the emphasis on mission as the work of the Trinitarian God came with implications for the redemptive work of God in Christ, the church’s mission

and the cosmos, and in all these three areas challenged the Winner model. Willigen responded to the first by emphasizing the centrality of the work of Christ which led to the cross in God's mission. To the second, Willigen maintained that the church still has a part in God's mission and is an essential part of God's mission of redemption in the world. To the third the cosmos was seen as the sphere of God's actions. While the traditional view in which the church was the exclusive realm of redemption seemed to have been softened, the categorical affirmation of redemption outside the church was still not the official position even though it was clearly the position of some. At the WCC assembly at Evanston 1954, the place of Christ as the hope of the world raised unanswered questions concerning the relationship between general history and the history of redemption, and therefore, the relationship between the church and the world and that between Christian hope and non-Christian hopes. It reveals tensions for the Winner model through its questioning of issues once taken for granted in the Winner model and thereby revealed some elements of the emerging Sign model.

The Lordship studies in the late 1950s and early 1960s attempted to understand the cosmological awareness that was dawning on the church especially in relation to the Lordship of Christ but did not answer the basic question of the relationship between redemptive history and general history and between the church and the world. Nevertheless, they highlighted the place of the concepts of sin and eschatology in understanding the church's relation to the world, the church's distinctive mission in the world and its essential nature in God's purpose for the world. At New Delhi 1961 the speech of Joseph Sittler raised the cosmological awareness of the ecumenical family to a peak and launched into the ecumenical atmosphere a seed that would yield significant

harvest in ecumenical activities and theology. The importance of dealing with non-Christian religions was highlighted and initial discussions on the concept of “dialogue” with them and solidarity with humanity were begun. At Montreal 1963 the relationship between general history and salvation history remained unclear, the multiplicity of New Testament witness to Christ shattered the old confidence in the Christological method and all spheres of the church’s living reality and existence were now seen as theological. Mexico City 1963 Christian witness to the secular culture and dialogue with non-Christian religions were the particular points of emphasis. Geneva 1966 had to confront the implications for the church of the scientific, technological and revolutionary forces in the world and highlighted the concept of the *humanum*. In the study on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation the church was defined by its apostolicity and therefore seen as dispensable in God’s purpose. God’s redemptive work in creation was clearly affirmed. Bristol 1967, though apparently with an openness to the redemption of God outside the church saw the need for a clearer relation of the unity of the church to that of humankind and for a way of understanding secular movements of peace and social justice which neither conflates secularist goals with the gospel nor leads to withdrawal of the church from the world.

Uppsala 1968 worked all these developments into an elevation of the Sign model over the Winner model. The world was taken seriously as the sphere of God’s action and as the place where the church’s agenda was to be set. The uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ was affirmed especially by means of the concept of catholicity. The church’s mission in the world was understood as sign of the ultimate reconciliation of all things in Christ, which calls the church into solidarity with the world in its brokenness.

Dialogue was judged necessary with non-Christian religions and scientific, technological and revolutionary forces for the bettering of human society. This was not, however, to preclude proclamation of the good news or conversion into the church, although this was now to be done through mutuality of witness. Redemption was no longer limited to the church and the distinctness of the church's unity and catholicity from any other catholicity was maintained.

In conclusion, the evidence of a change of model has not been in a change in the understanding of Christ as such, but in the understanding of how the church relates to the work of Christ in the world. Thus, in both the Winner model as inherited and the Sign model as it was emerging, the centrality of Christ was not at issue. Also there was no movement from Christology to cosmic pneumatology or from Cosmic Christology to a Trinitarianism which did not find its central focus in Christ.<sup>262</sup> In addition there was no movement away from the church to the world as has been sometimes suggested, as if the interests in the world which emerged were not with implications for the church, or as if the church's unity was no longer of interest. What was at issue was the centrality of the church in God's redemptive purpose, or the locus of the redemptive work of God in Christ and its implications for the church's mission. What was at issue was whether God's redemptive mission in the world was only through the church or whether God was free to act, and did indeed act, beyond and apart from the church. That the church has a role to play in the world was not at issue, but what the nature of this role was to be was. Whereas in the Winner model this role was to realize human unity through

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<sup>262</sup> Contra John Bolt, "The Ecumenical Shift to Cosmic Pneumatology," *Reformed Review* 51/3 (Spring 1998): 255-270; and contra Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), esp. chapters 3 and 4.

Christianization, in the Sign model it was to witness to God's uniting of all humanity through solidarity. In the Sign model the church still has an important role to play with respect to the world, but it was no longer the goal of God's activities in the world, nor the only means of God's activities. The new emphasis shifted to God's work in the world, to God's already and continuing mission in the world and the church's mission was now to be understood in terms of this mission of God in the world. It is within the implications of this realization for the church's mission that the change from the Winner model to the Sign model has so far been located. Yet the questions raised by Bristol 1967 lingered, namely, the relation of the church's pursuit of unity to the unity of humankind and the criteria for evaluating secular movements of peace and justice which would not on the one hand identify them with the church or on the other hand excluded the church from them. These concerns influenced the shaping of the Sign model in the post-Uppsala 1968 years. The processes of this shaping and how they define the ecumenical movement between 1969 and its seventh assembly at Canberra 1991 is the concern of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE SHAPING OF THE SIGN MODEL**

We have been attempting to show the changing face of ecumenical understanding of the church-world relation through two models, the “Church as Winner of the World” and the “Church as Sign to the World.” In the Winner model the church is seen as called to win the world for Christ by means of the gospel and thereby to realize the unity of humankind. In the Sign model the church does not stand over against the world but in solidarity with it as a sign to it of God’s reconciliation of all things in Christ. In chapter two we traced the shaping of the Winner model from Edinburgh 1910 through Whitby 1947, taking into consideration the ethical, ecclesiological and evangelistic influences in this shaping. In the last chapter we demonstrated the challenges the Winner model faced through emphases in Christology, in the concept of *missio Dei* and the priority of the Trinitarian God in mission, in the eschatological goal of the world’s hope and in the cosmological reality of human existence. These challenges were traced from the first Assembly of the WCC at Amsterdam in 1948 through the fourth assembly at Uppsala in 1968. At Uppsala 1968 the Sign model triumphed over the Winner model and ecumenical missionary understanding began to more definitely take a new direction. The understanding of where God is at work shifted in ecumenical missionary thought from

the church as such to the world<sup>1</sup> and humanity.<sup>2</sup> Structures of missionary engagement were now to be shaped to serve God's mission in the world rather than the church. While this did not reduce interest in the church, it set the understanding of the church in a new context – the context of the world.

However, the Sign model that emerged at Uppsala 1968 was only in its rudimentary stages. In this chapter we shall trace its shaping from these rudimentary stages to its more mature form at Canberra, 1991. This shaping took place both ecclesiological and in terms of witness.<sup>3</sup> The ecclesiological shaping took place mainly in the work of Faith and Order especially in the study on Unity of the Church-Unity of Mankind (hereafter the Unity Study) that began in 1969 and ended in 1974, and the study on "Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" (hereafter the Unity/Renewal Study) which began in 1981 and was finally approved for publication in 1990. The shaping of the model in terms of witness took place mainly in the activities of the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism from Bangkok 1973 to Baar 1990. The WCC assemblies at Nairobi 1975 and Vancouver 1983 also contributed to both

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<sup>1</sup> After Uppsala, six essays were published emphasizing this broader context of the church's unity. See Reinhard Groscurth, ed., *What Unity Implies: Six Essays After Uppsala* (Geneva: WCC, 1969)

<sup>2</sup> This emphasis on humankind following Uppsala led to the Humanum Studies. See *The Humanum Studies 1969-1975: A Collection of Documents* (Geneva: WCC, 1975). Even though this led to no official statements or decisions, it affected the ecumenical understanding in the period between Uppsala 1968 and Nairobi 1975. The Faith and Order decided to make the study of humanity central to its studies. See "Letter to Member Churches," *Unity Trends* 2/20 (October 1, 1969): 5-8, esp. 7.

<sup>3</sup> By the shaping in terms of witness I attempt to use a word, "witness" instead of "evangelism" preferred by the ecumenical movement in the period since especially the emergence of the Sign model. This witness is not only beyond the church but also within the church. Though evangelism was not a preferred word, it was occasionally used and the idea of wholistic witness has been severally argued for the ecumenical movement. Philip Potter pointed out the WCC preference for the term "mission" over "evangelism." "Evangelism and the World Council of Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 20/2 (April 1968): 171-182 at 176. See also Martin Lehmann-Habeck, "Wholistic Evangelism: A WCC Perspective," *International Review of Mission* 73/289 (Jan. 1984): 7-16; Priscilla Pope-Levison, "Evangelism in the WCC – Part I: From New Delhi to Vancouver," *International Review of Mission* 80/318 (April 1991): 231-243.

dimensions of this shaping. We shall conclude this chapter with a discussion of the appropriation of this model at Canberra, Australia in 1991. What will emerge through this chapter are the elements of the Sign model which eventually replaced the Winner model. We shall see that whereas there are many shared elements between the Sign and Winner models, the context of the world into which the Sign model casts these elements significantly shaped ecumenical understanding of the church-world relation. The church-world relation that finally emerges is one in which the church does not see the world as an enemy to be conquered, or as a competitor to be won, but as an object of God's love with which to be in solidarity. The world is a place in which the church sees God and builds local communities of justice and freedom, in token of God's kingdom. The church learns from the world and seeks to be present to it as a sign of God's reconciliation of all things. At Canberra this view emerged in an understanding of mission as a relationship of sharing.

## **I. Ecclesiological Shaping of the Sign Model**

### **A. Initial Contours of the Sign Model: The Unity Study**

After it was approved by Uppsala 1968 the study, "Unity of the Church – Unity of Mankind" (hereafter "the Unity Study") served as a resource for the Faith and Order Commission's consideration of the church-world relation. The rationale behind this study may be traced to the lingering questions of the post-Willingen 1952 and pre-Uppsala 1968 period, issues concerning the relationship between the world and the eschaton, as well as the relationship between the unity of the church and that of humanity. This study began with a draft in 1969 and after several revisions led to a statement, "Unity in Tension" which was formulated by the Faith and Order Commission



at Accra, Ghana in 1974. Several characteristics of the emerging Sign model which set the initial contours of the ecclesiological shaping of the Sign model may be gleaned from the 1969 draft and the other drafts of the 1970s.

### 1. The 1969 Unity Study

The first draft of the study “Unity of the Church – Unity of Mankind,” approved by Uppsala 1968, was presented to the Working Committee of Faith and Order at Canterbury in August of 1969.<sup>4</sup> At least four tendencies emerging from this study were responded to by the Canterbury 1969 Working Committee, and these responses reveal some key elements of the Sign model being shaped. To the tendency of the 1969 draft of the Unity Study to start the discussion of Christian unity by a definition of human unity, the Working Committee presented the distinctive Christological and pneumatological bearing of the church and its unity. To the tendency to define humanity only in terms of evolutionary categories was presented the oneness of humanity both at creation and in the eschaton when God unites all humanity in Christ. To the tendency to blur the boundaries between the church and the world was presented the importance of the church’s distinctness from the world. And to the tendencies towards a triumphalistic view of the church was presented a humble view of the church which recognized both its positional truth as it already is in Christ and its historical reality in the world.

This 1969 draft of the Unity Study took its starting point in the unity of humankind and emphasized the need for interdisciplinary, inter-contextual and inter-group study for its understanding of the relation of the unity of the church to that of

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<sup>4</sup> This draft is published in *Study Encounter* 5/4 (1969): 163-178; the Comments of the Working Committee are published as an appendix on pages 178-181. The document including the appendix will be cited hereafter as *1969 Draft Study*.

humankind.<sup>5</sup> It highlighted the theological issues involved in this study to include: what constitutes a human being; the relation of creation and calling; the goal of history; history and God's sovereignty; and the unity and diversity of humankind. It saw the church as integrally related to humanity, and was, with respect to it, "the place of real community." The church is the "community of free men" and, living as part of humanity, is a "witness for community among men," being itself, "a sign of true community." It is "a provisional community" precisely because it "exists as a community for the sake of community among men" and awaits the coming of the kingdom of God when it will "vanish away." It is "in communion with the past," yet it does not "idealize" it or "twist" it "to justify itself or to provide an escape from the present" or "despise" or "disregard" it as "a drag on the present." It is "open to the future" and therefore should "in principle always be ready for change."<sup>6</sup>

The response of the Working Committee to this document revealed four tendencies which were beginning to emerge and the correction of which shaped the Sign model. It is important to point out that what eventually emerged as the final form of the Sign model was the product of ongoing and prolonged efforts to distinguish between

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<sup>5</sup> The need for interdisciplinary studies had been made since at least Jerusalem 1928. See, e.g., *The Jerusalem Meeting of the of the International Missionary Council, March 24-April 8, 1928* (New York: IMC, 1928), 3:183; J. H. Oldham, ed., *The Oxford Conference (Official Report)* (Chicago & New York: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937), 77; Eugene C. Blake, "Preface," in Reinhard Groscurth, ed., *What Unity Implies: Six Essays after Uppsala* (Geneva: WCC, 1969), 7-8. The Bossey consultation of 1968 brought together biologists, pharmacologists, theologians, and professors of medicine to discuss the criteria that must guide bio-medical experiments on human beings. See *Experiments with Man: Report of an Ecumenical Consultation* (Geneva and New York: WCC and Friendship Press, 1969), 13-27 for a record of the convictions and of the consultation. See also pages 57-72 for the views of different religions and ideologies on the matter. Interdisciplinary approach also informed Louvain's inter-contextual method and has encouraged the several contributions from different regional and church groups. See "Unity in Church and World," *Study Encounter 7/2* (1971) [SE/06], 1-12; 8/1 (1972) [SE/19], 1-12; *Faith and Order: Louvain 1971: Study Reports and Documents* (Geneva: WCC, 1971), 120ff., 129, 195ff., etc.

<sup>6</sup> *1969 Draft Study*, 174-177.

legitimate and illegitimate elements of the church's relation to the world. The first tendency was the attempt to begin the unity of the church from the unity of humankind. The Working Committee found this illegitimate because, as it stated clearly, the unity of the church was only possible "by way of Christology and Pneumatology."<sup>7</sup> Here the Sign model's interest in the world was being used by some to attempt an understanding of the church from the world. But the Working Committee found this to be illegitimate, insisting rather on the Christological and pneumatological bearing of the church. This became a legacy of the Sign model.

The 1969 draft also tended to polarize the dynamic elements of human nature over the static. Emphasizing the "solidarity of the human race as a fact and a goal" in terms of its dynamic and evolving aspects at the expense of its permanent and given aspects, tended to see humanity merely as "a community of becoming."<sup>8</sup> The Working Committee rejected this tendency, arguing that only the permanent aspects of humanity "would allow us to speak of an inherent solidarity of mankind in all ages and places." In addition, affirmation of the given and permanent aspects of humankind in both the *imago Dei* and as given in Christ was for the Working Committee the only basis of adequately

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<sup>7</sup> 1969 Draft Study, 178. This same point had been made earlier by Lund. See: Oliver S. Tomkins, ed., *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order Held At Lund, August 15<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, 1952* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 22 – Report on Christ and His Church. See also the same complaint as voiced by a study group of the Federation of the Evangelical Church in the Germany which said the study regarded "the unity of the Church as itself a consequence of the unity of mankind." *Study Encounter* 8/1 (1972) [SE/19], 4.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. 1969 Draft Study, 179. Dietrich Bonhoeffer had spoken with reference to humankind of "personal being as structurally open" to the Other. *The Communion of Saints* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 44. However the dynamic nature of humanity is more a general consensus of phenomenologists and Existentialists.

caring for creation and seeking human destiny.<sup>9</sup> To treat humanity as only a community of “becoming” results in division, the Working Committee stated. The Christian understanding of “becoming,” it contended, looks towards the eschatological hope of the unity of all things in Christ.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, the Working Committee rejected the tendency to define humanity exclusively in evolutionary categories. The interest in the world which was demanded by the Sign model appeared again to be pulled into implications which the Working Committee found unacceptable. The corrective, however, made it possible to affirm key elements in the Sign model: humanity’s oneness in the image of God and in the redemption in Christ which ultimately ends in reconciliation of all things in Christ.

A third tendency was the attempt to blur the boundaries between the church and the world. The problem here, according to the Working Committee, was that church unity was being confused with any and every kind of unity in the world without properly defining the boundaries or by underplaying existing boundaries. The search for self-identity in many nations following decolonization raised the need to recognize cultural identity in a common human nature. Also, some feared that the interest in the catholicity of the church would dissolve all cultural peculiarities. These apparently led to efforts to affirm and to identify with Christian unity all kinds of catholicities in an attempt to respect cultural peculiarities. Against this tendency to blur the boundaries the Working Committee responded by emphasizing that:

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<sup>9</sup> *1969 Draft Study*, 179. For an example of this dynamic anthropology, see the Farley/Sartre’s version of it in “God as Dominator and Image-Giver: Divine Sovereignty and the New Anthropology,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 6/3 (Summer 1969): 354-375.

<sup>10</sup> *1969 Draft Study*, 179.

Church unity – and therefore real human unity – is not just any sort of unity, but community grounded in Christ, empowered in the Spirit and unfailingly open in love to all creatures.<sup>11</sup>

The Working Committee also held that maintaining the church's boundaries was essential because it was a matter of "honoring him who alone can unite all creation."<sup>12</sup> This corrective contributed to the ecclesiological shaping of the uniqueness of the church and the nature of the church's being in the world which would be continuously noticed in the Unity Study and the Unity/Renewal Study. The Zagorsk 1968 Consultation warned the church against "the danger of dilettantish engagement in social issues" in which the church's participation in "secular ecumenism" lacks any Christian distinctiveness.<sup>13</sup>

From the churches, broadly speaking, there were two reactions to the 1969 draft's attempt to blur the boundaries. One completely rejected any kind of continuity between secular catholicities and Christian unity. A study group of the Church of Norway, for example, insisted that "[t]he new and fundamental unity of mankind is possible only as the result of God's saving work in Christ," that this unity of humankind is "discontinuous with all attempts to create a unity of mankind within this world," and that "secular catholicities" not only do not possess a redemptive power but are no "pointers towards the new and final unity of mankind."<sup>14</sup> The other reaction tended toward caution. An example of this tendency is a study group of the Russian Orthodox Church, which noted

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<sup>11</sup> *1969 Draft Study*, 179.

<sup>12</sup> *1969 Draft Study*, 179.

<sup>13</sup> "The Zagorsk Consultation," *Unity Trends* 2/6 (Feb. 1, 1969): Section IV, 8; The Study Group of the Evangelical Commission from the GDR pointed out that there was no distinction in the 1969 document between the "Christian community" and the "civil community," *Study Encounter* 8/1 (1972) (SE/19): 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Study Encounter* 8/1 (1972): 11.

that “church unity” should not be uncritically taken as “directly linked with progress towards the universal unity of mankind.” The Russian group also cautioned soberly that since God’s ways are unfathomable, Christians should not be tempted into “excessive optimism which leads to an ill-advised connivance at the spread of *any* form of human community” on the one hand, nor into “fearfulness and pessimism which lead to the unthinking condemnation of any striving towards ‘natural’ community,” on the other.<sup>15</sup> The resistance here was to the identification of any earthy movement or secular catholicity with God’s redemptive work. What the resisting voices all seemed to say was that it was only in the church that God’s redemption may be pointed to and not elsewhere. This view characterizes the ethos of humility that the Sign model would later manifest as one of its distinctive elements. In this element, as would be seen later, while there is an openness to God’s work beyond the church, there is a general reticence in pin-pointing any activity outside the church as redemptive, in spite of the continuous demands in this regard within the ecumenical family.

As a fourth concern the Working Committee feared that the 1969 Study smacked of triumphalism, especially in its claim that the church was “the place of real community.”<sup>16</sup> The Working Committee thought that the Study needed to separate between positional and experiential truths. Thus, it asserted that “[a]s given by God, the Church is the place of real community” but in its historical existence it has fostered division, disunity and even oppression, and therefore, should not be spoken of in triumphalistic terms as the place of real community. The recommendation was that

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<sup>15</sup> *Study Encounter* 8/1 (1972): 7, 8 (emphasis in the original text).

<sup>16</sup> See e.g., *Faith and Order*, Louvain, 198.

“Church unity be viewed not simply ontologically and historically, but eschatologically as well.”<sup>17</sup> From the Working Committee’s critique and other challenges to overconfidence in scientific views of human nature came a conviction to tone down triumphalist claims for the church and for the world.<sup>18</sup> Here we again see an example of the “ethos of humility” that would figure prominently in the final shape the Sign model would take.

What we have seen here are tendencies which were beginning to emerge from the 1969 draft of the Unity Study. While they were clearly not the official ecumenical positions, they reflect tendencies within the ecumenical studies of the time. In the response generated by these tendencies came a corrective that helped shape the Sign model ecclesialogically. The tendency to start the discussion of Christian unity by a prior definition of human unity was judged to be illegitimate since Christian unity has a distinctive Christological and pneumatological bearing. The tendency to define humanity only in terms of evolutionary categories was rejected and it was pointed out that humanity was one both in being created in the image of God and in the eschatological hope in Christ of the reconciliation of all things. The tendency to blur the boundaries between the church and the world was rejected along with the identification of all kinds of secular unities with the kind of unity sought by the church. The triumphalism of the church was rejected and a more humble stance of the church acknowledging its historical failures was encouraged. All these elements contributed to the formation of the elements

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<sup>17</sup> *1969 Draft Study*, 180.

<sup>18</sup> Geneva 1966 and Uppsala 1968 have sometimes been thought to be triumphalistic with respect to their faith in scientific, technological and social revolutions. Cf. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 383, 388.

of the Sign model which emerged from the Unity Study in the 1970s. It should be recalled that all these elements were present in Uppsala 1968's appropriation of the Sign model as this would better clarify notions that tend to see Uppsala as a negative appropriation of the elements of the Sign model.

## 2. The Unity Study of the 1970s

The Unity Study of the 1970s, building upon the 1969 draft and the correctives of the Canterbury Working committee of 1969 shaped the Sign model in four ways. First, it took the world in its contextual realities into the understanding of the church through an inter-contextual methodology. Second, it expressed the nature of the church's mission in the world in the concept of "the church as sign." Third, it attempted to account for diversities within the church in the Trinitarian nature of God. And fourth, it saw unity as "conciliar fellowship" as the kind of unity which would allow for the church's many diversities.

The Faith and Order at Louvain in 1971 was one of the earliest discussions of the Unity Study in the 1970s. A Consultation at Torre Pellice, Italy in 1972 prepared the 1972 draft, which was discussed by the Working Committee at Utrecht in 1972. Yet another draft was prepared by a working group at Cartigny in 1973 which was discussed and approved by the Working Committee at Zagorsk 1973.<sup>19</sup> The Faith and Order Commission at Accra, Ghana, in 1974 prepared the short document "Unity in Tension" for the Nairobi 1975 Assembly. Accra 1974 agreed to discontinue the study but to emphasize its main themes in collaborative works with other units and sub-units of the

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<sup>19</sup> For the discussion of the working committee see *Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Committee held at the St. Sergius Monastery, Zagorsk, USSR, August 6-14, 1973* (Geneva: WCC, 1973), 11-14, 43-45.



WCC.<sup>20</sup> Here we shall show the four important dimensions in which this study helped shape the Sign model.

#### a. The Inter-Contextual Methodology

The Unity Study of the 1970s established the methodology of the Faith and Order studies such that the world was taken into consideration as the place where God is already at work. Examining the methodology of a study provides perspective to its dominant interests or presuppositions. The issue of methodology was debated as early as the Faith and Order Commission at Aarhus in 1964, where the “inductive” method was recommended over the “deductive” method.<sup>21</sup> In the inductive method studies were to begin from actual life situations and then the Scripture applied to them. The Zagorsk Consultation of March 17-23, 1968 recommended a “dialectical method” which combined the strengths and avoided the weaknesses of the inductive and deductive methods.<sup>22</sup> At Louvain 1971 an “intercontextual” method was proposed where the discussions about the unity of the church were to be done with reference to the socio-

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<sup>20</sup> The processes of these studies are in Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *Unity in Today's World: Faith and Order Studies on: "Unity of the Church-Unity of Humankind"* Faith and Order Paper no. 88 (Geneva: WCC, 1978), esp. 28-99. See also Kuncheria Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue: A Study of the Methodological Development in the Commission on "Faith and Order" of the World Council of Churches* (Bangalore, India: Dharmaram Publications, 1981), 373-374.

<sup>21</sup> *Minutes of the Meetings of the Commission and Working Committee held at The University of Aarhus, Denmark, 15-27 August 1964* (Geneva: WCC, 1965), 59; cf. P. W. Fuerth *The Concept of Catholicity in the Documents of the World Council of Churches 1948-1968: A Historical Study with Systematic-Theological Reflections* (Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1973), 139, 152ff., 161-163.

<sup>22</sup> This was the Consultation on Theological Issues of both the Church and Society and Faith and Order held at St. Sergius Monastery, Zagorsk, USSR, March 17-23, 1968. See: “Statement of the Zagorsk Consultation,” Sections I-III, *Unity Trends* 2/5 (Jan. 15, 1969): 4-14, esp. 5-6; Section IV has been published as “The Zagorsk Consultation,” *Unity Trends* 2/6 (Feb. 1, 1969): 6-9. This Statement, however pointed out, that Christian ethics was not possible without “certain basic principles of human existence as working criteria with which to evaluate the different situations in which” one lives, and that “[t]he biblical truth about God’s will and acts cannot be derived solely from the situation.” 6; cf. Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 357-358.

political context in which the church was situated. Whereas a strict following of the “inductive” method would have started from the actual doctrinal divisions of the churches, the intercontextual method began from the socio-ethical and socio-political lived experience of the church. Hence, Louvain’s Sections related church unity to different contextual realities: the “Struggle for Justice in Society,” “Encounter with Living Faiths,” “Struggle against Racism,” the “Handicapped in Society” and “Differences in Culture.”<sup>23</sup> This methodological trend, later developed by Accra 1974 and especially by the Unity/Renewal Study in the 1980s, was a way in which the Faith and Order studies brought the growing interest in the world and humanity to focus.

#### **b. The Church as “Sign”**

The Unity Study of the 1970s expressed the church’s mission in the world by the notion of “sign,” thus revealing the changing, if not changed, understanding of the church-world relation from the Winner model. The eclipse of the Winner model meant that the church was no longer regarded as standing in the world in the form of a redeemed army ready to win the unredeemed into its camp. The church now was seen as standing in solidarity with the world, being redeemed by God, as the sign of God’s presence and work in the world. The concept of the church as “sign” therefore became the strongest expression of the missional nature of the church in its solidarity with the world.<sup>24</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup> See e.g., *Study Encounter* 7/4 (1971) [SE/17]; *Study Encounter* 8/1 (1972) [SE/19], 1 – Conrad Raiser; cf. *Faith and Order, Louvain*, 184-199 – John Deschner’s summary of the method.

<sup>24</sup> Pathil thinks that this concept of the church as “sign” was the “most important contribution” of the Unity of the Church – Unity of Humankind study. *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 376; John Deschner thinks that the study was very formative for the BEM document and Bangalore’s “A Common Account of Hope.” See Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Towards Visible Unity: Commission on Faith and Order Lima 1982; Volume II: Study Papers and Reports. Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith*

idea of the church as “sign” was complex, and multiple perspectives of its meaning emerged.<sup>25</sup> 1) The church is “sign” in the sense of representing and revealing Christ on earth.<sup>26</sup> 2) The church is “sign” in the sense of being a pointer to a greater and different reality from itself but in which it nevertheless participates and which it also makes real.<sup>27</sup> It is for this reason that the 1972 study states that the church is “never more than a sign” since it is “God alone who in Christ through the Spirit unites mankind unto himself,” and Jesus “is the only fully efficacious sign.”<sup>28</sup> At the same time the church is also “no less

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*Today and The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community.* Faith and Order Paper No. 113 (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 2:192.

<sup>25</sup> An attempt to list these multiple meanings may be found in the Zagorsk 1973 Study printed in *What Unity Requires: Papers and Report on the Unity of the Church*, Faith and Order Paper No. 77 (Geneva: WCC, 1976), 1-9, (hereafter cited as “Zagorsk 1973 Study.”) See also the Faith and Order consultation at Salamanca in September 1973 on “Concepts of Unity and Models of Union,” September 1973. Part of this report on “The Unity of the Church – Next Steps” is published in *The Ecumenical Review* 26/2 (April 1974): 291-303 at 292-293. This report is also published in *What Kind of Unity*, Faith and Order Paper 69 (Geneva: WCC, 1974), 119-131. Citations of this document here are from *The Ecumenical Review*. Hereafter cited as “Salamanca 1973 Report”.

<sup>26</sup> “Salamanca 1973 Report,” 293; Accra 1974 also had this sense. Accra’s report is published as *Uniting in Hope: Reports and Documents from the Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission*, 23 July – 5 August, 1974, University of Ghana, Legon, Faith and Order Paper No. 72 (Geneva: WCC, 1975), 90-94, and in *What Unity Requires: Papers and Report on the Unity of the Church*, Faith and Order Paper No. 77 (Geneva: WCC, 1976), 10-13. All citations would be from this latter publication, hereafter cited as “Towards Unity in Tension.” Present citation is on p. 13. As Gennadios Limouris has pointed out, one of Accra’s contribution is the distinctions it made clear in the notion of “humankind” – “human inter-relatedness,” “the just interdependence of free people (a positive secular, utopian vision of human possibility);” and “an eschatological unity of humankind.” See “Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community: A Historical Survey,” in *Church Kingdom World: The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign*, ed. Gennadios Limouris. Faith and Order Paper No. 130 (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 176-185, esp. 179. The sense of the concept of sign here mentioned occurs also in the other documents of the study. See: “Unity of the Church – Unity of Humankind: An Interim Evaluation.” (Mimeographed, Geneva, WCC, 1972, FO/72:10, August 1972), 6, 7. (Hereafter cited as FO/72:10); cf. the preparatory document for Louvain 1971. “Unity of the Church – Unity of Humankind,” (mimeographed, Geneva, WCC, 1971, FO/71:11, June 1971), 4, (hereafter cited as FO/71:11; cf. the questions raised by Louvain as to how the church and the churches are signs of Christ’s presence, of Christ’s reconciliation and of the coming unity of humankind. *Faith and Order, Lovain 1971*, 207 – Lukas Vischer, and 240 – Conspectus of Studies.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., FO/71:11, 4; “Zagorsk 1973 Study” esp. 4-5. This idea of sign could be found in Paul Tillich and is also the Roman Catholic position; cf. *Lumen Gentium*, para. 1 in *The Documents of Vatican II: in a New and Definitive Translation With Commentaries and Notes by Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Authorities*, ed. Water M Abbott, S. J., intro. Lawrence Cardinal Shehan, trans. directed by Joseph Gallagher (New York: Herder and Herder & Association Press, 1966), 15.

<sup>28</sup> FO/72:10, 8; “Salamanca 1973 Report,” 292.

than a sign,” since God makes true God’s promise as proclaimed by the church.<sup>29</sup> It is in this sense that the church is a “foretaste” or “firstfruit” of God’s redemption of humanity and of the kingdom. 3) The church is “sign” in the sense of being an instrument of God’s will. In this idea the notion of “sign” is often complemented with that of “instrument”. Thus, for example, a Holland study group described the church as “an instrument and sign of God’s unique unifying activity among all people.”<sup>30</sup> 4) The church is sign in the sense that it lives by the sign of the Word and sacraments in the promise that God will be present anywhere the Word is preached and the sacraments administered. The church is sign because it communes with God through these signs.<sup>31</sup>

In the sign character of the church, therefore, the church is related: to Christ and to the kingdom of God, as realities beyond itself to which it points, but in which it participates; and to world and humanity as a token and foretaste of its ultimate unity in the kingdom of God. In addition the church’s sacramental nature is emphasized. G. Müller-Fahrenheit sees these as broadly two dimensions of the church’s sign character – the doxological dimension and the missionary/diaconal dimension, which two dimensions are to be kept together. Without care, says Müller-Fahrenheit, the doxological can lead the church into “egotistic preoccupation with its own salvation” and the missionary/diaconal “into mere secularity.”<sup>32</sup> The Unity Study of the 1970s was careful

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<sup>29</sup> FO/72:10, 8.

<sup>30</sup> *Study Encounter*, 7/2 (1971) [SE/06], 11.

<sup>31</sup> “Zagorsk 1973 Report,” 4ff.; also in Müller-Fahrenheit, *Unity in Today’s World*, 81.

<sup>32</sup> Müller-Fahrenheit, ed., *Unity in Today’s World*, 67f. (the original text is underlined); cf. the primarily doxological perspective of the speech of John Meyendorff at Louvain and the primarily diaconal perspective of the responses of Miguez Bonino and John Gatu published in *The Ecumenical Review* 24/1 (1972): 30-54.

to shun triumphalism.<sup>33</sup> This fear of triumphalism was one of the reasons for the reticence in the concept of the church as sacrament in the Unity Study<sup>34</sup> and strengthens the “ethos of humility” which characterizes the Sign model.

### c. Centered-Diversity

In addition to focusing interest in the world through its choice of methodology and making the concept of the church as sign descriptive of the distinctive missional posture of the church, the Unity Study of the 1970s also helped to focus the multiplicity of human diversity in the triune God. While the studies of the seventies did not add anything new to the concept of catholicity, they developed the concept of a “centered diversity” in which all human diversities individually, communally, nationally, and globally find their center in the triune God, where they also find a relation one to another.<sup>35</sup> Just as the Trinitarian God lives in relation, the church’s centered diversity is to be in relation. The Trinitarian focus of diversity both limits and welcomes plurality; any diversity inconsistent with the Trinitarian nature and mission was illegitimate. In centering the church’s diversity in God, there was a conscious effort to assert that the

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. This point was made by John Deschner. See: *Faith and Order, Lovain 1971*, 198. It was probably the fear of triumphalism that led to the Christocentric emphasis in the sign character of the church especially in the 1972 study [See the position of the 1972 study on the fear of triumphalism in F/O 1972:10,7, 14] ; cf. also Günther Gassmann, “The Church as Sacrament, Sign and Instrument: The Reception of this Ecclesiological Understanding in Ecumenical Debate,” in *Church Kingdom World: The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign*, ed. Gennadios Limouris. Faith and Order Paper No. 130 (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 1-17, esp. 3-7.

<sup>34</sup> While the concept of the church as sign was generally accepted, the concept of the church as sacrament was used very cautiously. See *Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Committee at Zagorsk* (Geneva: WCC, 1973), 12-13, 44. For the influence of E. Käsemann in this reticence with the notion of sacrament see his contribution at Salamanca in which he criticized the concept of the church as “sacrament” in R. Groscurth, ed., *Wandernde Horizonte auf dem Weg zu kirchlicher Einheit* (Frankfurt: Lembeck Verlag, 1974), 125-132. For the response of the Salamanca report which admitted the legitimacy of the concept of sacrament as a way of avoiding the identification of the church with the kingdom see: “Salamanca 1973 Report,” 292-293.

<sup>35</sup> FO/72:10, 11f.

multiplicity of cultures and traditions within which the church's life is made manifest are all gifts of God. This openness to and affirmation of cultures would be one characteristic of the emerging Sign model. The term "centered diversity" was later dropped as being too abstract, but it had already given a permanent legacy to the understanding which roots the world's diversity in the triune God.<sup>36</sup> This rooting of diversity in the triune God would later (especially at Canberra 1991) deepen the understanding of care for creation and for all life, which the Sign model had begun to see as being part of the church's calling in the world.

#### d. Conciliar Unity

The type of church unity found to be consistent with this idea of centered diversity was that of the church as a conciliar fellowship. Since New Delhi 1961, conciliarity has become a concept of increasing interest in ecumenical thought.<sup>37</sup> Conciliarity, as Louvain 1971 understood it, was "the coming together of Christians – locally, regionally or globally – for common prayer, counsel and decision" in trust of the Holy Spirit's use of such efforts to guide the church into fullness of truth and love.<sup>38</sup> The Consultation at Salamanca in 1973 expanded the local catholicity of New Delhi 1961,

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<sup>36</sup> Müller-Fahrenholz, *Unity in Today's World*, 69.

<sup>37</sup> *New Delhi Report*, 116 – Report of the Section on Unity cf. *Uppsala to Nairobi*, 79; *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches Uppsala July 4-20, 1968* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 13. (Hereafter cited as *Uppsala Report*); "Salamanca 1973 Report," esp. 293-298; etc. For some of the most important texts on conciliarity see: Choan-Seng Song, ed., *Growing Together into Unity: Texts of the Faith and Order Commission on Conciliar Fellowship* (Madras: CLS, 1978). For the Roman Catholic influence on Uppsala's understanding of conciliarity, see: John J. McDonnell, *The World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church*, Toronto Studies in Theology, vol. 21 (New York & Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 278-283. McDonnell believes that Uppsala had the idea of a council with binding decisions, however, the 1971 definition at Louvain and the 1972 study, as well as Salamanca 1973 and Accra 1974 all saw conciliarity as the churches' coming together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for prayer, counsel and decision

<sup>38</sup> *Faith and Order, Lovain*, 226.

noting that the one church is to be “envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united” but each of these local churches possess, “in communion with others the fulness of catholicity.”<sup>39</sup> Accra 1974 had difficulties with distinguishing between the terms “conciliar” and “organic,” in Salamanca’s conciliar unity.<sup>40</sup> The fifth WCC assembly at Nairobi in 1975, however, still adopted Salamanca’s concept of catholicity.<sup>41</sup> As a unity which held Christians together in prayer, counsel and decision without obliterating their distinct particularities, the Unity Study found conciliar unity as the kind of unity which would account for the centering of diversity in the pattern of the Trinitarian nature – without superiority or domination of the participating persons.

To summarize: we have examined four aspects in which the Unity Study of the 1970s set the initial contours of the Sign model. First, the new inter-contextual methodology took the contextual concerns and brokenness of the church’s historical existence into consideration in its attempt to understand the relation of the church’s unity to that of humankind. Second, the concept of the church as sign emerged as one of the strongest ways of speaking of the church’s nature and task in the world. The church is

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<sup>39</sup> “Salamanca 1973 Report,” esp. 293-298.

<sup>40</sup> Accra 1974 confessed to not being able to properly distinguish between the terms “conciliar” and “organic.” *Uniting in Hope*, 110-123.

<sup>41</sup> *Breaking Barriers Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November – 10 December, 1975* (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 60-61 – Report of Section II V (hereafter cited as *Nairobi Report*). While Nairobi’s position was generally well received, there was disagreement on whether or not it adequately expressed the unity of the church. Some wanted a more federal understanding [E.g., Harding Meyer, “Einheit in versöhnter Verschiedenheit – ‘konziliare Gemeinschaft’ – ‘organische Union’: Gemeinsamkeit und Differenz gegenwärtig diskutierter Einheitskonzeptionen” in *Ökumenische Rundschau* 27/3 (1978): 377-400. Meyer preferred the concept of “reconciled diversity” to “conciliarity.”], while others wanted a more organic understanding [E.g., Lesslie Newbigin, “What is ‘a Local Church Truly United’?” in *In Each Place: Towards a Fellowship of Local Churches Truly United* (Geneva: WCC, 1977), 14-29].

sign of Christ and of the unity of humankind in the kingdom of God. As sign, the church is an instrument of God's purpose for the world. The church is also sign because it is nourished through the sign of the Word and sacraments with Christ's real life. Third, the multitudinal diversities in culture and experiences within the church were rooted and centered in the Triune God. And Fourth, the kind of unity which the church was to seek and which was appropriate for this centered diversity was spoken of as a conciliar fellowship.

#### **B. The Mature Contours of The Sign Model: The Unity/Renewal Study**

We recall that between Uppsala 1968 and Nairobi 1975 the study on Unity of the Church-Unity of Mankind set the initial contours of the ecclesiological shaping of the Sign model. We discovered that in spite of other tendencies, the following were claimed: the church's distinctive nature as a Christological and pneumatological reality; the given or static dimensions of human nature both from creation and the eschatological hope of the unity of humankind; and the boundaries between the church's unity and secular catholicities. We saw the rejection of triumphalistic views of the church. We also discovered that the Unity Study in the 1970s: used a new methodology to bring the world into the focus of ecumenical studies; expressed the church's ministry in the world in the concept of "sign"; grounded the multitudinal diversities of the church and humanity in the Trinitarian nature of God; and saw unity as "conciliarity" to be the form of church unity which would respect this centered diversity. The Unity Study ended at Accra 1974. It was not until the 1980s that this study was again revisited in the Faith and Order Commission but with the new title "Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human



Community” (the Unity/Renewal Study). It was through this new study that the ecclesiological shaping of the Sign model was continued.

The Faith and Order Standing Commission at Annecy, France, in January, 1981 resolved to change the title of the Unity Study from “Unity of the Church – Unity of Humankind” to “Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community.” This change was made because Annecy 1981 was concerned that the unity of the church was being misconstrued as “an instrument of general cosmopolitan or generally humanitarian unity;” and the WCC was therefore being seen as “a religious sub-section of the UNO.” In addition to this, some “monolithic political systems and ideologies” seem to be using the concept of “unity of humankind” for their own various agendas.<sup>42</sup> Annecy 1981 therefore changed the study to “Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Communities because the unity of the church is “a gift of the Spirit” and “has its doxological and sacramental integrity which cannot be measured in terms of secular efficacy for other goals only.”<sup>43</sup>

The Unity/Renewal Study came in two stages. The first stage was from the Faith and Order Standing Commission at Annecy, France in 1981 to the sixth assembly of the WCC at Vancouver, Canada in 1983. Included here are the preliminary consultation of the Unity/Renewal Study at Geneva, Switzerland in 1981 and the Faith and Order Commission at Lima Peru in 1982. The second stage was from the Faith and Order

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<sup>42</sup> See the working group report in *Towards Visible Unity*, 2:132-134, esp. 132f. (Hereafter cited as Annecy Working Group Report). *From Nairobi to Vancouver*, 84; cf. “Annecy Working Group Report,” 132. A German working group had already noted that the 1969 Unity Study described the concept of the “unity of humankind” sometimes with terms that were ambiguous. See: “Report of the Working Group on Faith and Order Questions of the Ecumenical Commission of the Federation of the Evangelical Church in the GDR,” *Study Encounter* 8/1 (1972) (SE/19): 3.

<sup>43</sup> Annecy Working Group Report, 133.

Standing Commission at Crete in 1984<sup>44</sup> to the Faith and Order Standing Commission at Dublane in 1990. The Crete 1984 Standing Commission changed the title of the study to “The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign” following the recommendations of the Vancouver 1983 assembly.<sup>45</sup> At a consultation at Chantilly, near Paris, France in 1985 the first draft (the Chantilly draft) was drawn up and discussed and revised at the Commission of the Faith and Order at Stavanger in 1985 (the Stavanger draft).<sup>46</sup> Both Chantilly and Stavanger agreed to relate the study to concrete situations of human brokenness.<sup>47</sup> Stavanger related it to the community of men and women and to the impact of ideologies, cultures and social systems on Christian attitudes to issues of justice and peace (later shortened to “Justice”).<sup>48</sup> Through several consultations<sup>49</sup> and

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<sup>44</sup> *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission held at the Orthodox Academy, Crete, Greece, 6<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1984*, Faith and Order Paper No. 121 (Geneva: WCC, 1984), 33-42, esp. 39-41.

<sup>45</sup> *Minutes: Standing Commission, Crete 1984*, 33, 43-46; cf. David Gill, ed., *Gathered for Life: Official Report VI Assembly World Council of Churches Vancouver, Canada 24 July-10 August 1983* (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 50 – Issue Group on Taking Steps Towards Unity. Hereafter cited as *Gathered for Life*, and “Issue Group” will be represented as IG. What used to be Sections in previous assemblies is what Vancouver called Issue Groups.

<sup>46</sup> Report of the first consultation of the Unity/Renewal study is published in Limouris, ed., *Church Kingdom World*, 163-175, cited hereafter as “Chantilly Draft.” The Stavanger draft is published in Thomas F. Best, ed., *Faith and Renewal: Reports and Documents of the Commission on Faith and Order Stavanger, Norway 13-25 August, 1985*, Faith and Order Paper No. 131 (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 192-207. For the eleven theses by which this draft was summarized by John Austin Baker, see “The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community,” in *Faith and Renewal*, 169-176, esp. 170-171. For some theological concerns raised by this study see the contribution of Manas Buthelezi in *Faith and Renewal*, 177-183.

<sup>47</sup> “Chantilly Draft,” 174 (4:52); “Stavanger Draft,” 207 (4:55).

<sup>48</sup> For the reports of these efforts see *Faith and Renewal*, 208-214 and 215-221 respectively. These reports set the direction which the studies took.

<sup>49</sup> The community theme was dealt with at Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1985, Porto Novo, Benin, 1988 and Cambridge, England, 1989; the justice theme was dealt with at Singapore, 1986; Porto Alegre, Brazil, 1987; and Harlem, New York, 1988. See: Günther Gassmann, “Report of the Secretariat: Stavanger 1985 to Budapest 1989” in Thomas F. Best, ed., *Faith and Order 1985-1989: The Commission Meeting at Budapest 1989* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 55-69, esp. 61. The Prague consultation is published as *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity Renewal and the Community of Women and Men* (Geneva: WCC, 1988); the

revisions,<sup>50</sup> a final copy of this work was approved for publication by the Standing Commission at Dublane, Scotland, in August 1990 (the Dublane document).<sup>51</sup>

Through these studies, the initial contours of the ecclesiological elements revealed by the Unity Study from 1969-1974 were reemphasized and some of them were cast into a new light. In this section I shall discuss these re-emphasized contours as they affect the uniqueness of the church and its unity, the distinctive mission of the church in the world, the eucharistic vision of the church's unity, and the nature of the church as mystery. Each of these aspects reveal particular elements of the Sign model that was shaped by the Unity/Renewal Study. We shall see that the elements of the Sign model include the following: the uniqueness of the church as a Christological and pneumatological reality; the world as the sphere of both God's and the church's activities without which there can be no adequate understanding of the church; the ultimate redeemed community being larger than the church; the church's distinctive mission in the world being as a "prophetic sign" to the world of the unity of humankind, God's reconciliation of all things in Christ,

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Singapore Consultation was published in *Mid-Stream*, ----; the Porto Alegre Consultation was published in *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission 1988 Boston, USA*, Faith and Order Paper No. 145 (Geneva: WCC, 1988), 15-27, hereafter cited as Porto Alegre Report; the Harlem Consultation was published in *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission 1988 Boston, USA*, Faith and Order Paper No. 145 (Geneva: WCC, 1988), 28-39. Hereafter cited as "Harlem Report."

<sup>50</sup> The Chantilly/Stavanger Draft was further revised in March 1986 and July 1987, and by the Standing Commission at Midrid, Spain to which it was presented [See *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission 1987 Midrid, Spain*, Faith and Order Paper No. 141 (Geneva: WCC, 1987), 16-29, 83-89; all minutes of the Standing Commission shall be cited as *Minutes: Standing Commission*]. Upon direction of the Boston 1988 Standing Commission [*Minutes: Standing Commission 1988 Boston*, 13], an integration of all the studies was presented to the Budapest plenary, after having been worked upon by members of the Steering Group and consultants at Leuenberg, March 17-22, 1989 [*Faith and Order 1985-1989*, esp. 160-162]. Upon further comments by Budapest, yet another revision was undertaken in January of 1990 at Mandeville, Jamaica by the Steering Group and advisers, and the revision of their work after comments and feedback from the participants was approved for publication by the Dublane Standing Commission [*Minutes: Standing Commission 1990 Dublane, Scotland*, 16-17 – Report by Thomas F. Best].

<sup>51</sup> See *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission 1990 Dublane, Scotland*, Faith and Order Paper No. 152 (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 54-58; The document was later published as *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*, Faith and Order Paper No. 151 (Geneva: WCC, 1990).

and a community of justice and peace; solidarity with other forces of life in the world, proclamation and exemplary living as the church's way of living out its calling to be a prophetic sign in the world; the church's historic position as important in the understanding of the church's prophetic calling today; the nature of the unity which the church seeks being an organic unity which expresses itself in a conciliar fellowship in which exists a common faith, a common witness, and common ways of decision making and teaching authoritatively.

### 1. The Uniqueness of the Church

We may recall that Canterbury 1969 had insisted on the church's unique Christological and pneumatological bearing over against the attempts to understand the church's unity from a general notion of humanity. Annecy 1981 continued this same understanding of the church. This was why it changed the title of the study from "Unity of the Church-Unity of Humankind" to Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community." Annecy 1981 pointed out that the church's unity is "a gift of the Spirit" with "a doxological and sacramental integrity" that is not exhausted by the church's secular efficacy for other goals, hence the need to avoid its being misunderstood as "an instrument of general cosmopolitan or generally humanitarian unity."<sup>52</sup> This idea of the church's uniqueness was continued by the Chantilly/Stavanger drafts and by the Dublane document.<sup>53</sup> On the one hand, as the Chantilly draft put it, the church and the world are, in the perspective of the kingdom, inseparable in God's plan of salvation, since they

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<sup>52</sup> Annecy Working Group Report, 133.

<sup>53</sup> "Chantilly Draft," 164 (1:8); cf. ("Stavanger Draft," 1:8); *Church and World*, 35 (3:46).

“appear in their fundamental, or rather eschatological togetherness.”<sup>54</sup> Or, as the Stavanger draft and the Dublane document put it, “the relation between church and world depends ultimately on a final act of God in which God’s promise of redemption becomes full reality.”<sup>55</sup> But in the perspective of history the church is not the world and the structures of the world, though the realm of God’s and the church’s actions, are not, and do not become, the church.<sup>56</sup> The Chantilly and Stavanger drafts and the Dublane document clearly stated that the church has its own distinct “inalienable identity” from the world and therefore cannot be an undifferentiated and monolithic unity with the world.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, it has the “stuff” of the world even as it is not “of” the world. “What is gathered, reconciled and renewed in the church is, in fact, “world” in its estrangement from God.”<sup>58</sup> Though the brokenness and division within the world are often found within the church, the church is not the world and its pursuit of unity starts from a different ground from the world’s and is differently motivated:

The world strives for unity on the basis of the aspirations and common humanity which God has given to it. The church strives for visible unity on the basis of the forgiveness of God accomplished in Christ, and on the basis of the unity already given by Christ in communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Such unity of redemption is already experienced in the deep community shared by Christians and is the basis for renewal and reconciliation among them.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “Chantilly Draft,” 167-168 (2:26-27).

<sup>55</sup> *Church and World*, 25 (3:13); “Stavanger Draft,” 199 (2:26). Cited as in the Dublane document.

<sup>56</sup> “Chantilly Draft,” 168 (2:26); “Stavanger Draft,” 199 (2:26).

<sup>57</sup> “Chantilly Draft,” 168 (2:26); “Stavanger Draft,” 199 (2:26); *Church and World*, 25 (3:13).

<sup>58</sup> *Church and World*, 25 (3:23); cf. “Stavanger Draft,” 199 (2:26).

<sup>59</sup> “Chantilly Draft,” 169 (3:34); cf. “Stavanger Draft,” 201-202 (3:35).

Two things seem clear from these documents: 1) the distinctness of the church from the world in history and 2) the redemption in the eschaton extending beyond the church to include the world. While this distinction between the church and the world did not completely answer the questions raised by Willingen 1952 and repeated by Lima 1982 on how the redemption in Christ relates to both the church and the world, there is here a clear understanding that the “fact” of a wider redemption is no longer an issue but the “how.”<sup>60</sup> This “how” is however left in the ultimate act of God and not explained further. The ecclesiological element of the Sign model being shaped here concerns the nature of the church and its pursuit of unity as integrally related to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and as, therefore, different from the world. There is also present here an openness to the world’s salvation apart from and outside of the church even though the “how” of this is left unexplained.

## **2. The Distinctive Mission of the Church**

The change in Annecy 1981 in the title of the Unity Study to the Unity/Renewal Study focused the church’s mission in the world on the renewal of human community. This focus, however, arose from the understanding of the church’s distinctive nature in the world. The nature of the church in the world, as understood by the Sign model, was in the notion of “sign.” The church is “a sign and foretaste” of God’s purpose “to restore

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<sup>60</sup> At Lima 1982, there was no unanimity on the theological answers to how God is at work in creation outside the church, even though the conviction was strong that to avoid these questions and thereby “link the activity of the Creator only to the Church,” could make the church “run the danger of becoming a countersign to God’s reconciling love in the world,” especially in view of the many groups and movements outside the church which were engaged in actions for justice and peace, and attempting to end ecological abuse. Lima still confessed to “a dynamic tension” between its reflection on “life in the perspective of creation and life in the christological framework of new creation.” *Towards Visible Unity*, 2: 201-203 – Report of Working Group on Creation. The same issues were made by the working group of History (p. 209). However, as will be seen in this section, by Dublane 1990, there was a more confident confession of the broadness of the ultimate redeemed community.

all things into unity in Christ.”<sup>61</sup> It is “a sign and bearer of the Triune God’s work towards the salvation and renewal of humankind.”<sup>62</sup> It is “a mystery and sign pointing to and serving the Triune God’s work towards the salvation and renewal of all humankind.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore, with respect to the rest of humanity, the church is “according to its divine calling, the firstfruits of the renewed human community made possible by the action of the triune God.”<sup>64</sup> This understanding of the church’s nature in the world as sign therefore became a ground for the church’s commitment to the renewal of human community.

Vancouver 1983 sought to convey this active sense of the sign character of the church by describing the church as “a prophetic ‘sign’.”<sup>65</sup> In this emphasis, the church is “a prophetic community through which and by which the transformation of the world can take place.”<sup>66</sup> In its prophetic task the church is not to replace its own agenda by the world’s and neither is it to seek to understand itself in society apart from the world. Rather, it is to take on the world’s agenda as its own, but from its “eucharistic centre,” going from there confidently to the edges of society because God is already at work in

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<sup>61</sup> *Towards Visible Unity*, 2:198-199 – Report of the Working Group on Creation.; cf. *Church and World* 23 (3:6).

<sup>62</sup> *Church and World*, 2 (1:7)

<sup>63</sup> *Church and World*, 23 (3:5).

<sup>64</sup> *Church and World*, 38 (4:1)

<sup>65</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 50 – IG on Taking Steps Towards Unity . This notion of the church’s sign-character being prophetic was also present in the Zagorsk 1973 Study, 4-7.

<sup>66</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 50 – IG on Taking Steps Towards Unity. The Crete Standing Commission for the second stage of this study clearly understood the concept of “the church as prophetic sign” not only to include “[t]he mission of the church as grounded in the dynamics of the Holy Spirit and related to the hope of a ‘new creation’,” but also “the church as prophetic challenge to the world” while “at the same time being itself challenged by the ‘signs of the times’ being experienced in contemporary life.” *Minutes: Standing Commission, Crete 1984*, 45.

those places.<sup>67</sup> The renewal of community is, therefore, to take place in local communities where the eucharist is celebrated. Thus, each congregation of the church was seen as a living community which is “open to the world, as sign and instrument of new forms of human relationships” and as “instrument for God’s caring work in the world, i.e. to make the whole inhabited earth habitable for all creation.”<sup>68</sup>

The church’s prophetic ministry to the world is not a one-way movement (from church to the world) but a two-way movement, in a ministry of mutual challenge between church and world. There are signs in the world, signs “related to the all-encompassing plan of salvation of the triune God,” which should challenge the church in its witness to the world.<sup>69</sup> It is this confidence of God’s presence already in the world that distinguishes the missionary attitude of the Sign model from the Winner model. It is not as if God is located in the church and being taken by the church to a world in which God is completely absent or only partially present but rather that God is already at work in the world as the Trinitarian God in the Trinitarian mission of which the incarnation is central and the church meets God there as it bears witness to the world about this God in Christ who is already at work in the world. It is this presence of God in the world, as Vancouver 1983 puts it, which gives the church courage to move to the world’s edges in order to take on the world’s agenda as its own.<sup>70</sup>

The church’s prophetic role is to be performed in the world not only in the context of the world’s reality of pain and brokenness but also in the context of the church’s

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<sup>67</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 50 – IG on Taking Steps Towards Unity.

<sup>68</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 97 – IG on Learning in Community.

<sup>69</sup> “Stavanger Draft,” 204 (4:44-45) cf. *Minutes: Standing Commission, Crete 1984*, 45.

<sup>70</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 50 – IG on Taking Steps Towards Unity.



historical heritage. This was the point of the “inter-relational method approved for the Unity/Renewal Study by the Geneva 1981 consultation. The inter-relational method was meant to be a further improvement on the “inter-contextual method” of the studies of the 1970s<sup>71</sup> precisely because, unlike the inter-contextual method, which limited itself to relating the church’s unity to its lived experience, the inter-relational method related the church’s unity also to the church’s history.<sup>72</sup> Through this method, the Unity/Renewal Study set for the Sign model a way of taking on the world’s concerns without failing to relate them to the church’s historic witness. The church’s prophetic ministry was therefore to relate truth to the past, present and future.<sup>73</sup> This point is important to emphasize because here is set down at least in method the need to take on the world’s brokenness while at the same time taking on the church’s historic positions.<sup>74</sup>

In the present, the church is to be a prophetic sign through solidarity, proclamation of the truth, and a life of love. The church has been “called and sent to be among the forces of life in a world marked by sin, suffering and death” but it is to do this

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<sup>71</sup> The inter-contextual method was proposed by Louvain 1971, and was adopted by Accra 1974 and Bangalore 1978. *Uniting in Hope*, 110; Lukas Vischer, “Report of the Secretariat,” in *Sharing in One Hope: Reports and Documents from the Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission, 15-30 August, 1978, Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, India*. Faith and Order Paper; no. 92 (Geneva: Commission on Faith and Order, WCC, 1978), 24f

<sup>72</sup> The relevant paper report of the preliminary consultation at Geneva in 1981 is “Bases and Outline of a Study on the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community,” in *Towards Visible Unity*, 2: 135-143. Citation was at 136. Some of the most troubling issues to human unity and world peace in the period 1975-87 with which the church wrestled in its search for renewal of human community have been discussed by Ernest W. Lefever. See his *Nairobi to Vancouver: The World Council of Churches and the World, 1975-87*, forward by Edward Norman (Washington D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1987).

<sup>73</sup> “Stavanger Draft,” 205 (4: 48).

<sup>74</sup> This change gave justification to the efforts of the Faith and Order to study the creeds of the church as a way of seeking the unity of the churches. This also explains in part why *Church and World* spent a good part expounding the Biblical understanding of the issues it treated. Cf. *Church and World*, chapter II.

in solidarity with other “forces of renewal and life” in the world, of which it is a part, and by proclaiming Jesus “as the source of the world’s true and decisive hope.”<sup>75</sup> It is therefore no longer understood that the church is the only force of renewal and life in the world. As one of a number of forces, it is called upon to be in solidarity with other similar forces. It is to be in the world as a prophetic sign, engaged in acts of justice and in the affirmation of the worth and integrity of all persons irrespective of race, gender, class or nationality.<sup>76</sup> Its role as prophetic sign is only realized as it “displays God’s justice in its life and witness”<sup>77</sup> and encourages relationships that affirm the value and worth of human lives.<sup>78</sup> But it is also to perform its prophetic sign through its proclamation and exemplary living. As the Dublane document put it, the church is “destined to be God’s sign for the world by proclaiming the gospel and living a life of service to humanity” and, as such, it “is God’s pointer to what God wants to tell the world and to give to it.”<sup>79</sup>

The efficacy for the church’s sign nature, however, is not in the church but in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Since the church’s sign character is not self-evident but can be realized as such only by faith, it is Jesus Christ through the Spirit who is the efficacy of the church’s sign character.<sup>80</sup> The church, therefore, “should never be centred

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<sup>75</sup> “Chantilly Draft,” 164f. (1:9); cf. “Stavanger Draft,” 196 (1:10)

<sup>76</sup> *Church and World*, chapters IV and V.

<sup>77</sup> *Church and World*, 38 (4:1)

<sup>78</sup> *Church and World*, 19 (2:28); cf. *Church and World*, 25 (3:8).

<sup>79</sup> *Church and World*, 28 (3:25); cf. “Stavanger Draft,” 204-206 (4:46-51).

<sup>80</sup> “Chantilly Draft,” 171 (4:39); cf. “Stavanger Draft,” 203-204 (4:42).

on itself but rather upon Christ and upon God's purpose of salvation of which it is a sign."<sup>81</sup>

### 3. The Eucharistic Vision of Unity

We may recall that the kind of unity which the Unity Study of the 1970s found appropriate for the idea of centered diversity was unity as conciliar fellowship. Lima 1982 and the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) document expounded this unity as that which led to the expression of a common confession,<sup>82</sup> a common witness,<sup>83</sup> and common ways of decision making and teaching authoritatively. The BEM document also presented both the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist as not only able to renew all aspects of individual life but also all aspects of community life.<sup>84</sup> These ideas were developed by Vancouver 1983 into the concept of the "eucharistic vision" of unity. The conviction of this eucharistic vision was that since in the eucharist God was one with all creation through the elements of the world (bread and wine) it meant that "Christ – the

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<sup>81</sup> "Stavanger Draft," 206 (4:51).

<sup>82</sup> An example of efforts towards a common confession of faith was the document "A Common Account of Hope" of Bangalore 1978. For background and responses from the churches that led to this document see *Faith and Order Louvain 1971*, 215f.; *Uniting in Hope*, 25ff.; the responses of the churches are published in *Study Encounter* 11/2 (1975); 11/1 (1976); 11/2 (1976); *Giving Account of the Hope Today*, Faith and Order Paper; no. 81 (Geneva: WCC, 1976); *Giving Account of the Hope Together*, Faith and Order Paper; no. 86 (Geneva: WCC, 1978). For Bangalore's common account see *Sharing in One Hope*; A Common Account of Hope is on pp. 1-11. For efforts in regards to Scripture and Tradition see the findings of the Boldern consultation summarized by James Barr in "The Authority of the Bible: A Study Outline," *The Ecumenical Review* 21/2 (1969): 135-150; see also articles attached to this outline by Eberhard Jüngel (Lutheran, FRG), Gerhard Krodel (Lutheran, USA), René Marlé (Roman Catholic, France) and John D. Zizioulas (Orthodox, Greece). See pp. 150-166. For some of the final reports on Scripture between 1949-1978 see Ellen Flesseman-van Leer, ed., *The Bible: Its Authority and Interpretation in the Ecumenical Movement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 99 (Geneva: WCC, 1980).

<sup>83</sup> An example of efforts towards a common witness is *Mission and Evangelism, an Ecumenical Affirmation*. Jean Stromberg Published this with a study guide (Geneva: WCC, 1983).

<sup>84</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 3, 4. Hereafter cited as *BEM*; cf. *BEM*, 14.

life of the world – unites heaven and earth, God and world, spiritual and secular.”<sup>85</sup> In this vision, Christ’s body and blood given in the elements of bread and wine were seen as integrating all of the church’s life and ministry with the whole of creation.<sup>86</sup> In this unity, women as well as men, children as well as adults, the whole as well as the disabled, the poor as well as the rich were included in a community of healing and sharing. Also, the plants as well as the animals and all of nature were included.<sup>87</sup> Here, Christian unity was understood as essentially an “organic unity” which arises from the incarnate self-sacrifice of Christ as source, thereby allowing the concept of eucharistic vision to become “a new and inspiring guidance” in the journey towards a full and credible realization of the church’s given unity.<sup>88</sup> This kind of unity would mean, for the churches, a common understanding and expression of the apostolic faith, a full mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist and ministry, and common ways of decision-making and teaching authoritatively, ideas already indicated by Salamanca 1973/Nairobi 1975’s concept of catholicity, by the Faith and Order Commission at Bangalore in 1978 and in the BEM document.<sup>89</sup> As Vancouver believed, it was by means of this common faith and witness that the churches would “help the world to realize God’s design for creation,” manifest a

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<sup>85</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 44 – IG on Taking Steps Towards Unity. The BEM document had been looked at by the Accra 1974 Faith and Order Commission, by Nairobi 1975 before Bangalore 1978 and Lima 1982. See *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 78.

<sup>86</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 44 – IG on Taking Steps towards Unity.

<sup>87</sup> See the works of the IG on Healing and Sharing Life in Community, Moving towards Participation, and Learning in Community. *Your Kingdom Come*, 52-71, 93-102; cf. The Sheffield, England Conference of 1981. See: Parvey, ed., *The Community of Women and Men in the Church*; cf. *Church and World*, 27 (3:22).

<sup>88</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 45 – IG on Taking Steps towards Unity.

<sup>89</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 45 – IG on Taking Steps towards Unity; cf. *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 77-78.

“healing and uniting power” “amidst the divisions of humankind” and offer, in the face of injustice, racism and sexism, “a credible sign of the new creation.”<sup>90</sup>

#### 4. The Church as Mystery

As we have already noted, upon Vancouver 1983’s recommendation, the second stage of the Unity/Renewal study was titled “The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign.” In this new title of the study, the idea of eucharistic vision was linked with the idea of the church as mystery. The Dublane document asserts that the idea of the church as mystery used in different Christian traditions

indicates a basic insight which Christians already have in common, namely the admission of their inability to speak adequately about the church. By “mystery” the Bible points to a reality which transcends human comprehension and, even more so, human possibilities of expression, a reality which becomes evident only in the degree to which God wills and accomplishes it.<sup>91</sup>

In the New Testament, this word refers to God’s intention in Christ to accomplish the salvation of humanity. And since “the church belongs in its essence to this saving event” of God, when the term “mystery” is applied to the church it reflects the church’s nature “as a reality which transcends its empirical, historical expression” being shaped by its communion with the Trinity.<sup>92</sup>

Therefore with “mystery” the accent will fall on that saving communion with Christ which the church already enjoys in faith and upon whose final scope no limits are set; it will be a question of the eventual inclusion of the whole world in the kingdom already known to the church.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 45 – IG on Taking Steps towards Unity.

<sup>91</sup> *Church and World*, 25-26 (3:16).

<sup>92</sup> *Church and World*, 26 (3:17).

<sup>93</sup> *Church and World*, 26 (3:17).

It is important to note here that the idea of the church as mystery is being used to express openness to a wider salvation beyond the church. The reasoning here is that the church in its historical reality is a mystery which will find fulfillment in the kingdom of God, whose limits and boundaries are known only to God. It is to be noted here that the cosmic salvation of Christ is the basis upon which this openness to the world was conceived. This is a very different position from the Hockings Commission's report which denied this universal relevance of Christ. It is to be also noted that the boundaries of the kingdom are not set by the church's experience of faith in Christ; neither is the church's experience of faith in Christ minimized or seen as unimportant. Yet it does not determine the kingdom which remains a mystery to which even the church cannot set limits.<sup>94</sup>

The Dublane document also used the concept of mystery for yet one more argument; it asserted that it is "[t]he mystery of the divine-human relationship revealed in Jesus Christ" which is "the foundation of unity and community for God's people."<sup>95</sup> Here the Dublane document relies upon Eph. 2:14-16, 3:4-6 to argue for the church's seeking of peace in the world based upon "the mystery of Christ."<sup>96</sup> Using the words of the Porto Alegre Consultation of 1987, it stated that the "struggle for justice is both an essential part of the mystery of the church and a means for experiencing more deeply this mystery."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Church and World*, 26 (3:17-18).

<sup>95</sup> *Church and World*, 26 (3:18).

<sup>96</sup> *Church and World*, 26 (3:19).

<sup>97</sup> *Church and World*, 27 (3:21); cf. Porto Alegre Report, 24.

The church is mystery because of its relation to Jesus and to the word and sacraments. Jesus is the center of the church's life but the Holy Spirit is communicated to the church through the word and sacraments, which are also called mysteries. And, as already noted, since the sacramental life embraces historical and natural realities (water, bread, wine), the church is united with the whole of creation. In the sacramental life, God continues to be in unity and communion with the whole of creation through Christ and calls the church into the path of solidarity with all creation.<sup>98</sup>

To summarize: we have seen that the Unity/Renewal Study which took place between the Annecy Standing Commission of 1981 and the sixth assembly of the WCC at Vancouver in 1983 and between the Crete Standing Commission in 1984 and the Dublanc Standing Commission in 1990 solidified the initial contours of the ecclesiological shaping of the Unity Study of 1969-1974. Four contours were studied: the uniqueness of the church and its unity, the distinctive mission of the church in the world, the eucharistic vision of the church's unity, and the nature of the church as mystery. Through these four contours a number of elements of the Sign model emerged. We saw that for the Sign model, the uniqueness of the church as a Christological and pneumatological reality was an element which has been repeatedly emphasized without distracting from the church's life within the world; here there is continuity with the Winner model. However, unlike the Winner model, the world was emphasized as the sphere of both God's and the church's activities without which there can be no adequate understanding of the church. The Winner model is different here as it sees the church as the sphere of God's activities and the world as the sphere of the church's activities for the

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<sup>98</sup> "Chantilly Draft," 168-170 (3:28-37); "Stavanger Draft," 200-202 (3:29-38); *Church and World*, 27 (3:21-22).

purpose of enlarging the church, and thereby enlarging the kingdom. Another element of the Sign model which was repeatedly seen was the admission of the ultimate redeemed community as being larger than the church; here is a clear-cut difference from the Winner model which saw the only redeemed community as the church. This was argued in the Unity/Renewal Study from the fundamental unity of the church and the world in the eschaton and from the church's nature as mystery.

The church's distinctive mission in the world was seen as a "prophetic sign" to the world of the unity of humankind, of God's reconciliation of all things in Christ, and of a community of justice and peace. This sign character was to lead the church into solidarity with "other forces of renewal and life" in the world, proclamation and exemplary living. Here, not only was the church no longer seen as the only force of "renewal and life" in the world, but unlike the Winner model which sees the world as an object to be won for Christ, the Sign model sees the world as an object to be directed to its already given reality. Hence the church serves as sign to the world of what it is to become. The nature of the church's unity was shown to be an organic unity which expresses itself in a conciliar fellowship in which exists a common faith, a common witness, and common ways of decision making and teaching authoritatively. All these elements emerged through the process of the ecclesiological shaping of the Sign model.

What may be noted as a general element, which cuts across most of these other elements discussed, is what we have called an ethos of humility. The church was to avoid triumphalism in its view of itself (apparently contra the pre-Willingen 1952 phase of the ecumenical movement) or in its view of the world (apparently contra the post New-



Delhi 1961 phase of the ecumenical movement).<sup>99</sup> The latter counsel may be discerned in the general effort to show that secular catholicities are distinct from the church and that their pursuit of unity cannot be indiscriminately identified with the kingdom. The Unity/Renewal Study held on the one hand that the church was different from the world, and on the other hand, that the world needed the ministry of the church for its wholeness. In this way neither the church nor the world could be triumphalistically understood.

One significance of the Unity/Renewal Study as Paul A. Crow, Jr. pointed out was that it deepened the understanding of the divisions within the church's life. The church's disunity used to be understood only in terms such ecclesiastical matters as baptism, eucharist, ministry, and the apostolic faith; it was now realized, by means of the Unity/Renewal Study that the church's divisions go beyond their confessional histories to such issues which pervade the human community, like poverty, racism, sexism, conflicting ideologies and cultures. As Crow notes, these are not merely social issues but new church-dividing issues.<sup>100</sup> This perspective, however, was not entirely new as it seems to be the point of the so-called "non-theological factors" of the church's divisions which engaged ecumenical discussions in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, they were brought into a new prominence and thrown into a richer context in the Unity/Renewal Study.

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<sup>99</sup> This point was made at every stage of the study beginning from the comments of the Canterbury Working Committee on the 1969 draft. It was also present in the Chantilly and Stavanger drafts and the Dublane document. See, e.g. Stavanger Draft, 3:34-35.

<sup>100</sup> Paul A. Crow, Jr., "Unity and Renewal: Introductory Reflections," in *Faith and Renewal*, 166-168, at 167-168.

<sup>101</sup> On this concept and its overthrow at Montreal 1963 see Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 46, 48, 269-271, 362f.

## II. The Shaping of the Sign Model in Terms of Witness

The “Church as Sign for the World” model, which triumphed at Uppsala 1968 over the “Church as Winner of the World” model of ecumenical church-world relation was not only shaped ecclesologically, but it was also shaped in terms of witness. By shaping “in terms of witness” I refer to the elements of the Sign model which emerged as part of the church’s wholistic witness to both itself and the world. Whereas the ecclesiological shaping took place mainly in the studies of the Faith and Order especially the Unity Study of 1969-1974 and the Unity/Renewal Study of 1981-1990, the shaping in terms of witness was done mainly through consultations and conferences of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC. The Nairobi 1975 and the Vancouver 1983 assemblies also helped to further shape the emerging model. The conferences of the CWME in this period are Bangkok 1972-1973 (which we shall call Bangkok 1973), Melbourne 1980 and San Antonio 1989. These along with several other consultations especially on dialogue with people of other faiths helped shape the evangelistic understanding of the Sign model.

From the earliest moments of missionary history, non-Christian religions have been of interest. While for a long time they were seen as basically manifestations of the demonic powers in the world and adumbrations of truth, by Jerusalem 1928 and Madras 1938 comparatively better opinions of them had begun to emerge. Nevertheless, the Winner model in operation still saw them as people to be won for Christ. In the 1950s a study was begun on “The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men.”<sup>102</sup> From this time

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<sup>102</sup> See comprehensive review of this study and related issues in ecumenical response to people of other faiths from Madras 1938 to Uppsala 1968 in Gerard Vallee, *Mouvement Oecuménique et Religions*

on, non-Christian religions became regarded generally as “Living Faiths”<sup>103</sup> and their views of God and the world and reality became important in the ecumenical movement. In the 1960s, Harvey Cox and many others questioned the description of non-Christians, including Marxists, as “non-believers.”<sup>104</sup> Different religions and philosophies began to be invited into ecumenical conversations as people with authentic contributions to make to the understanding of the world. At the Bossey Consultation of 1966, many of these expressed their view on the right criteria for experiments on human beings.<sup>105</sup> At the Ajaltoun, Lebanon Consultation from March 16-25, 1970, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians all sat together to discuss their faiths.<sup>106</sup> And many other such consultations have been carried out since then.<sup>107</sup> In 1971, the WCC formed the working group on Dialogue with Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI) to arrange for dialogue (bilateral, or multilateral) with Jews, Muslims, Hindus and those who follow no specific

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*Non Chretiennes: un Debate Oecumenique sur la Rencontre Interreligieuse de Tambaram a Uppsala (1938-1968)* (Tournai/Declee and Montreal: Bellarmin, 1975). See especially pp. 83-215 on the study.

<sup>103</sup> For a chronology of the Study Process of “The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men,” see *Study Encounter* 6/3 (1970): 207-214.

<sup>104</sup> This was a general trend of the international symposium of theologians and sociologists held in Rome, Italy, in March 1969 under the joint sponsorship of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers and the Sociology Department of the University of California at Berkeley. About thirty scholars from twenty universities participated. See: *Unity Trends* 2/12 (May 1, 1969): 1-2; cf. “Dr. Harvey Cox on the Culture of Unbelief,” *Unity Trends* 2/13 (May 15, 1969): 8-10.

<sup>105</sup> *Experiments with Man*, 57-72.

<sup>106</sup> *Study Encounter* 6/2 (1970): 97-106.

<sup>107</sup> E.g. at Zurich, Switzerland, in 1976, Jews contributed to the conference on Faith, Science and the Future, and at Beirut, Lebanon in 1977, Moslems contributed to the discussion on Faith, Science and Technology and the Future of Humanity. At Yaoundé, Cameroon in 1978, people from the traditional religions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Americas contributed to the discussion on Religious Experience in Humanity’s Relation to Nature. Other consultations at Toronto, Canada in 1980, at Rajpur, India in 1981 and at Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1982 all contributed to the effort to understand the unity of humankind with contributions from non-Christian religions and ideologies. There has also been cooperation by DFI (Department on Dialogue with Living Faiths) and CWME in relation to dialogue with non-Christian faiths and ideologies. *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 107-115, at 108ff.

religious tradition.<sup>108</sup> Even among Roman Catholics, this has become an important issue of interest.<sup>109</sup> Several articles and books were published with reference to recognizing the authentic witness and faith of non-Christian religions and many articles and books to the contrary were also published.<sup>110</sup> It has become a common position in ecumenical dialogue to admit that dialogue with non-Christian religions can lead to mutual enrichment and the deepening of one's own religious understanding by the other.<sup>111</sup> The interdisciplinary studies since the 1960s included contributions to the understanding of human unity from non-Christian religions and philosophies.<sup>112</sup> All these reflect a change in the understanding of non-Christian religions within the ecumenical movement. This change in understanding was particularly important for the Sign model of ecumenical church-world relation.

At Bangkok 1973, the legacy of what we have called "the ethos of humility" was set for ecumenical witness. Nairobi 1975, as an apparent corrective of the perceived extremes in ecumenical thought in the 1960s strongly emphasized evangelism, even though it expressed worries about dialogue. At the Chiang Mai consultation of 1977 some recommendations that were later approved as guidelines for ecumenical dialogue

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<sup>108</sup> On a brief history of dialogue in ecumenical history, see Carl F. Hellencreutz, "A Long Standing Concern: Dialogue in Ecumenical History 1910 – 1971," in Samartha, ed, *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement*, 57-71.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. the work of McDonnell, *The World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church*, for a discussion of the relationship and influences of Roman Catholicism and the WCC. See also the statement, "Dialogue With Non-Believers," issued by the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers in October, 1968. *Unity Trends* 2/7 (February 15, 1969): 5-9.

<sup>110</sup> See, for instance, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7 (1970) and 8 (1971) for various responses to inter-religious dialogue.

<sup>111</sup> See John Deschner's Report in *Faith and Order Louvain*, 191f.

<sup>112</sup> See J. Scharbert, ed., *Zum Thema: Eine Kirche – Eine Menschheit* (KBW Stuttgart, 1971).

by the Central Committee of 1979 were developed. At Melbourne the vision of the kingdom of God and the place of the poor in mission dominated. The 1982 ecumenical affirmation, *Mission and Evangelism*, held the church's calling and its mission together and emphasized the planting of churches as an element of the churches' witness. However, it also found signs of the kingdom among non-Christian religions. Vancouver 1983 held together word and deed, witness and dialogue as all integral parts of the church's mission and clearly showed reluctance to go the way of Melbourne with respect to non-Christian religions. Tambaram 1988 revealed the lingering ecumenical questions and showed the efforts of some to formulate the church's exclusive claims less offensively. San Antonio 1989 continued the legacy of "the ethos of humility," setting the relationship between the uniqueness of Christ and the presence of God in non-Christian religions as a "tension" to be appreciated rather than resolved. Baar 1990, a consultation of some theologians, however, took the line of Melbourne 1980 and attempted to resolve the tension between Christian uniqueness and God's presence in non-Christian religions; it found the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions. All these conferences, consultations, publications and assemblies helped to shape the Sign model in terms of witness. In this section, we shall show some aspects of this shaping through all these gatherings mentioned.

#### **A. Bangkok 1973 and "the Ethos of Humility"**

The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism at Bangkok in 1972/73 (which we shall call Bangkok 1973) on the theme "Salvation Today" demonstrates the ecumenical ethos of humility which would characterize and shape the Sign model in terms of witness. This ethos with respect to non-Christian religions was epitomized at

San Antonio 1989. Bangkok 1973, in the work of its Section I – “culture and identity,” expressed belief in the presence of God in all creation, noting that “there is no realm of life and no situation where he cannot reveal himself” and that “the Spirit translates the groaning of all mankind into prayers acceptable to God.”<sup>113</sup> But, according to Bangkok 1973, all this should be a reason for praise and not for determining where God is or is not at work. Because Bangkok’s position reflects the pattern generally taken in ecumenical discussions, I shall cite it here extensively. According to Bangkok 1973, this insight concerning God’s presence in the world

is more a reason to worship His freedom than an invitation to build our theological theories. Our preoccupation is with the revealed Christ and with the proclamation of Him as he has been made known to us. Scripture tells us that Christ identifies himself with the poor and that the Spirit translates the groaning of men; this may indicate the direction in which we are invited to move but it does not give us the power to pinpoint the details of His presence. The observation that Christ-like action and insights which we know from the Gospels are also present among other groups does not give us the right to claim such groups for Christ; it should lead us deeper into the process of our own conversion and bring us to worship our Lord even more humbly. He asked us to follow him, not to spy on Him.<sup>114</sup>

Bangkok 1973’s position was simply that God’s presence outside the church is not to be pin-pointed but rejoiced in.

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<sup>113</sup> *Bangkok Assembly 1973: Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and evangelism of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1973), 77ff. (Hereafter cited as *Bangkok Assembly 1973*). It is to be noted that the efforts at Bangkok are the culmination of the works at Kandy, Sri Lanka on “the Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men” in 1967, the Zürich 1970 meeting and the “interim guidelines” set by the Central Committee of the WCC at Addis Ababa in 1971. It should especially be noted that the Central Committee wrote, in 1971 that the WCC “does not have one united view of dialogue with people of other faiths” because of the multiplicity of traditions that it represents. See the interim policy in *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. S. J. Samartha (Geneva: WCC, 1971), 47-54. For a brief history of the dialogue movement see Carl F. Hellencreutz, “A Long Standing Concern: Dialogue in Ecumenical History 1910 – 1971,” in *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement*, 57-71.

<sup>114</sup> *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, 77.

On dialogue with other faiths, Bangkok 1973 held that Christians can only enter into dialogue from the starting point of the centrality of Christ but are to be “keenly open to discover what he [God] is doing among people of other faiths.”<sup>115</sup> People of non-Christian religions have a “mission” to share with Christianity just as Christianity has a “mission” to these non-Christians. This “reciprocal mission” in dialogue “will lead to deeper understanding, the clearing away of ignorance about each other and a sharpening of the imperative of commitment.”<sup>116</sup> It will also lead to a world community of justice and peace.

Bangkok 1973 was also clear on the comprehensiveness of salvation.<sup>117</sup> It admitted that “[t]he salvation which Christ brought, and in which we participate, offers a comprehensive wholeness in this divided world” and is “newness of life – the unfolding of true humanity in the fulness of God (Col.2:9).”<sup>118</sup> It is a salvation involving “the soul and body,” “the individual and society, mankind and ‘the groaning creation’ (Rom. 8:19).”<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, Bangkok made a deliberate choice for an emphasis on the “the social, economic and political implications of the gospel,” insisting, however, that this “does not in any way deny the personal and eternal dimensions of salvation.”<sup>120</sup> This puts

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<sup>115</sup> *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, 78ff.

<sup>116</sup> *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, 79.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Lehmann-Habeck, “Wholistic Evangelism,” 7.

<sup>118</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 88.

<sup>119</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 88.

<sup>120</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 87; cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 396; James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 122 who pointed out that what emerged at Bangkok was not “Salvation Today” but “Liberation in Christ” cf. Bangkok’s “Salvation in Four Dimensions” which were all socio-political.

in perspective the accusations of many evangelicals about Bangkok's one-sidedness.<sup>121</sup> Bangkok's position is clearly that "God's justice manifests itself both in the justification of the sinner and in social and political justice."<sup>122</sup>

In Summary: Bangkok 1973 made three admissions which reflect the ethos of humility with respect to non-Christian religions. One, God was seen to be at work in the midst of non-Christian religions and the Holy Spirit was believed to translate their groanings into prayers acceptable to God. Two, the work of God outside the church is, however, not to be pin-pointed but only marveled at. Three, non-Christian religions have a "mission" which the church should embrace. This latter idea has been present in ecumenical thought since at least New Delhi 1961. In addition to these points, Bangkok also stood for dialogue with non-Christians and held to a comprehensive view of Christian witness and salvation.

## **B. Nairobi 1975: Evangelism**

The discovery of the importance of the world for ecumenical theology in the 1950s and 1960s was seen by David Bosch as having led to mission being "overtaxed" by the concerns of the world<sup>123</sup> such that mission now meant everything, without any

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<sup>121</sup> See e.g., Ralph Winter, ed., *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1973); Peter Beyerhaus, *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption*, trans. M. Clarkson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971); Walter Kunneth and Peter Beyerhaus, eds., *Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft? Die Berliner Ökumene-Erklärung zur utopischen Vision des Weltkirchenrates* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1975).

<sup>122</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 88.

<sup>123</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 383f.



distinctive sense of the church's participation in the world.<sup>124</sup> The aggressive concentration on the world by Geneva 1966 and Uppsala 1968 was now beginning to lead to apprehension among many.<sup>125</sup> These apprehensions led to the need to re-emphasize some of the aspects of the older missionary understanding which was being challenged by over-identification of the church with the world. Thus in the 1970s, as Bosch notes, there was "something of a turning of tide" and many now confessed that "it is impossible to talk about mission as responsibility toward and solidarity with the world unless such mission is understood in ecclesial categories."<sup>126</sup> It was at the Fifth Assembly of the WCC at Nairobi from 23 November to 10 December 1975 that some of the old concerns in mission were emphasized. The primary emphasis of Nairobi, however, was on the place of evangelism in the church's mission.<sup>127</sup> This does not mean that the idea of evangelization was given up by the WCC before Nairobi. As Martin Lehmann-Habeck, Priscilla Pope-Levison and Philip Potter have pointed out, even though the word "evangelism" is not one preferred in the WCC discussions, the concept of wholistic

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 150-153.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. W. A. Saayman, *Unity and Mission: A Study of the Concept of Unity in Ecumenical Discussions Since 1961 and its influence on the World Mission of the Church* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1984), 35f.; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 383ff. Bosch, however, gives the erroneous impression that Geneva 1966, Uppsala 1968 and Bangkok 1973 denied the place of the church in mission.

<sup>126</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 385.

<sup>127</sup> The concern for evangelism and Salvation was admitted by Nairobi as a sign of the Holy Spirit because it seemed to be the concern everywhere: the CWME at Bangkok in 1972-1973 dealt with "Salvation Today;" the Faith and Order at Accra, Ghana dealt with "Giving an Account of the Hope that is Within Us;" the 1974 Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church dealt with "Evangelization in the Modern World;" the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne was in 1974. *Nairobi Report*, 54; cf. Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology: 1948-1975 Years of Worldwide Creative Tension Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), 100.

Christian witness is recurrent in ecumenical thought.<sup>128</sup> At Nairobi 1975, however, it appears that the particular emphasis of the word “evangelism” which accents the calling of people to faith in Christ<sup>129</sup> was underscored.

Muller-Fahrenheit thought that Nairobi 1975 shifted the discussion of the unity of humankind to the broader perspective of the unity of all creation and that it was in this respect that Nairobi broke from Uppsala and earlier conferences.<sup>130</sup> It is not clear, however, that Nairobi was a clean break from Uppsala in this respect,<sup>131</sup> but there can be no doubt that Section VI of Nairobi emphasized the issue of care for creation<sup>132</sup> and that this was the thrust of Charles Birch’s paper at Nairobi.<sup>133</sup> Nairobi’s understanding,

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<sup>128</sup> Lehmann-Habeck, “Wholistic Evangelism,” 7-16 and Pope-Levison, “Evangelism in the WCC – Part I,” 231-243 cf. Philip Potter, “Evangelism and the World Council of Churches,” 171-182 at 176.

<sup>129</sup> Philip Potter thinks that this is an idea which may be more associated with evangelism than with witness. Potter, “Evangelism and the WCC,” 176.

<sup>130</sup> Muller-Fahrenheit, *Unity in Today's World*, 95ff.

<sup>131</sup> Uppsala seemed to have had a concern not only for humankind but also for creation. It asserted that “man is God’s trustee for creation” and that the church accepts with fellow humans the “trusteeship over creation, guarding, developing and sharing its resources.” [*Uppsala Report*, 5 – Message of the Assembly]; it also noted human “interdependence with society” made clear by science and asserted that “[t]he avoidance of atomic, biological or chemical war has become a condition of human survival. [*Uppsala Report*, 29 – Report of Section II; 62 – Report of Section IV]. Also, as humankind “begins to cope with the control over his environment which technology brings,” he needs also to understand “the changes in attitudes toward nature, work, leisure, human relations and community.” *Uppsala Report*, 51 – Report of Section III. The concept of a cosmic Christology was well emphasized at New Delhi in Sittler’s paper. Kenneth Slack notes that Charles Birch’s presentation was “a gathering up within the narrow confines of one address of some six years of World Council study of how the churches can play their part in preserving the human factor in a world that has come to be dominated by science and technology.” *Nairobi Narrative: The Story of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches 23 November – 10 December 1975* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 55.

<sup>132</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 135 – Report of Section VI; cf. 45 – Report of Section I; ix – The Message; and the work of all the sections especially sections II, IV and VI.

<sup>133</sup> Charles Birch, “Creation, Technology and Human Survival: Called to Replenish the Earth”, *The Ecumenical Review* 28/1 (January 1976): 66-79, esp. 79.

however, did not move much beyond humanity.<sup>134</sup> In fact, as Müller-Fahrenholz himself noted, Nairobi did not seem to realize the full import of its theological insight.<sup>135</sup> The distinctive emphasis of Nairobi would seem to rather lie elsewhere - in its emphasis on evangelization. Rodger C. Bassham has rightly called it “a consolidating Assembly”<sup>136</sup> and, citing A. H. van den Heuvel, notes that it was “firm in keeping and working out the programmes of the previous period, anxious to make explicit the dimension of faith which inspired them.”<sup>137</sup> For our purpose, Nairobi may be said to reflect a balance of the Winner and Sign models, but as will be seen shortly, it only followed each of these models partially.

Whereas it was possible from the theme of the Nairobi Assembly, “Jesus Christ frees and unites” to yield “implications that are perplexing, explosive, and yet hopeful,”<sup>138</sup> the Assembly itself, as many people have pointed out, was very sober; it lacked what some have thought were the triumphalism, over-confidence and utopianism of Geneva 1966 and Uppsala 1968.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, Nairobi was a very pointed

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<sup>134</sup> Cf. e.g. how it understood the “all God’s creation” in these references: *Nairobi Report*, 48 – Report of Section I; 135 – Report of Section VI.

<sup>135</sup> Müller-Fahrenholz, ed., *Unity in Today’s World*, 96.

<sup>136</sup> Bassham, *Mission Theology*, 99.

<sup>137</sup> Bassham, *Mission Theology*, 99; cf. A. H. van den Heuvel, “The Fifth Assembly at Nairobi,” *The Ecumenical Review* 28/1 (1976): 97.

<sup>138</sup> J. Robert Nelson, “The Issues Before Nairobi: Shared Hopes and Divided Strategies at the WCC’s Fifth Assembly,” *The Christian Century* 92/31 (October 1, 1975): 842-847 at 842.

<sup>139</sup> E.g., Muller-Fahrenholz, *Unity in Today’s World*, 95. Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 385, 388; Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, 85, 87; etc. Perhaps, this was partly because of the reduced influence of staff and special advisers at Nairobi (being the old brigade), Tom Wright having complained about their domination of discussions. Slack, therefore, thought that many in the section discussions were “complete amateurs.” Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, 61f. J. Robert Nelson called a large portion of the members of the post-Nairobi Central Committee “second-generation ecumenists.” J. Robert Nelson, “The World Council’s Second Generation Takes Over,” *The Christian Century* 93/5 (Feb 18, 1976): 144-147, esp. 147.

assembly in many of its declarations and held together in a balanced way positive aspects of both the old and the new in one vessel. This may be seen as a “balance.”

We may speak of this balance of Nairobi in a number of ways. In one way, Nairobi may be seen as a balance in the content and method of Christian witness. It distinguished “salvation” from “service” but held them closely together as means by which “Christ mediates God’s new covenant;” “evangelism” and “social action” were distinguished but held together as belonging together to the gospel; “proclamation of the gospel of Christ” and “the struggle for peace, justice and freedom throughout society” were not confused or placed over against each other but held together.<sup>140</sup> The gospel was not to be reduced to either “social and political dimensions” alone or “private and eternal dimensions” alone:

The gospel always includes: the announcement of God’s Kingdom and love through Jesus Christ, the offer of grace and forgiveness of sins, the invitation to repentance and faith in him, the summons to fellowship in God’s Church, the command to witness to God’s saving words and deeds, the responsibility to participate in the struggle for justice and human dignity, the obligation to denounce all that hinders human wholeness, and a commitment to risk life itself.<sup>141</sup>

While it would seem that these were current concerns for the assembly, J. Robert Nelson observed that Nairobi repaired “[t]he sharp dichotomy between individualistic salvation and the witness for freedom with justice,” which was at issue at Uppsala 1968.<sup>142</sup> For Nairobi, the missionary message was the whole gospel for the whole person in the whole

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<sup>140</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 43, 50, 52, etc. – Report of Section I.

<sup>141</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 45, 52 – Report of Section I.

<sup>142</sup> Nelson, “The World Council’s Second Generation,” 145f.

world by means of the whole church.<sup>143</sup> But it expressed this in terms that reflected the concerns of the Sign model. “Our obedience to God and our solidarity with the human family,” demands of us obedience to Christ’s command “to proclaim and demonstrate God’s love to every person,” of every class, race, continent, culture, setting and historical context.<sup>144</sup>

Nairobi also held a balance between the uniqueness of Christ and dialogue with people of other faiths in spite of the strong concern it expressed about dialogue.<sup>145</sup> It is helpful to note in this balance that while many themes were expressed with which the Winner model would be comfortable, they were cast in the mold of the Sign model. So, for instance, while the assembly could “boldly confess Christ alone as Savior and Lord,” the “one,” “true,” and “faithful,” witness of God, who is at the same time “God and Savior *according to the Scriptures*,”<sup>146</sup> it cast this in a humble tone. To confess Christ in this way was said to be no “arrogant doctrinal superiority” but “the humble and obedient

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<sup>143</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 52-54 – Report of Section I. This concept was already used at New Delhi and Mexico City. Bishop Mortimer Arias’s paper was an influence on Nairobi. See: Mortimer Arias, “That the World May Believe” and the responses by John R. W. Stott among others. *International Review of Mission* 65/257 (Jan. 1976): 13-33; cf. Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, 38-42.

<sup>144</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 53 – Report of Section I.

<sup>145</sup> Lukas Vischer criticized Nairobi’s discussion on dialogue as fixed on abstract theories and not born within the political and historical contexts in which dialogue usually occurs. See his *Veränderung der Welt – Bekehrung der Kirchen: Denkanstöße der Fünften Vollversammlung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen in Nairobi* (Frankfurt/Main: Otto Lembeck, 1976); According to L. A. Sanneh, Section III of Nairobi “went adrift in the cross-currents of theological uncertainty” as it was caught between the assembly’s expectations and “The rich experience of contact with people of other religions.” “Dialogue and Community: the Unresolved Questions,” in *Faith in the Midst of Faiths: Reflections on Dialogue in Community*, ed. S. J. Samartha (Geneva: WCC, 1977), 98-107, esp. 99. D. C. Mulder, in his preface to *Faith in the Midst of Faiths*, 5, noted that “[m]any participants in the Nairobi assembly obviously lacked experience in dialogue and were inclined to look at the whole idea of dialogue with much hesitation and some suspicion.”

<sup>146</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 43, 44, 46 (emphasis in the original text).

stewardship of the Church which knows it has been ‘put in trust with the gospel.’”<sup>147</sup>

Also, although there was no agreement on “whether and how Christ is present in other religions,” there was agreement in the belief that the Holy Spirit, who is one with the Father and the Son, is at work among all peoples, and Jesus Christ has not left himself without witness in any “generation or society.” Thus, Nairobi held to the “possibility” that God might speak to the church from outside the church even though it did not describe this as a “mission” of the world to the church as New Delhi 1961 and Bangkok 1973 had done. There was no agreement on the nature and salvific value of Christ’s work outside the church and on whether or not there was a common basis which should be mutually acceptable to people of differing faiths and ideologies.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, Christ meets us in our individual cultural contexts, Nairobi said, and is revealed to us in a new way as we confess him and experience him in the lives of the exploited and oppressed, in whom he is specially present.<sup>149</sup>

Dialogue with non-Christian religions was considered good for “mutual understanding and practical co-operation”<sup>150</sup> especially in local communities.<sup>151</sup> But this should not be an abandonment, betrayal, disobedience or compromise of the Great

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<sup>147</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 52 – Report of Section I.

<sup>148</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 75-77 – Report of Section III.

<sup>149</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 46 – Report of Section I.

<sup>150</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 46 – Report of Section I; 77-78 – Report of Section III.

<sup>151</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 74ff. The idea of community with which Nairobi was fully engaged was a prominent theme in the 1969 Unity Study but began to feature in ecumenical dialogue more prominently since, at least, the Colombo 1974 inter-religious conversation on the theme “Towards World Community.” Here, people of five different faiths took part in a multilateral meeting and pointed to “a common commitment to reconstruct community.” They also affirmed their responsibility to discover “those inbuilt elements in our religious traditions that hinder rather than help life in community” and to seek for all, in “the task of living together in a world community,” “a higher and more just quality of life.” *Towards World Community: The Colombo Papers* (Geneva: WCC, 1975), 125.

Commission to make disciples of every nation.<sup>152</sup> The reason to be committed to evangelizing, in Nairobi's opinion, include "obedience to God" and "solidarity with the human family."<sup>153</sup> Nairobi, therefore, accepted the concept of solidarity and saw the valued place of dialogue in the church's life, but did not find these to be incongruous with preaching to non-Christians that they may know Christ and the salvation he offers. In view of the fact that this was virtually the position of Uppsala 1968, in spite of its strong emphasis on the socio-political dimension, and in view of the presence of this two-fold emphasis in subsequent ecumenical discussions, we may note that the Sign model did not repudiate proclamation, in spite of the tendencies in that direction. This view may have been obvious from the ecclesiological shaping of the model in which the prophetic-sign-character of the church was believed to demand solidarity, proclamation and loving example. Dialogue, then, was no "alternative for mission" and no compromise of the faith.<sup>154</sup> Although the uniqueness of Christ is "a tension which divides the Church from the world," Nairobi noted, the church was not to allow its faith "to add to the tensions and suspicions and hatreds that threaten to tear apart the one family of humanity."<sup>155</sup> All these limits set around dialogue are important to note because they would continue to be maintained through the Sign model.

Nairobi also maintained a balance between eschatology and ethics. It did this by relating the church's unity, not only to the ultimate unity of humankind, but also to the secular struggles of humanity. Thus, while agreeing with Uppsala 1968 that the church

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<sup>152</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 73 – Report of Section III.

<sup>153</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 53 – Report of Section I.

<sup>154</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 77 – Report of Section III.

<sup>155</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 73, 74 – Report of Section III.

“is to be the sign of the coming unity of humankind,” it insisted that the church was therefore to “be open to” and be the “true home” of “women and men of every nation and culture, of every time and place, of every sort of ability and disability.”<sup>156</sup> That is, to be faithful to its nature, the church must consider its unity “within the wider context of the unity and diversity of humankind,”<sup>157</sup> but this must also find expression in “the secular struggles of humankind for peace and justice” in order that “the world may believe.”<sup>158</sup>

What has been clear so far is that Nairobi tried to strike a balance in its affirmations. In its position on the missionary engagement, it held in balance: word and deed; solidarity with the world and witness to it of Christ as Savior and Lord; evangelization and social action; the whole gospel for the whole person in the whole world by means of the whole church. At Nairobi, the gospel included the invitation to the life of the church. The concept of dialogue was limited to mutual understanding and working together with non-Christian religions in a wider world community, and was not to replace the call to preach the gospel to all.<sup>159</sup> We may note, however, that Nairobi did not use the Winner language. This is an indication that this language form had been superseded. However, while some of the themes with which the Winner model would be at home were emphasized, they were often cast in the molds of the Sign model.

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<sup>156</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 61 – Report of Section II. Section II of Nairobi expanded on this thought with reference to the disabled, the relationship between men and women and rich and poor.

<sup>157</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 61 – Report of Section II.

<sup>158</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 64 – Report of Section II, cf. John 17:21.

<sup>159</sup> It would seem that it was a view like Nairobi’s that John Deschner had in mind when he said that an encounter of faiths “limited to what each can contribute to a common quest for world community would miss what each holds to be crucial in human encounter with other human beings and with ultimate reality.” He thought that this was a new infection with what in another situation we used to call ‘minimum ecumenism’: i.e. the illusion that community can be built by finding the lowest common denominator.” See his “Aspects of ‘Community’ as Christians Could Understand it in Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and Ideologies,” in *Faith in the Midst of Faiths*, 38-47, esp., 38, 46.



### C. Chiang Mai 1977 and the *Guidelines on Dialogue*

The Chiang Mai, Thailand consultation of 1977 on “Dialogue in Community” has been seen as significant in ecumenical thought because it was the consultation from which came the *Guidelines on Dialogue*, which was later approved by the 1979 Central Committee.<sup>160</sup> The reasons for dialogue with people of other faiths as they are put in the *Guidelines* include: the development of “the community of humankind,” that is, a broader community of justice, peace and the integrity of creation; better understanding of one’s neighbor; and part of Christian service of love, care and respect for one’s neighbor.<sup>161</sup> Dialogue was, therefore, not to be “a secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy” but “a means of living our faith in Christ in service of community with our neighbors.”<sup>162</sup> The idea was that in dialogue, the Christian should not go with an ulterior motive to convert the dialoging partner: we do not go into dialogue “as manipulators but as genuine fellow-pilgrims” who seek to meet Jesus anew in dialogue.<sup>163</sup> Dialogue is no compromise of one’s faith but a “venture of exploratory

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<sup>160</sup> For the papers and report from Chiang Mai see, *Faith in the Midst of Faiths*; the Chiang Mai Statement is on pp. 134-149 cf. the amended published version in 1979: *Guidelines On Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* (Geneva: WCC, 1979). The Central Committee’s Decision is in *Central Committee: Minutes of the Thirty-First Meeting Kingston, Jamaica 1-11 January, 1979* (Geneva: WCC, 1979), 35.

<sup>161</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*, 9-11 (paras. I:16-19).

<sup>162</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*, 11 (para I:19).

<sup>163</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*, 11 (para. I:19).

faith” in different contexts and cultures.<sup>164</sup> Dialogue is to be done with “people” and not systems or ideologies.<sup>165</sup>

Chiang Mai’s *Guidelines* continued the ethos of humility. While claiming a “divine given-ness” for the Christian revelation, it pointed out that in other faiths it is possible to perceive “a spirituality, dedication, compassion and a wisdom” and that these should forbid Christians from “making judgements about others as though from a position of superiority.”<sup>166</sup> It therefore called Christians to repentance, humility, joy and integrity.<sup>167</sup> In dialogue, like Bangkok 1973, it held that the starting point for the Christian was the Christian faith and the teachings of the Bible, even though this starting point cannot be imposed on others. Yet it called upon the church to make its Christological affirmations with reference to “the nature and activity of God and the doctrine of the Spirit” which arise in dialogue. It highlighted, yet again, the old questions which have long attended ecumenical discussions as aspects yet to be agreed upon. These include the relation between God’s dealings with all humanity and God’s dealings with Israel and the Christian church, and whether or not there is redemptive revelation in other faiths.<sup>168</sup> Here, twenty-five year old questions in ecumenical discussion were still unanswered, in spite of changed attitudes to non-Christian faiths.

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<sup>164</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*, 9-11 (paras. I:16-19); cf. *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 110-112.

<sup>165</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*, 11 (para. I:20). This issue of dialogue as an event with people and not systems was highlighted early by the Second East Asia Christian Conference at Bangkok in 1964. See its statement in *The Christian Community within the Human Community. Containing Statements from the Bangkok Assembly of the EACC Feb-March, 1964. Minutes* (Bangalore: EACC, n.d.), 2:9-16. Cf. Diana Eck, “The Religions and Tambaram: 1938 and 1988,” *International Review of Mission* 77/307 (July 1988): 375-389, at 388 where she points out the importance of dialogue with people and not systems.

<sup>166</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*, 12 (para. II:21).

<sup>167</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*,

<sup>168</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*, 7 (para. I:11); 12-13 (paras. II:21, 23).

Chiang Mai's significance for the Sign model lies in the *Guidelines* approved by the 1979 Central Committee.

#### **D. Melbourne 1980: Kingdom Oriented Mission**

The shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness was furthered by the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism at Melbourne, Australia, from 12-25 May, 1980<sup>169</sup> which met under the prayer theme: "Your Kingdom Come."<sup>170</sup> In spite of the fact that Melbourne reflected multiple tendencies and that the Sections<sup>171</sup> seemed to have differing emphasis and possibly understandings,<sup>172</sup> Melbourne contributed distinctively to the shaping of the Sign model. It made the poor a missional criterion and also considered them as legitimate agents of mission. It highlighted the many ramifications of proclamation and also made a distinctive appropriation of the understanding of the broader view of the redeemed community.

Perhaps Melbourne's most distinctive contribution to the Sign model was its presentation of the poor as both a criterion for mission and as legitimate agents of

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<sup>169</sup> The Official Report is published as *Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives. Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism Melbourne, Australia 12-25 May 1980* (Geneva: WCC, 1980).

<sup>170</sup> Ernest W. Lefever notes that the theme of this conference "Your Kingdom Come" "was fraught with political overtones," being held just after the WCC's "weak and belated" response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Lefever, *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 28f.

<sup>171</sup> The sections are: I – Good News to the Poor; II – The Kingdom of God and Human Struggles; III – The Church Witnesses to the Kingdom; IV – Christ – Crucified and Risen – Challenges Human Power.

<sup>172</sup> David Bosch has described these contradictions in terms of a tension between guilt and hope; he finds in Section III the presentation of the church as a sign of hope in spite of its failures, and in Sections II, IV and especially I the presentation of the church as a sign of guilt. David J. Bosch, "The Melbourne Conference: Between Guilt and Hope," *International Review of Mission* 69/276-277 (Oct. 1980 – Jan. 1981): 512-518. Thomas F. Stransky also noted the differences in perspective of the Sections. "A Roman Catholic Response [to Stowe], *Missiology* 9/1 (Jan. 1981): 41-51 at 43.

mission, rather than being seen merely as objects of the church's charity.<sup>173</sup> While the kingdom includes all persons irrespective of race, gender, class, etc., Melbourne says, "[i]n the perspective of the kingdom, God has a preference for the poor."<sup>174</sup> Thus, the church's prayer for God's kingdom to come must be made "in solidarity with the cry of millions who are living in poverty and injustice."<sup>175</sup> Because Christ who is the center is always moving to the peripheries of life, Melbourne discerned "a change in the direction of mission" in which the down-trodden and less developed nations would take a greater initiative because of Christ's presence among them.<sup>176</sup> Melbourne, however, seemed to have operated with a schema in which the world was divided into two groups – the oppressed and the oppressors and apparently saw the condition of the poor as a result of the wealth of the rich. This, some found to be problematic. Charles Chaney, for example, though not part of the Melbourne conference, thought that Melbourne's position was an "unrealistic simplification and, to be somewhat facetious, a kind of reverse of evangelism;" his reasoning was that since Melbourne saw the rich as sinful and the poor as saints, and since the mission of the church seeks to move the poor to a better economic life, it would mean that mission then is "to make saints into sinners."<sup>177</sup> Thomas F.

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<sup>173</sup> Cf. John P. Brown, "Reflections on the Melbourne Conference, 'Your Will Be Done,'" *Reformed World* 36/4 (1980): 147-154; P. Clements-Jewery, "Your Kingdom Come," *The Baptist Quarterly* 29/1 (1981): 25-32, esp. 29f.; Martin Connway, "Through the Eyes of the Poor: the Christian Mission as Service of the Ex-Centric but True Centre," *The Modern Churchman* (Autumn 1990): 144-160; Emilio Castro, "Mission Theology Today and Tomorrow: A Conversation with Emilio Castro," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 5/3 (July 1981): 108-111 at 108.

<sup>174</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 171 – Report of Section I.

<sup>175</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 235 – Message to the Churches.

<sup>176</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 220 (3:24) – Report of Section III; *Nairobi to Vancouver*, 90f.

<sup>177</sup> See e.g. Charles Chaney, "A Southern Baptist Response [to Stowe]," *Missiology* 9/1 (Jan. 1981): 37-40 at 39.

Stransky thought that Melbourne revealed a “pop analysis of this huge, complex world and at oversimplified categories.”<sup>178</sup> In spite of such misgivings, the poor, as we shall see, could no longer escape ecumenical missional attention through Melbourne’s lead.<sup>179</sup>

Melbourne was also a significant ecumenical conference in its highlighting of the place of proclamation in Christian witness. In this regard, it made four points concerning the church’s proclamation. First, proclamation must arise from the local community<sup>180</sup> where the eucharist is celebrated. The eucharist was therefore conceived in missional terms as a witness to the kingdom of God, as an experience of God’s reign, and as bread for the pilgrim community in mission.<sup>181</sup> James A. Scherer has observed that Melbourne continued the rehabilitation of the church for mission which began at Nairobi 1975.<sup>182</sup> Melbourne’s emphasis did indeed transcend the position of the study on “The Missionary Structure of the Congregation” in the 1960s which saw the church as dispensable. Contrary to this study, Melbourne insisted that “[t]he institutional church is not to be rejected as it is one of the forms in which renewal can occur.”<sup>183</sup> It is important to note,

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<sup>178</sup> Stransky, “A Roman Catholic Reflection,” 43.

<sup>179</sup> Paul Abrecht has noted that between 1969 and Vancouver, the ecumenical movement was under the influence of liberation ethics hence the focus on liberation themes like the poor. See: “From Oxford to Vancouver: Lessons from Fifty Years of Ecumenical Work for Economic and Social Justice,” *The Ecumenical Review* 40/2 (April 1998): 147-168, esp. 162-168.

<sup>180</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 195 (1:6); 199 (3:17-20) – Report of Section III.

<sup>181</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 203-207 (5:28-32) – Report of Section III.

<sup>182</sup> Scherer, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom*, 144. Scherer apparently did not think that Uppsala did the same. However, as we may have noted, Uppsala was also strong on the church’s role in mission. Uppsala located the “constitutive centre” of the church’s double movement in “corporate worship” where, as it believed, Jesus Christ himself is the one who both calls and sends thereby rejecting a pure apostolary view of the church which fails to anchor the church in its relationship with its Lord. *Uppsala Report*, 15 – Report of Section I.

<sup>183</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 197 (2:12) – Report of Section III.

however, that the church was only one of the forms of renewal and no longer the only form of renewal.

Second, Melbourne held that proclamation must be contextual,<sup>184</sup> being always “from inside a situation” and “always linked to a specific situation and a specific moment in history.”<sup>185</sup> Proclamation, then, has to be fitted within the context of the reality addressed. This would be an important point to remember when analyzing ecumenical documents as it always qualifies the emphasis placed by the document on any particular issue or subject. It may also give perspective to the differences in emphasis of Melbourne’s Sections.

Third, Melbourne held that the church’s proclamation was to have Jesus Christ as its content in every situation. “Genuine evangelism,” says Melbourne, “is the proclamation of Jesus as Saviour and Lord who gave his life for others and who wants us to do likewise” and it is credible and true when it combines proclamation and witness, word and deed.<sup>186</sup> The gospel given to the church to “disclose” to the world as the church’s “specific task” is “the final revelation of God himself in Jesus Christ.”<sup>187</sup> And this gospel is universally relevant; it contains the “common hope for humankind and for the whole creation.”<sup>188</sup> In this position, Melbourne strongly declared the finality of

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<sup>184</sup> Again, in this position, Melbourne continued a theme that Uppsala 1968 had sounded and Bangkok 1973 had expanded. Uppsala noted that each of the double movements would have to be differently named in each situation. Cf. *Uppsala Report*, 15 – Report of Section I; cf. *Bangkok Assembly*, Section I.

<sup>185</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 195 (1:6,7); cf. 198 (2:13) – Report of Section III; cf. 218 (3:19) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>186</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 218 (3:19) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>187</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 181 – Report of Section II.

<sup>188</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 181 – Report of Section II.

Christ and his universal relevance. Charles Chaney's view that Melbourne's authentic evangelism was expressed in "idealistic terms" is therefore debatable.<sup>189</sup>

James A. Scherer has asserted that Melbourne highlighted not Jesus' pre-existence or his sacrificial death on the cross in the traditional understanding but his historical life as Jesus of Nazareth. He further claimed that at Melbourne "there occurred a shift from Paul and the apostles as paradigms for mission to Jesus Christ, healer, proclaimer, and caster-out of demons, as the missionary *par excellence*." And this was for him "a shift away from preaching the message of justification by faith for sinners to enacting the kingdom in history by word and deed."<sup>190</sup> Emilio Castro and David Bosch have also noted the lack of the perspective of Christ's redeeming death on the cross in Melbourne's position.<sup>191</sup> These views would, however, need to be nuanced as a result of the works of Sections III and IV of Melbourne. In these Sections, Jesus was referred to as the "crucified and risen" and "suffering and risen Lord," the incarnated word," the "incarnated Christ," etc. In Section IV, the idea of the crucified Christ was not only used as the headings of the Section and a subsection, but it was also a recurrent thought through the report.<sup>192</sup> Also, in Section III Melbourne discussed conversion as involving faith in Jesus Christ and the joining of the church.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, Melbourne clearly

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<sup>189</sup> Chaney, "A Southern Baptist Response," 38.

<sup>190</sup> Scherer, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom*, 142.

<sup>191</sup> Emilio Castro, "Reflections After Melbourne," in *Your Kingdom Come*, 225-234, at 227; idem, "Mission Today and Tomorrow," 108; David J. Bosch, "In Search of Mission: Reflections on "Melbourne" and "Pathaya," *Missionalia* 9/1 (1981): 3-18, at 9.

<sup>192</sup> For some occurrences in Section III, see: *Your Kingdom Come*, 194-5 (1:4), 195 (1:6), 198 (2:13), 200 (4:21), 204 (5:29), etc. For some occurrences in Section IV, see: 218 (3:19), Section heading and subsection heading of paragraphs 8 and 9, etc.

<sup>193</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 196 (1:10) – Report of Section III.

declared: “[w]e reject as heretical any proclamation of a discarnate Christ, a caricatured Jesus, who is presented as not being intimately concerned with human life and relationships.”<sup>194</sup> Thus, while the Christ of Melbourne was almost exclusively emphasized in Sections I and II in terms of his historical life on earth,<sup>195</sup> in Sections III and IV his crucifixion and resurrection and the importance of conversion to him were also emphasized. Nevertheless, the concern of Castro, namely, that the cross and its defeat of human sin needed a clearer affirmation than was given at Melbourne seems an appropriate observation.

A fourth point Melbourne makes about the church’s proclamation concerns the unreached. Melbourne called upon the church to have a common Christian witness to those unacquainted with the gospel, to non-Christians, to pluralistic societies, etc.<sup>196</sup> It confessed:

We acknowledge and gladly accept our special obligation to those who have never heard the Good News of the Kingdom. New frontiers are continually being discovered. Jesus our Lord is always ahead of us and draws us to follow him, often in unexpected ways.<sup>197</sup>

It is therefore not true that Melbourne lacked the perspective of the unreached, as Walden Scott and David Bosch<sup>198</sup> thought or that it did not speak of Christian witness to non-

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<sup>194</sup> 218 (3:19) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>195</sup> Even here, however, a few undeveloped references were made to the crucified Christ. See e.g., *Your Kingdom Come*, 171 (para. 1) – Report of Section I; 180 (1:3); 186 (2:19) – Report of Section II.

<sup>196</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 200 (4:21) – Report of Section III.

<sup>197</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 195 (1:7) – Report of Section III.

<sup>198</sup> Walden Scott, “The Significance of Patty,” *Missiology* 9/1 (1981): 57-75 at 69; cf. a similar view by Bosch “In Search of Mission,” 7.



Christians as Norman E. Thomas<sup>199</sup> thought. These thoughts were not absent in Melbourne's position in spite of whatever tendencies may have operated in the conference.

Melbourne's position on reaching the unreached does not, however, preclude dialogue. Rather, the church is encouraged to engage in dialogue with people of other faiths, daring with them to be "present at the bleeding points of humanity and thus near those who suffer evil" without, however, "losing sight of the ultimate hope of the kingdom of God or giving up their critical attitude."<sup>200</sup> Dialogue with people of other faiths "will show us how they and we may serve the common needs of humanity;" it will also help us "discover that God has fresh inspiration for us in the experience of other religions."<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, dialogue will enable "authentic community in Christ at the local level" but this community "will encompass but be larger than the local church community because the kingdom is wider than the church;" the community "is found in caring and fulfilling relationships and environments where people are reconciled and liberated to become what God wants them to be." Dialogue also "encourages and stimulates the development of the unique identity of individuals and groups within the total human community."<sup>202</sup>

Yet one more way in which Melbourne forwards the Sign model was in its particular appropriation of the understanding of the ultimate redeemed community as extending beyond the church. This was accomplished in two ways at Melbourne. In the

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<sup>199</sup> Thomas, "Ecumenical Directions in Evangelism," 157.

<sup>200</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 180 – Report of Section II.

<sup>201</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 201 – Report of Section II.

<sup>202</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 196f. – Report of Section III.

first way, Melbourne consciously affirmed a humble view of the church and thereby held an openness to others in God's redemption. Section III stated that the churches have "no proprietary rights on the kingdom, no claim for reserved seats at the great banquet," but do "seek the mercy and grace of God" to be "open to all those who are in the kingdom, whether or not they are part of the institutional churches."<sup>203</sup> This view clearly opens up the kingdom to people beyond the bounds of the institutional churches. This Section could therefore re-interpret the concept of "evangelism" such that it would not just refer to what the church does with reference to the world, but also to what the church does within its own life. Hence, the church was regarded, like the rest of humanity in the world, as part of the problems and sins of the world, and like everyone and everything else, in need of the gospel. So, not only should the world alone be evangelized, the churches "must continue to evangelize themselves in order to become ready instruments for the kingdom of God."<sup>204</sup> The concept of "conversion" was similarly so used.<sup>205</sup> This was an idea which, as we have noted, was already present at Bangkok 1973, where the church itself was said to be in need of salvation.<sup>206</sup>

The other way in which a wider redemption was affirmed was by discerning the signs of the kingdom of God in non-Christian religions. This was the move of Section II. The criterion used was this: "[w]herever a religion or its revival enhances human dignity, human rights and social justice for all people, and brings liberation and peace for

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<sup>203</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 194 – Report of Section III, 179 – Report of Section II.

<sup>204</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 194 – Report of Section III, 179 – Report of Section II; cf. III; 217 – Report of Section IV.

<sup>205</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 193 (1:10) – Report of Section III.

<sup>206</sup> *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, 89, 100.

everybody, there God may be seen to be at work.”<sup>207</sup> Not only did this Section of Melbourne suggest that non-Christian religions touch and find God in their seeking,<sup>208</sup> but it also called upon the churches to co-operate with groups which, though outside the churches, “show signs of the kingdom of God at work on behalf of those who are marginalized by the systems of consumer society.”<sup>209</sup> These signs of the kingdom are, however, signs of God’s kingdom in Christ since this Section also affirmed, as we have seen, the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ.<sup>210</sup>

This kind of confidence in pointing to activities in non-Christian religions as signs of the kingdom was a move which earlier conferences had not made. This confidence of Melbourne did not heed the caution of Bangkok 1973<sup>211</sup> but chose to “spy” on God, as Bangkok would put it.<sup>212</sup> As will be seen, both Vancouver 1983 and San Antonio 1989 would take positions that may be considered as attempts to correct Melbourne, and thus, to redirect ecumenical thinking along the ethos of humility. Baar 1990 would, however, stay with Melbourne and Canberra would seem to show sympathies with Melbourne 1980 but would ultimately end up in what would seem like the “ethos of humility.” Salvador 1996 would stay with San Antonio 1989 and not Melbourne 1980. It is this position of Melbourne which justifies David Bosch’s observation that there was a tendency at

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<sup>207</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 187 – Report of Section II.

<sup>208</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 187 – Report of Section II.

<sup>209</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 191 – Report of Section II.

<sup>210</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 181 – Report of Section II.

<sup>211</sup> Stransky noted that Melbourne did not make much use of conferences before it. Stransky, “A Roman Catholic Response,” 41-51 at 46.

<sup>212</sup> *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, 77 – Report of Section I.

Melbourne to blur the boundaries between the church and the world and to treat world history as having “messianic and salvation-historical attributes.” Also, Bosch considered Melbourne’s view as making “certain historical events assume the quality of revelation where God is seen at work in political and revolutionary events.”<sup>213</sup>

Melbourne, therefore, contributed to the shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness by making the poor a missional criterion and seeing them as legitimate bearers of mission. Melbourne highlighted the church’s proclamation as emanating from the local eucharistic community, as always contextual, as having Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the crucified and risen Lord as its message, and as revealing belief in the view of a wider redeemed community. Melbourne was different from earlier conferences in suggesting that non-Christian religions not only seek but also find God and in pointing out signs of the kingdom among them, especially in their acts of justice for the oppressed and poor and the liberation of the suffering. Melbourne, however, did not give up the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ.

#### **E. 1982 Ecumenical Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism**

After Melbourne, the 1982 document, *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*<sup>214</sup> continued the tradition of holistic evangelism within the WCC. This

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<sup>213</sup> Bosch, “In Search of Mission,” 3-18, at 10. For some other criticisms of Melbourne see: Norman E. Thomas, “Ecumenical Directions in Mission: Melbourne to San Antonio,” *Missiology* 18/2 (April 1990): 149-161, at 156; Emilio Castro, “Reflections After Melbourne,” 225-234; idem, “Mission Theology Today and Tomorrow,” 108-111; David M. Stowe, “What Did Melbourne Say?” *Missiology* 9/1 (Jan. 1981): 23-35; Chaney, “A Southern Baptist Response,” 37-40; Stransky, “A Roman Catholic Response,” 41-51; Bosch, “In Search of Mission,” 3-18; idem, “The Melbourne Conference,” 512-518, esp. the position of Prof. Joaquim Beato of Brazil noted on p. 514; idem, “Evangelism: an Holistic Approach,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 36 (Sept. 1981): 43-63; Clark Pinnock, “An Evangelical Observes a WCC Assembly,” *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin* 4/1 (Oct. 1980): 7-8.

<sup>214</sup> See Jean Stromberg’s compilation of this affirmation with stories and reflections illustrating some of its basic themes, including questions for study and discussion groups. *Mission and Evangelism, an*

document has been seen as a significant achievement of the ecumenical Movement.<sup>215</sup> It saw the church's evangelistic mission as directed towards the whole creation, national life, economic, political and societal institutions and structures.<sup>216</sup> This document stated that Christians owe the message of the salvation in Jesus Christ to all the world and all peoples. In this broadness, it continued a holistic sense of mission. It also affirmed the place of the uniqueness of Jesus in the church's witness, insisting that Christian witness points to "Jesus Christ in whom real humanity is revealed and who is in God's wisdom the centre of all creation, the 'head over all things' (Ehp. 1:10; 22f)."<sup>217</sup> In keeping with the eucharistic emphasis, the document finds the life and ministry of the church as proceeding from the eucharist, which is "bread for missionary people."<sup>218</sup> While like Mexico City 1963 and Nairobi 1975 it emphasized the inseparability of the church's calling from its mission, it stood with New Delhi 1961, Uppsala 1968, Nairobi 1975, and even Melbourne 1980 in addressing the calling of people to the membership of the church through the church's witness. But the issue of church planting was placed in this

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*Ecumenical Affirmation: a Study Guide* (Geneva: WCC, 1983). It is also published in James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization, I: Basic Statements 1974-1991* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 253-259.

<sup>215</sup> Thomas, "Ecumenical Directions in Evangelism," 156; Scherer, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom*, 153; "From Evangelicals at Vancouver: An Open Letter" *International Review of Mission* 72/288 (Oct. 1983): 596-598 at 598; Pope-Levison says that it has "found wide acceptance as an important and timely document." See "Evangelism in the WCC," 240; George Vandervelde called it a "landmark" statement: see George Vandervelde, "Harare as Evangelical-Ecumenical *kairos*," *The Ecumenical Review* 50/2 (April 1998): 173-183 at 177; Lesslie Newbigin, writing in 1994, calls it "[o]ne of the most important documents produced by the WCC in the past three decades." See his Review of Conrad Raiser's Book, *Ecumenism in Transition*, titled "Ecumenical Amnesia," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18/1 (1994): 2-5.

<sup>216</sup> Stromberg, ed., *Mission and Evangelism*, 28 (para. 15);

<sup>217</sup> Stromberg, ed., *Mission and Evangelism*, 30 (para. 19).

<sup>218</sup> Stromberg, ed., *Mission and Evangelism*, 38 (para. 21).

document as belonging to the heart of mission.<sup>219</sup> The church is to sow the seed of the gospel through which God will bring about a community gathered around the Word and sacraments. This seed-sowing task is to continue until in every human community there is “a cell of the kingdom, a church confessing Jesus Christ and in his name serving his people.”<sup>220</sup> Vancouver 1983 was later to commend this 1982 ecumenical affirmation to the churches and San Antonio 1989 greatly used it in its statements. It is therefore a document crucial for the understanding of mission and evangelism in the WCC and therefore for the shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness.

#### **F. Vancouver 1983: Witness and Dialogue**

The sixth Assembly of the WCC at Vancouver, Canada in 1983 contributed to the shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness by attempting to appropriate some of the insights discovered and directions taken by the WCC since Uppsala 1968 and molding them into definitive positions for the WCC. Vancouver stood with Melbourne in affirming the call of God upon the church to witness to the gospel among all peoples, especially among the poor in the balance of word and deed: “word without service is

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<sup>219</sup> Pope-Levison thinks that the idea of church planting was “new” having been absent “in recent ecumenical writings.” [Pope-Levison, “Evangelism in the WCC,” 241]. But this would need to be nuanced. New Delhi, in adopting the report on “Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty,” necessarily affirmed the view that “the act of witness seeks a response which contributes to the upbuilding of the fellowship of those who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ.” [*New Delhi Report*, 151; cf. *From Evanston to New Delhi*, 239-245]. Uppsala said “[m]ission bears fruit as people find their true life in the Body of Christ, in the Church’s life of Word and Sacrament, . . . The growth of the Church, therefore, both inward and outward, is of urgent importance. . . .” [*Uppsala Report*, 29 – Report of Section II]. Nairobi said that being “converted to Christ necessarily includes membership in the confessing body of Christ.” [*Nairobi Report*, 45 – Report of Section I]. All these would seem to have some bearing on church planting.

<sup>220</sup> Stromberg, ed., *Mission and Evangelism*, 39 (para. 25); cf. Pope-Levison, “Evangelism in the WCC,” 240-241.

empty and service without the word is without power.”<sup>221</sup> And in Jesus’ announcement of the kingdom, “the spiritual and material Gospel belong together.”<sup>222</sup> Vancouver also maintained continuity with Melbourne and the *Guidelines on Dialogue* in its treatment of the desirability of dialogue as a way to build local communities.<sup>223</sup> But without giving “front and center stage” to mission and evangelism,<sup>224</sup> Vancouver furthered the previous discussions by clarifying the inter-relationship and distinction between dialogue and witness. In witness the church shares and is challenged in its faith in Christ; in dialogue, the church expects to discern more about how God is active in the world and to appreciate the insights and experiences with God of those of other faiths, without denying its own faith.<sup>225</sup> Thus both dialogue and witness were seen as two-way processes. Christians were to dialogue, not only with other religions but also with scientists and technologists for the preservation of the earth, the elimination of nuclear and destructive elements<sup>226</sup> and for a deeper understanding of the inter-relation between “God, humanity

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<sup>221</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 38 – IG on Witnessing to a Divided World. It is to be noted, however, that the work of this Issue Group could not be approved by the whole Assembly and was referred to the Central Committee, which approved its substance and recommended it to the churches.

<sup>222</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 38 – IG on Witnessing in a Divided World.

<sup>223</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 38 – IG on Witnessing in a Divided World

<sup>224</sup> James A. Scherer, “The Mission Focus at the Vancouver Assembly of the WCC,” *Missiology* 11/4 (Oct. 1993): 529-531 at 529; idem, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom*, 153. In both of these works, Scherer also says that Vancouver lagged behind the 1982 *Mission and Evangelism*.

<sup>225</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 40 – IG on Witnessing in a Divided World.

<sup>226</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 75, 77 – IG on Confronting Threats to Peace and Survival. Vancouver stood by the Amsterdam Public Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament. For this report, see Paul Abrecht and Ninan Koshy, eds., *Before Its Too Late: The Challenge of Nuclear Disarmament; the Complete Record of the Public Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament/ Organized by the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 3-34, esp. 32. For the action of the Central Committee in this respect, see: *Central Committee of the World Council of Churches: Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 19-28 July, 1982* (Geneva: WCC), 60-63, also printed as an appendix to *Before Its Too Late*, 383-384; see esp. 384.

and nature” as it “finds its central expression in Christ.”<sup>227</sup> This position weaves afresh the notion of a wider unity, which has been increasingly emphasized since New Delhi 1961, namely, a unity of all creation in Christ,<sup>228</sup> and which explains Vancouver’s theme, “Jesus Christ – the Life of the World.”<sup>229</sup>

The crucial area of tension for Vancouver was in the way that God may be said to be at work in other religions. The initial report, as Wesley Ariarajah cites, put the proposal thus:

While affirming the uniqueness of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus to which we bear witness, we recognize God’s creative work in the religious experience of people of other faiths.<sup>230</sup>

Ariarajah points out that no fewer than 68 written proposals were submitted for the revision of this one sentence. The position that finally emerged only recognized “God’s creative work in the seeking for religious truth among people of other faiths”<sup>231</sup> rather than in their “religious experience.” Ariarajah thinks that this final position was only a recognition of the “seeking” for truth of other religions and not their “finding.”<sup>232</sup> This

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<sup>227</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 77 – IG on Confronting Threats to Peace and Survival; cf. Report of Section II – Humanity, Nature and God - of the Massachusetts Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, in *Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Report of the World Council of Churches’ Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA, 12-24 July, 1979*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 2:28-38.

<sup>228</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 78-82 – IG on Confronting Threats to Peace and Survival; cf. *Faith, Science and the Future*, 32-36.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. John Poulton, *The Feast of Life: A Theological Reflection on the theme “Jesus Christ – the Life of the World”* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 6-7; cf. the “Orthodox Theological Symposium Report” in *The Lord of Life: Theological Explorations of the Theme “Jesus Christ – Life of the World”* ed. William H. Lazareth (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 1-12, esp. 1-3.

<sup>230</sup> Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbour*, 107-108.

<sup>231</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 40 – IG on Witnessing in a Divided World.

<sup>232</sup> Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbour*, 108.



may have been so in the minds of some who preferred this change.<sup>233</sup> But looked at against the background of the ethos of humility, it may simply be just a keeping of the caution of Bangkok 1973 and an apparent correction of Melbourne's over-confidence in this regard. Vancouver may not be denying non-Christians of the "finding" of truth, but may simply be limiting its speech to what was possible for it to see and know as part of a different religious tradition. God alone, it may be suggesting, knows those who truly find God.

Vancouver's contribution to the shaping of the Sign model of ecumenical church-world relations may then be seen in four respects; in continuing the balance between word and deed; in deepening and clarifying the inter-relation between witness and dialogue; in emphasizing the reach of dialogue as including science and technology, and placing this in the context of the unity of all creation; and in apparently correcting the over-ambition of Melbourne 1980 with respect to non-Christian religions.

#### **G. Tension in Dialogue: Tambaram 1988 and San Antonio 1989**

Two ecumenical gatherings which also contributed to the shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness were the Tambaram (Mahabalipuram), Madras, India Consultation in January 1988<sup>234</sup> and the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism at

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<sup>233</sup> The general satisfaction with Vancouver by evangelicals is to be noted, the areas of misgivings not withstanding. See: Bruce Best, "Evangelicals Affirm Role in Ecumenism," *Canvas* 14 (August 10, 1983): 25 cf. "From Evangelicals at Vancouver: An Open Letter" *International Review of Mission* 72/288 (Oct. 1983): 596-598.

<sup>234</sup> For the major papers in this consultation see *The International Review of Mission* 77/307 (July 1988): 309-436; the issues for further studies are on pp. 449-450. (the volume was mistakenly published as volume 78).

San Antonio, Texas in 1989.<sup>235</sup> The Tambaram 1988 consultation was the celebration of 50 years since Tambaram, Madras 1938, a meeting of the IMC known for the conflicts expressed on the question of Christian uniqueness and for its emphasis on the church's role in mission. Whereas at Madras, some like Lesslie Newbigin and Paul Heim were convinced about the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ,<sup>236</sup> some others like Stanley J. Samartha and Christopher Duraisingh found it incompatible with dialogue. Apart from speeches which strongly rejected the position of Hendrik Kraemer,<sup>237</sup> upon whose book, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, Madras 1938 was greatly divided, there were direct statements to this effect. Stanley J. Samartha called the consultation to "look beyond Tambaram 1938," noting that an exclusive claim is to be likened to a bit of rock in a handful of peanuts. "It may break a few teeth but will never provide nourishment to the body."<sup>238</sup> Christopher Duraisingh called for a methodological shift in starting point in dialogue, moving from one's own faith to "the dialogical experience with people of other faiths."<sup>239</sup> He also suggested that "the decisiveness of Christ" in the early Christian confession be seen as "paradigmatic," that is, as the product of the Christian community's search for meaning for its core experience with Christ, and

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<sup>235</sup> *The San Antonio Report*.

<sup>236</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, "A Sermon Preached at the Thanksgiving Service for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Tambaram Conference of the International Missionary Council," *International Review of Mission* 77/307 (July 1988): 325-331; see Dr. Heim's opinion in the report of Jean Stromberg, "Christian Witness in a Pluralistic World," *International Review of Mission* 77/307 (July 1988): 422.

<sup>237</sup> E.g. Stanley J. Samartha, "Mission in a Religiously Plural World: Looking Beyond Tambaram 1938," *International Review of Mission* 77/307 (July 1988): 311-324, esp. 312-313; Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Mission, Dialogue, and God's Will for Us," *International Review of Mission* 77/307 (July 1988): 360-374, esp. 372.

<sup>238</sup> Samartha, "Mission in a Religiously Plural World," 320.

<sup>239</sup> Christopher Duraisingh, "Issues in Mission and Dialogue: Some Reflections," *International Review of Mission* 77/307 (July 1988): 398-411, esp. 403

not as a universally binding truth normative for non-Christians.<sup>240</sup> The questioning of the Christian claim to uniqueness led some who held to exclusivist views like Dr. Heim to propose a distinction between an “exclusivity of rejection and an exclusivity of commitment and love,” preferring the latter.<sup>241</sup> At the end of the consultation, the old questions on the relation of the church to the world emerged unanswered, including: the possible challenge and clarification of Christian understanding of Christ’s uniqueness by the claims of uniqueness of other religions; the saving work of God in other religions, if any; and the work of the Holy Spirit outside the church.<sup>242</sup> What is important to point out with reference to the shaping of the Sign model is that although there have been calls for the rejection or revision of the uniqueness of Christ, these have not been adopted by any official body within the WCC.

The San Antonio Conference pursued some of the issues raised by Tambaram 1988 and worked them, along with the already published *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* and results of other consultations into its Section I report. Here, it was affirmed that the will of God is “[f]inally and uniquely” revealed in Jesus Christ,<sup>243</sup> that Christians desire to ‘confess the life and work of Jesus Christ as unique, decisive, and universally significant’;<sup>244</sup> that the love of God in Christians “creates an

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<sup>240</sup> Duraisingh, “Issues in Mission and Dialogue,” 406-407.

<sup>241</sup> In the report of Jean Stromberg, “Christian Witness in a Pluralistic World,” 422.

<sup>242</sup> “Dialogue and Mission: Issues for Further Study,” 449.

<sup>243</sup> *San Antonio Report*, 25 (1:3).

<sup>244</sup> *San Antonio Report*, 27 (1:7).

urgency to share the gospel invitingly;<sup>245</sup> etc. While admitting God's presence in people of other faiths, it clearly stated that "[w]e cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ" but that "at the same time we cannot set limits on the saving power of God."<sup>246</sup> And then it went on to show the inter-relationship between witness and dialogue stating that "witness does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it."<sup>247</sup> It cautioned against the church taking the posture of judges rather than what they are indeed called to be, namely, witnesses. Nevertheless, it declared that "[i]n affirming the dialogical nature of our witness, we are constrained by grace to affirm that 'salvation is offered to the whole creation through Jesus Christ'.<sup>248</sup> Recognizing a tension between this affirmation and that of God's presence in other faiths, San Antonio confessed: "we appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it."<sup>249</sup> In this way San Antonio joined Vancouver 1983 to continue the ethos of humility in spite of Melbourne 1980's discontinuity.

Whereas Tambaram 1988 still highlighted the unanswered questions in the relation of the Christian gospel to non-Christians, San Antonio highlighted the tension which exists in the affirmation of Christ's uniqueness and the admission of God's grace in non-Christian religions. Unlike Melbourne which was prepared to speak of signs of the kingdom among non-Christians, San Antonio, like Vancouver 1983 and the tradition of the ethos of humility associated with the Sign model, would rather maintain and not

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<sup>245</sup> *San Antonio Report*, 27 (1:7).

<sup>246</sup> *The San Antonio Report*, 31 (4:24) cf. 32 (4:26).

<sup>247</sup> *The San Antonio Report*, 32 (4:27).

<sup>248</sup> *The San Antonio Report*, 29 (4:29).

<sup>249</sup> *The San Antonio Report*, 29 (4:29)

resolve the tension. The highlighting of this general attitude of the ecumenical conferences is not to deny that some, like Duraisingh, have not made and are still not making efforts to resolve the tension. We have also seen that the increasing attack on exclusivist claims have also begun to lead some of those who share such claims to seek for less offensive ways of stating these claims, e.g. Heim's distinction between an "exclusivity of rejection and an exclusivity of commitment and love."

#### **H. Baar 1990: Resolution of the Tension**

The trend of the "ethos of humility," which we have associated with the ecumenical conferences, and which was broken by Melbourne 1980, was again broken in 1990, in a consultation of Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox theologians and some other specialists which took place at Baar, Switzerland in January 1990 to pursue again the question of dialogue.<sup>250</sup> Noting that people of other faiths have witnessed to experiencing God and salvation, this consultation resolved to take this witness "with utmost seriousness" and went on to declare that "among all the nations and peoples there has always been the saving presence of God" and that "the plurality of religious traditions" is "both the result of the manifold ways in which God has related to peoples and nations as well as a manifestation of the richness and diversity of humankind." Also, the consultation continued:

[w]e affirm that God has been present in their seeking and finding, that where there is truth and wisdom in their teaching, and love and holiness of living, this like any wisdom, insight, knowledge, and understanding, love and holiness that is found among us is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We also affirm that God is with them as they struggle, along with us, for justice and liberation.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> The Statement of the Consultation has been published as "The Baar Statement," *Buddhist Christian Studies* 11 (1991):297-301.

<sup>251</sup> "The Baar Statement," 298-299.

Baar, however, also held that the “saving mystery” of God “is mediated and expressed in many and various ways as God’s plan unfolds toward its fulfillment” and that this saving mystery “may be available to those outside the fold of Christ (Jn. 10:6) in ways we cannot understand” through their faithfulness to their religious traditions.<sup>252</sup>

Now, whereas this latter affirmation is one way that the ethos of humility could express God’s presence in other religions, the definite assertion of the “finding” of people of non-Christian religions through their religious experiences is a departure from the ethos of humility. But, as we have seen, this is one of the ways in which the Sign model works out the implications of the broadness of the kingdom. When it does this, however, it is a deviation from the more generally adopted ethos of humility with respect to the world which attempts not to speak too definitely about where God is or is not at work. In any case, Baar 1990 was not a commission or assembly of the WCC but only a meeting of theologians from different church traditions. It is, however, important because it illustrates the different routes taken by commitment to the kingdom in the Sign model. As we have seen, this is not a position that could be said to be the common stand of the ecumenical movement; Melbourne 1980 and possibly Canberra 1991 are the only exceptions to this in ecumenical assemblies and conferences.

To summarize: we have seen that the shaping of the Sign model had an ecclesiological dimension and a dimension with respect to witness. The former dimension of the shaping occurred mainly in the Unity and Unity/Renewal Studies of the Faith and Order between Uppsala 1968 and Canberra 1991 and the latter took place mainly through the activities and conferences of the CWME at Bangkok 1973,

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<sup>252</sup> “The Baar Statement,” 300.

Melbourne 1980 and at San Antonio 1989 and through the Baar Consultation of 1990.

The Nairobi 1975 and Vancouver 1983 assemblies contributed to the two dimensions of the shaping of the model.

We may now summarize the elements of the Sign model that we have encountered in the process of both its ecclesiological shaping and its shaping in terms of witness. Through the ecclesiological shaping of the Sign model, we encountered the following elements: 1) the uniqueness of the church as a living relation to both Jesus and the Holy Spirit; but the church exists in this relation on behalf of the rest of humanity; 2) the church as called to seek the renewal of human community both by solidarity with all forces of life in the world and proclamation of Jesus Christ as the source of the world's hope; 3) the existence of the church in the world as a prophetic sign, instrument and foretaste of Jesus Christ, of his salvation of the world which would culminate in the unity of all things in Christ in the kingdom of God, and of a community of justice and peace in the world; 4) commitment to the unity of the church as an organic unity to be manifested in a eucharistic vision which embraces all creation and which, in the life of the church, is to be seen in a common faith, a common witness and common ways of decision making and learning.

In the shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness some of these elements were repeated and emphasized, but some others were revealed or freshly emphasized. These include: 5) the ethos of humility both with respect to the church and God's activities outside the church, the understanding of which makes the church acknowledge God's activities beyond the church as a reason for praise and not as ground to pinpoint where and how God is or is not present; 6) the understanding of Christian witness as a two-way

process, in which the church witnesses to Christ and is challenged in this witness by God's presence in the lives of the people witnessed to; 7) the understanding of dialogue as an authentic way to witness to non-Christians but which way ought not to preclude the proclamation of Christ and invitation to all humanity including people of non-Christian faiths to come to know Christ as Savior and Lord; 8) the understanding of the world as the sphere of the mission of the triune God to whose edges the church goes from its eucharistic center and whose agenda the church takes as its own; 9) the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ upon whose incarnation, life, death, and resurrection all creation is redeemed and for whose work the church is to be in the world as sign and instrument through solidarity with the broken and poor of the world and proclamation of Christ as Savior and Lord; 10) the inclusion of the non-human world as part of the object of God's world and to which the church's ministry is to be integrally related. It is by comparison of all these elements with those of the Winner model that we shall understand the nature of the change which took place in ecumenical thought. Meanwhile, it is helpful to understand how the seventh assembly of the WCC at Canberra, Australia in 1991 appropriated these elements of the Sign model.

### **III. Canberra 1991 and the Sign Model**

The seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches took place at Canberra, Australia from 7<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> February 1991. Canberra stands unique in the history of WCC assemblies by being the first with a pneumatological focus in its prayer theme: "Come



Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation.”<sup>253</sup> Its pneumatological interest had a great bearing on both its understanding of the church-world relation and its understanding of the uniqueness of Christ. Being an assembly of the WCC it combined the ecclesiological shaping and the shaping in terms of witness of the Sign model which had been taking place since Uppsala 1968. We shall therefore seek the manifestations of these combined shapings in the discussions and decisions of Canberra 1991.

#### **A. Appropriation of the Ecclesiological Dimension**

We may recall that the ecclesiological elements of the Sign model which the Unity and Unity/Renewal Studies revealed include the understanding of the church’s distinctive nature, the expression of the church’s being in the world in terms of the concept of sign and the consequent relation of the church to Christ, to the unity of all humanity in the kingdom of God, and to a habitable society. Yet also, we saw that the Unity of the church was conceived of in terms of a eucharistic vision in which the church is united to God and to all creation but which ought to manifest in the church’s life in a conciliar fellowship with a common confession, a common witness and common ways of decision making and teaching authoritatively. Canberra appropriated and furthered all these elements of the Sign model.

Canberra, like the general trend of the Sign model, related the church to both Christ and the Holy Spirit: at Pentecost, the church was constituted by the Holy Spirit “to

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<sup>253</sup> The official report of Canberra has been published as Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991* (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), hereafter cited as *Canberra Report*.

become the fullness of the body of Christ in history.”<sup>254</sup> However, more consciously than earlier trends, Canberra highlighted the church’s relation to the Trinity and showed how the Holy Spirit works this out in the church’s life.<sup>255</sup> Thus, according to Canberra, it is the Holy Spirit who draws the church “to model its life on the relationship of the Trinity and draws the people of God into the community of the Holy Trinity,” whose communion is the church’s paradigm.<sup>256</sup> Canberra’s understanding of the Trinity was, however, no substantive movement away from the previous ecumenical assemblies as its view was also strongly shaped by the centrality of Christ.<sup>257</sup> Still, the emphasis on the Holy Spirit came to a greater prominence at Canberra.

As was also the trend of the Sign model, the nature of the church’s presence in the world was described as “sign” and “instrument.”<sup>258</sup> Hence, the church was seen as called by God to be in the world as “a sign and sacrament of the kingdom of God among the nations.”<sup>259</sup> But unlike the earlier practices within the Sign model in which for fear of triumphalism the church’s instrumental nature was minimized and the idea of the church as sacrament was contested, at Canberra the instrumental nature of the church was prominent in at least two ways. In the first way, it directly spoke of the church as “an

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<sup>254</sup> *Canberra Report*, 113 (3:12) – Report of Section IV; cf. 67 (3:48-49).

<sup>255</sup> Even before the assembly, Ans van der Brent had noted that if Canberra adopts a developed Trinitarian theology it could possible give a new perspective to a new was forward. See Ans van der Bent, “A Renewed Ecumenical Movement,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/2 (April 1991): 172-177 at 175.

<sup>256</sup> *Canberra Report*, 113 (3:14) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>257</sup> See e.g. *Canberra Report*, 54 (1:1) – Report of Section I; 73 (1:1) – Report of Section II; this latter section, for example, began with freedom of Christ before the leading of the Spirit into truth.

<sup>258</sup> E.g. *Canberra Report*, 67 (3:49) – Report of Section I; *Canberra Report*, 99 – Report of Section III, etc.

<sup>259</sup> *Canberra Report*, 113 (3:12) – Report of Section IV.

instrument of God's saving and transforming purpose."<sup>260</sup> In this sense, the church is "a redeemed community" with "a crucial role in the renewal of creation" through the power of the Holy Spirit in which it is enabled to be "a life-giving, healing and sustaining community where the wounded and the broken derive wholeness and renewal."<sup>261</sup> But rather than the Winner model's exclusive understanding of the church in relation to the wholeness and renewal of the world, the Sign model simply sees the church as "a" and not "the" community for this purpose. In the second way, Canberra argues from the holiness of the church that since the church is holy and becoming holy by the Holy Spirit's work within it, it is, therefore, "a place where sanctification and transformation occur" in spite of its failures.<sup>262</sup> In these and other ways Canberra continued the sign concept of the church emphasizing its instrumental nature.

The particular way in which Canberra highlighted the nature of the church's ministry in the world was by the concept of "koinonia" or communion.<sup>263</sup> Through this concept it emphasized God's mission in the world as the gathering of the whole creation under the Lordship of Christ through the Holy Spirit into "koinonia" or communion with

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<sup>260</sup> *Canberra Report*, 99 – Report of Section III.

<sup>261</sup> *Canberra Report*, 67 (3:49-50) – Report of Section I.

<sup>262</sup> *Canberra Report*, 113 (3:13) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>263</sup> The idea of koinonia, though an old concept, and in much use in Roman Catholicism, became a prominent way to describe God's relation with the world in the late 1980s and was incorporated marginally into the Dublane document as a way of describing the church's instrumental nature. The Central Committee in 1987 requested the Faith and Order Commission to prepare a paper for Canberra 1991 on the unity which the church seeks. This paper was titled "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling," and was discussed and amended by Section III of Canberra and adopted by the assembly. It is printed as part of the Report of the General Secretary in *Canberra Report*, 172-174. Santiago de Compostela was later to expand the concept of koinonia. For de Compostela's official report see: Thomas F. Best and Günther Gassmann, ed., *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, Faith and Order Paper no. 166 (Geneva: WCC, 1994)

God<sup>264</sup> It was of this communion with God that the church is a “foretaste.”<sup>265</sup> And it was also towards this communion with God that the church’s mission was to be directed, since the church’s mission is really a participation in God’s mission in the world. Hence the church’s duty is

to unite people with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom.<sup>266</sup>

This means that the church shares “in God’s own mission of bringing all humanity into communion with God through Christ in the power of the Spirit.”<sup>267</sup>

In the life of the church, this communion was to result in a unity promoted by the Holy Spirit towards a common confession of the apostolic faith, common sacramental life, and a common mutual recognition of ministries, expressed at both local and global levels in the richness of diversities harmonized by the Holy Spirit.<sup>268</sup> However, and apparently in direct response to the discussions raised in the assembly due to the plenary presentation of Professor Chung Hyun Kyung, Canberra set limits on the church’s diversity. Any diversity which renders impossible “the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour the same yesterday, today and forever” and which compromises “the salvation and the final destiny of humanity as proclaimed in holy

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<sup>264</sup> *Canberra Report*, 172 (1:1) – Unity of the Church as Koinonia.

<sup>265</sup> *Canberra Report*, 172 (1:1) – Unity of the Church as Koinonia.

<sup>266</sup> *Canberra Report*, 172 (1:1) cf. (1:2) – Unity of the Church as Koinonia.

<sup>267</sup> *Canberra Report*, 3 – Message.

<sup>268</sup> *Canberra Report*, 173 (2:1) – Unity of the Church as Koinonia.

scripture and preached by the apostolic community” was considered as “illegitimate.”<sup>269</sup>

Whereas for the church the goal of visible unity is the expected manifestation of this communion of God with all creation, Canberra agreed that the churches’ inability to realize this goal should not prevent them from working together, noting that the churches’ “common endeavor in the world may further the unity of the church.”<sup>270</sup>

The church’s unity, as Canberra understood it, was also to be co-extensive with God’s unity of creation. Since the communion which God seeks to realize in Jesus Christ was to include all humanity and all creation, the church’s unity was related both to the whole of humanity and to the whole of creation, that is, to the “all things” which are to be reconciled to God through Christ. The idea of unity with all creation may be traced to at least the New Delhi 1961 assembly, but in the 1990s it became a staple of ecumenical endeavors. The Unity/Renewal Study of the 1980s showed how this was such a dominant thought especially in the post-Uppsala 1968 years. This commitment to creation was argued by Section I on the ground of redemption: the triune God, as the author of life who in Jesus Christ has reconciled creation to God and is present in creation

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<sup>269</sup> *Canberra Report*, 173, 174 – Unity of the Church as Koinonia. Professor Chung, in her presentation, invoked some of the ancestral spirits of Korea. Following this, Canberra spent a lot of time in official and unofficial discussions about the limits of diversity. Some thought her presentation reflected the richness of diversity and others thought it was syncretistic. It is probably this which informed the position in Section III’s report that the Holy Spirit is distinct from all “other” spirits benign or demonic. 112 (2:9). The Orthodox did not fail to insist that catholicity is the basis of diversity. See e.g., Nicholas Lossky, “The Promise and the Outcome,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/2 (April 1991): 211-216, esp. 214. For examples of the debates at Canberra see the contributions of K. C. Abraham, “Syncretism is not the Issue: A Response to Professor Chung Hyun Kyung;” Konrad Raiser, “Beyond Tradition and Context: In Search of an Ecumenical Framework of Hermeneutics;” Tso Man King, “Theological Controversy in Canberra: A Reflection;” all respectively in *International Review of Mission* 80/319-320 (July/Oct., 1991): 339-346, 347-354, 355-360. In addition to these, many of the reflections on Canberra in *The Ecumenical Review* 43/2 (April 1991) made reference to this debate as the most crucial issue at Canberra.

<sup>270</sup> *Canberra Report*, 100 – Report of Section III. It is important to note that this apparent disinterest in faith and order issues was strongly resisted by the Orthodox Church. *Canberra Report*, 279-280.

through the Holy Spirit, “binds us as human beings together with all created life” and enables us to begin to experience “God’s future.”<sup>271</sup> It also argued the point from the sacrament as was done by the earlier Unity/Renewal Study: since the elements of water, bread and wine in the sacraments all represent creation, it argued, the sacraments represent God’s continued relation to creation and God’s call to the church to participate in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.<sup>272</sup> Section IV of Canberra thought that this communion of God with all creation should lead to an “ethos of holiness,” which, because all life comes from and returns to God, “requires holding an attitude towards all that exists as if it by nature belonged to God.”<sup>273</sup> This, it was thought, would obviate “anthropomorphism” but should not necessarily lead to the sacralization of nature.<sup>274</sup>

Thus, because God has already reconciled all things to Godself through the cross of Christ, humanity is called to commitment to creation as its “servants, stewards and trustees, as tillers and keepers, as priests of creation, as nurturers, as co-creators.”<sup>275</sup> This unity of God with all creation is also to find reflection in every aspect and situation of human life. It is to be a unity between body and soul, subject and object, and matter and spirit. It is to be found in socio-economic realms between production and consumption, and development and growth. It is to be in socio-political realms, between industrialized

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<sup>271</sup> *Canberra Report*, 54-5 (1:1-2) – Report of Section I

<sup>272</sup> *Canberra Report*, 119 (10:50) – Report of Section IV; cf. 57 (1:12) – Report of Section I

<sup>273</sup> *Canberra Report*, 116 (6:36) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>274</sup> *Canberra Report*, 116 (6:37) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>275</sup> *Canberra Report*, 55 (1:2)

and non-industrialized nations, and between rich and poor countries.<sup>276</sup> This means that ecclesiology was being related here to creation. This understanding of the church's mission to creation based upon God's purpose for creation was lacking in the Winner model but was an element of the Sign model which had come to stay by Canberra 1991.<sup>277</sup>

Canberra, then, continued and deepened all the elements of the ecclesiological shaping of the Sign model but restated them in terms of the concept of "koinonia" or communion. The church's place in the world was seen as a redeemed and life-giving community by the Holy Spirit. The church is a foretaste of the koinonia of God with the whole creation. This was the way that the Sign model was manifested at Canberra. The difference between Canberra and the model prior to it is the emphasis on the instrumental nature of the church.

## **B. Appropriation of the Witness Dimension**

Canberra also appropriated the emerging elements of the Sign model in terms of witness. Like the general trend of the Sign model, it affirmed the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ. As already pointed out, Canberra declared as illegitimate any Christian diversity which does not allow for the declaration of Jesus Christ as God and Savior. It also noted that its "conviction that Jesus Christ through the action of the

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<sup>276</sup> *Canberra Report*, 60 (2:19) – Report of Section I.

<sup>277</sup> This point has been made in a different way by Philip Potter. See, "Mission as Reconciliation in the Power of the Spirit," *International Review of Mission* 80/319-320 (July/October, 1991): 305-314. I shall show later that while Philip Potter is right to perceive a change between Canberra and the pre-Uppsala.

Holy Spirit is 'God's saving presence for all' is not hesitant or partial."<sup>278</sup> This position was nowhere denied in the documents of Canberra and has not been denied in any official document of the WCC, in spite of the fact that many individuals and some members of staff of the WCC have often called for positions which lacked such absoluteness. The comments of Christopher Duraisingh and Stanley J. Samartha at Tambaram 1988 are two illustrations.

Canberra also continued "the ethos of humility" in its understanding of the relation of the church to non-Christian religions. It held that

The Holy Spirit is at work among all peoples and faiths, and throughout the universe. With the sovereign freedom which belongs to God the Wind blows wherever it wants. Recognizing this, the church rejoices in being nourished by the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the word and sacraments, thereby participating in salvation.<sup>279</sup>

Evidently, here, Canberra did not go the way of Melbourne 1980 or Baar 1990 but rather that of Bangkok 1973, Vancouver 1983 and San Antonio 1989, which we have described as the ethos of humility. Perhaps to correct the opinions of those who, as Margaret Rodgers reported, seemed to hold to a pneumatology which was neither linked to Christ nor founded in Scripture,<sup>280</sup> Canberra clearly stated that "[t]he Holy Spirit cannot be understood apart from the life of the Holy Trinity"<sup>281</sup> and that "the primary criterion for

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<sup>278</sup> *Canberra Report*, 101 – Report of Section III.

<sup>279</sup> *Canberra Report*, 116-117 (6:38) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>280</sup> Margaret Rodgers, "An Australian Assessment," *The Ecumenical Review* 43/2 (April 1991): 183-193 at 186.

<sup>281</sup> *Canberra Report*, 112 (2:9) – Report of Section IV.



discerning the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ” who “points to the cross and resurrection and witnesses to the Lordship of Christ.”<sup>282</sup>

However, Canberra was not as careful as Bangkok 1973, Vancouver 1983 or San Antonio 1989. It sometimes placed its affirmation of Christian uniqueness in such a way that dulls the force of this affirmation and was more open to discerning the Spirit of God in non-Christian religions. For example, it saw, as another criterion of discerning the Spirit in non-Christian religions, “the fruits of the Spirit, among them love, joy and peace.”<sup>283</sup> It also noted that the task of renewal of human community requires of the church a “continuing discernment of God’s creative activity in the world,”<sup>284</sup> and insisted that “dialogue challenges us to discern the fruits of the Spirit in the way God deals with all humanity.”<sup>285</sup> One example which muddles up Canberra’s claim to Christian uniqueness was when it noted that while we Christians have come to know God through Jesus Christ we

also recognize that other people testify to knowing God through other ways. We witness to the truth that salvation is in Christ and we also remain open to other people’s witness to truth as they have experienced it.<sup>286</sup>

All these citations are, to say the least, ambiguous.

These and other similar examples may have informed Margaret Rodger’s opinion that at Canberra was “an apparent movement” away from the position of San Antonio and

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<sup>282</sup> *Canberra Report* 117 (6:39) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>283</sup> *Canberra Report*, 117 (6:39) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>284</sup> *Canberra Report*, 67 (3:53) – Report of Section I. Recall the problematic nature of the idea of God’s “creative” work in the world at Vancouver.

<sup>285</sup> *Canberra Report*, 104 – Report of Section III.

<sup>286</sup> *Canberra Report*, 104 – Report of Section III.

that at times it “appeared to be operating in a relativizing mode which placed Christianity alongside other faiths as one of the pathways to God.”<sup>287</sup> Similarly, the Roman Catholic, Michael Fitzgerald thought that while at Vancouver delegates had been divided over the possibility of discerning signs of the Spirit in the experiences of non-Christian people, this seemed to have been readily accepted at Canberra.<sup>288</sup> This also may account for the Orthodox observation at Canberra concerning “an *increasing departure from the Basis of the WCC*” and the dearth in “the affirmation that Jesus Christ is the world’s Savior,” etc.<sup>289</sup> Yet also, it may account for the comment of the evangelicals concerning Canberra’s “insufficient clarity” regarding the relationship between Jesus Christ as God and Savior, the work of the Holy Spirit, and WCC legitimate concerns.<sup>290</sup> But as shown by the report of the Report Committee, which sought to integrate the comments (written and spoken) made at the plenary into a single report, more care was taken to avoid all these extremes especially the pinpointing of the Spirit in non-Christian religions.<sup>291</sup> Hence an apparent return to the ethos of humility.

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<sup>287</sup> Rodger, “An Australian Assessment,” 188.

<sup>288</sup> Michael Fitzgerald, “Mission in Canberra,” *International Review of Mission* 80/319-320 (July/Oct. 1991): 315-326, at 323.

<sup>289</sup> *Canberra Report*, 280 – Reflections of Orthodox Participants; cf. Nicholas Lossky, “the Promise and the Outcome,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/2 (April 1991): 211-216.

<sup>290</sup> “Evangelical Perspectives from Canberra,” *Canberra Report*, 282-286, esp. 283.

<sup>291</sup> For this report, which was only finally approved by the Central Committee as a result of insufficient time for discussion, see *Canberra Report*, 235-258. This report avoided the confusion of the language of the original report especially in terms of discerning the Spirit in other religions. It says: “The Biblical list of ‘fruits’ of the Spirit, including love, joy and peace, is another criterion to be applied (Gal. 5:22) [in discerning the Spirit]. These criteria should be remembered in our encounters with the often-profound spirituality of other religions.” 256 (4:93). This is evidently more carefully worded. It shows that the ethos of humility was continued at Canberra.

While it cannot be denied that Canberra affirmed the uniqueness of Christ, it would seem that at least in Canberra there was an openness to the discerning of the Spirit's work in non-Christian religions. But this openness was apparently questioned, hence the care of the report of the Report Committee. In any case, Canberra's position has to be held along with the view that the Spirit's Christological bearing is the "primary criterion" of discerning the Spirit.<sup>292</sup> The most that can be said was that Canberra lacked sufficient clarity on its position. This lack of clarity may have partly informed Donna Geernaert's view that Canberra lacked focus.<sup>293</sup> However, what would seem clear is that while Canberra's position did not remain altogether consistent with the ethos of humility, it did not go as far off the ecumenical tradition as Melbourne 1980 or Baar 1990, which categorically attributed salvific significance to non-Christian religions. That Canberra did not really make an improvement on San Antonio 1989 seems to be confirmed by the fact that the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism at Salvador, Brazil in November of 1996 returned in this matter to San Antonio's position rather than to Canberra's which seems to be really muddled up.<sup>294</sup>

Apart from the ethos of humility, Canberra also affirmed the other elements of the Sign model in terms of witness. It affirmed that the reconciled community that the church seeks "can only be found through Jesus" and that the reconciliation on the cross is

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<sup>292</sup> *Canberra Report*, 117 (6:39) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>293</sup> Donna Geernaert, "A Lack of Focus?" *The Ecumenical Review* 43/2 (April 1991): 206-210. Michael E. Putney thought that at Canberra the Faith and Order and the Life and Work seem to be diverging without any point of meeting. He thinks that the ecumenical family needs a criterion for authentic Christian theology. "Ecumenical Moments," *The Ecumenical Review* 43/2 (April 1991): 226-228.

<sup>294</sup> Christopher Duraisingh, ed., *Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures* (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 60-64; cf. Duraisingh's comments in this regard on p. 205.

the basis of the church's mission. It affirmed that the whole church is to share the whole gospel with the whole world, that is, all peoples locally and globally. The gospel is to be communicated by preaching, teaching and healing all held together. The church is to be in solidarity with those who suffer, especially the poor and oppressed and to pursue Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). It emphasized evangelism as "a vital part of mission." This is to be done by the whole church in communities of sharing. In this, it emphasized the mutuality of witness that was already a common place in the Sign model.<sup>295</sup> It also affirmed the place of dialogue with other faiths and ideologies, and with science and technology as all ways of community building.<sup>296</sup>

The idea of Canberra in which mission was seen as "sharing" seems to highlight what has been the deepest concern of the Sign model. Since New Delhi 1961 the idea of mutuality in witness has been encountered in ecumenical meetings. For Canberra, this was expressed as sharing. Mission then is no longer taking to the world what it lacked but the sharing with the world from the fullness of God already present and available to all. "Sharing means giving and receiving by all to one another to effect reconciliation and to promote growing together."<sup>297</sup> This is perhaps the distinctive emphasis of Canberra in its appropriation of the Sign model. Canberra's Section I expressed its vision as "people of different faiths beginning to learn from each other's spirituality and inspiration while developing practical examples in commitment to community and

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<sup>295</sup> *Canberra Report*, 100-101 – Report of Section III.

<sup>296</sup> *Canberra Report*, 104-107 – Report of Section III.

<sup>297</sup> *Canberra Report*, 102 – Report of Section III.

sharing.”<sup>298</sup> The Report of the Report Committee also emphasized the idea of the church’s mission as sharing stating that this “includes sharing faith, sharing power, sharing material resources,” noting that such sharing encourages reconciliation.<sup>299</sup> The unity of humankind was not to be realized through winning others but in mutual sharing of what everyone has. The world thus is not alone in need of what the church has but the church was also in need of what the world has. This is the new perspective to mission which the Sign model in its mature form at Canberra expresses.

At Canberra, then, we notice a general appropriation of the elements of the Sign model as they emerged from 1969 to 1991. Canberra, however, also revealed a tendency to depart from the ethos of humility even though it did not go as far as Melbourne 1980 or Baar 1990. But it had revealed that the Sign model was ultimately a model of mutual sharing as a way of approximating the reconciliation of all things in Christ and not of winning others for Christ. In this sharing, the church exists as a sign to the world of what the world is to ultimately become.

#### IV. Conclusion: The Sign Journey in Summary

Uppsala 1968 was a manifestation of the triumph of the Sign model over the Winner model. Uppsala was also a climax of the trends in the ecumenical movement with respect to the *humanum*, the relationship between the church and the world, and the relationship between the unity of the church and that of humankind. Uppsala, therefore, approved the study, Unity of the Church – Unity of Humankind (Unity Study). It was especially in the processes of this study that the first forms of the ecclesiological shaping

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<sup>298</sup> *Canberra Report*, 59 – Report of Section I.

<sup>299</sup> *Canberra Report*, 252 (3:73).

of the Sign model took place. The study began in 1969 and was concluded with Accra 1974's "Unity in Tension." After the Unity Study, the church-world study of the Faith and Order was continued in the study "Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community." This study was completed in two stages, from 1981-1984 and from 1984-1990. The process of the Unity and Unity/Renewal Studies revealed that essential to the Sign model were: the understanding of the church's uniqueness in terms of its relation to Christ and to the Holy Spirit and therefore its distinction from the world; the church's nature in the world as a sign of Christ, of the unity of all humanity in the kingdom of God and of a community of justice, peace and the integrity of creation; the nature of the church's unity was to be that which involves a common confession, a common witness, and common ways of decision making and teaching authoritatively. Canberra appropriated all these elements and furthered them especially by its belief that God's purpose for creation was reconciliation of all creation to God and for koinonia with God.

The shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness took place chiefly in CWME consultations and conferences and in the WCC assembly at Vancouver. Bangkok 1973 set the legacy of the "ethos of humility" in terms of witness. In this ethos, God's work outside the church was admitted as a truth to encourage praise of God's mysteries and not as a ground to pinpoint where and how God is or is not at work. Nairobi 1975 emphasized the place of evangelism in the church's holistic witness and held both personal experiential change and the witness for justice and freedom as integral to the gospel. Chiang Mai 1977 and the *Guidelines on Dialogues* that arose from it revealed three purposes of dialogue: 1) the building of local communities of humankind; 2) the fulfilling of the Christian calling to love one's neighbor; and 3) the understanding of the

faith of one's neighbor. These reasons for dialogue were consistently maintained through ecumenical thought; dialogue was never seen as a ground for faith unification among religions. Melbourne 1980 made the poor a missional criterion and saw them as legitimate agents of mission rather than mere objects of the church's charity. It also highlighted proclamation as emanating from the local eucharistic community, as always contextual, as having as message Jesus Christ who is Lord and Savior. Melbourne was different from earlier conferences in suggesting that non-Christian religions touch and find God in their seeking and that signs of the kingdom exist among them, especially in their commitments to justice and freedom. However, Melbourne did not see these signs of the kingdom as apart from Christ, having also held to the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ. The 1982 *Mission and Evangelism* may be seen as unique in pulling together the current ideas of ecumenical thought and especially in highlighting the planting of churches as belonging to the "heart" of mission. Vancouver 1983 clarified the distinctions between witness and dialogue and apparently corrected Melbourne 1980's over-confidence with respect to non-Christian religions. Tambaram 1988 revealed the lingering ecumenical questions on the understanding of non-Christian religions and the efforts to reformulate Christian exclusivist claims. San Antonio 1989 continued the legacy of the "ethos of humility," setting the relationship between the uniqueness of Christ and the presence of God in non-Christian religions as a "tension" to be appreciated rather than resolved. Baar 1990 continued the line of Melbourne 1980 and found the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions. Canberra fluctuated between the ethos of humility and Melbourne 1980/Baar 1990 on its position with respect to non-Christian religions. However, the report of the Report Committee shows that the

ethos of humility was the final position which Canberra took. San Antonio 1989 seemed to have been the climax of ecumenical thought as it, rather than Canberra 1991, was later to be followed by Salvador 1996.

In our concluding chapter we shall summarize the elements of the two models as we have discovered them, establish the nature of the change that has taken place in ecumenism and then analyze some of these changes in terms of their theological legitimacy or implications.



## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **CONCLUSION: THE CHANGING FACE OF ECUMENISM**

In this chapter we shall attempt to summarize the work done in the preceding chapters, describe the nature of the change which has taken place in ecumenism and analyze some of the details of the theological change in ecumenical thought. We shall then offer a conclusion of this work. As part of our conclusion it would be asked if the Sign model is not consistent with a Reformed understanding of God's sovereignty.

#### **I. Summary of the Chapters**

We have attempted in this dissertation to show the changes in ecumenical thought by means of two models, the "Church as Winner of the World" and the "Church as Sign to the World." The former model describes that understanding of the church-world relation in which the church was seen as called to win the world for Christ by means of the Christian gospel and thereby to realize the oneness of humanity. The latter model describes that understanding of the church-world relation in which the church is not to stand over against the world or to win it for Christ but is to be in solidarity with it as a sign to it of God's reconciliation of all things in Christ. These models were introduced in the first chapter.

In chapter two we traced the shaping of the Winner model from the nineteenth century through Whitby 1947. We saw that Christ was seen as unique and universally relevant as God and Savior. And because only in Christianity is Christ fully revealed, all

other religions were seen as aberrations of the truth and, therefore, as false. It was important, then, to be a Christian in order to be saved. The church saw its task as that of winning the world for Christ through the preaching of the gospel which was primarily verbal and secondarily social. It is in this way, through Christianization, that the unity of humanity was considered possible. The church, therefore, was to be united for the sake of its mission in the world. This was the Winner model in its original form.

Edinburgh 1910 maintained this model but made minor adjustments which further defined the model ethically, ecclesiologically and evangelistically. Ethics, preaching and social work were drawn closer together as inseparable aspects of the one gospel and the eschatological notion of the kingdom of God was emphasized as founded in redemption through Christ and as being a socio-ethical concept. Ecclesiologically, the need for unity in faith as necessary for the church's effective witness began to emerge and as such a deeper unity than comity was stressed. Evangelistically, though a comparatively better view of non-Christian religions emerged at Edinburgh, it was essentially the position of the nineteenth century that was repeated. Hence non-Christian religions were seen as false and lacking of salvific values. The best they stood for were as preparations for the gospel.

Between Edinburgh 1910 and Amsterdam 1948, several other modifications took place in the Winner model in these three aspects but the one controlling commitment was the church's call to win the world for Christ. That understanding did not shift. Liverpool 1912, Lausanne 1925 and Oxford 1937 contributed to the ethical shaping of the Winner model. At Liverpool 1912, the ethical shaping was continued with social-ethics drawn closer into the gospel and the criterion of "humanity" emphasized for mission and ethics.

At Stockholm 1925 the church's socio-ethical uniqueness was shown to lie in the spiritual ideal of the kingdom of God. Though initially naïve with respect to the importance of unity in the church's life and witness, having held that doctrine divides and service unites, Stockholm 1925 did not get far into its meeting before it learned otherwise. At Oxford 1937, the context of totalitarian states led to the emphasis on humanity's true worth as existing in relationship with God. Oxford checked the idealism of Stockholm with respect to the church's socio-ethical participation in two ways: by an admission that the church can only appropriate the ideal of the kingdom of God ambivalently, being itself a human and sinful community; and by realizing the place of inter-disciplinary studies (and not the church's pontification alone) for social ethics. Through these conferences the need for the church to hold its distinctiveness from the state but not in total separation was emphasized.

The Faith and Order conferences at Lausanne 1927 and Oxford 1937 contributed in shaping the ecclesiological elements of the Winner model. These conferences attempted to explore the church's unity in order for it to be an effective winner of the world. Though without an agreement on the church's nature, at Lausanne 1925 the church's one message was declared to be Jesus Christ. At Edinburgh 1937, the church's uniqueness in God's purposes for the world was stated in such a way that the church was seen as the sphere of redemption.

The International Missionary Council meetings at Jerusalem 1928, Madras 1938 and Whitby 1947 set the evangelistic understanding of the Winner model which Amsterdam inherited and somewhat modified. At the IMC meeting at Jerusalem 1928, the universal need for the gospel was emphasized and that began to shape mission in such

a way that the idea of mission as what the Western nations alone did began to be questioned. This continued through Madras 1938 and Whitby 1947. At Whitby 1947, the concept of mission as “partnership in obedience” between the older and younger churches came to stay. Also at Whitby, the place of evangelism in mission was highlighted. Madras 1938, following the idea of Oxford 1937 and Edinburgh 1937 in which the church is the one and only redeemed community, centered mission around the church, making the church the goal of mission. Through all these recastings of the Winner model, the elements of the uniqueness of Christ and the church’s calling based upon this to win the world for Christ that it may be saved did not change.

In chapter three we showed the tensions which the Winner model faced as a result of challenges from emphases in Christology, the concept of *missio Dei*, eschatology and the cosmos. We saw that Amsterdam 1948 inherited the Winner model from the earlier ecumenical tradition but accented its Christological element by emphasizing Christ as the winner. This was feared by some to be detrimental to the church’s prophetic witness but Amsterdam did not fall into that error. Rather it emphasized both Christ as the winner and the church’s task of winning the world for Christ through Christianization. Lund 1952 continued this Christological accenting of the Winner model by linking the church and Christ indissolubly together in such a way that Christ’s cosmological relevance was apparently only understood in terms of the church’s mission. Some wondered if this identification was not a realistic interpretation of the idea of the church as the body of Christ, an idea which is meant to be metaphoric. Concerns were also raised whether this did not imply the church’s pre-existence, thereby compromising the church’s historical character as an event which began on the Day of Pentecost.

At Willingen 1952, the emphasis on mission as the work of the Trinitarian God who is already at work in the world raised questions in three areas. If the triune God was at work in the world outside the church, is the redemptive work of Christ not secondary and the church dispensable? And what does it say about the status of the world? Willingen responded by emphasizing the centrality of the work of Christ which led to the cross in God's mission, maintaining that the church is an essential part of God's mission of redemption in the world. The cosmos was seen as the sphere of God's actions. While Willingen was still a place of experimentation, the understanding of both the church and the world in God's mission had begun to be challenged. Here seeds had begun to emerge of the Sign model: the position on the church as the sphere of redemption had begun to be softened and voices were now being raised about the need to see the world rather than the church as the sphere of God's redeeming and judging actions. Questions therefore emerged concerning the relation between creation and the eschaton and the work of Christ in the church and his work in the world. At the WCC assembly at Evanston 1954, the place of Christ as the hope of the world placed the questions of Willingen 1952 in sharper relief. An additional coloring of this question emerged as Evanston's theme highlighted the need for clarification of the relationship between the church and the world and that between Christian hope and non-Christian hopes. Here the Winner model was being questioned on issues formerly taken for granted. Elements of the Sign model were emerging. This reveals tensions for the Winner model through the questioning of issues once taken for granted in the model and at the same time reveals some elements of the emerging Sign model.

Attempts to understand how Christ's cosmic Lordship relates to the world were the concerns of the Lordship Studies of the late 1950s and early 1960s. These studies, though shedding some light on the issues, could not definitely answer the basic question of the relationship between redemptive history and general history and between the church and the world. Nevertheless, they highlighted the place of the concepts of sin and eschatology in understanding the church's relation to the world, the church's distinctive mission in the world and its essential nature in God's purpose for the world. Joseph Sittler's "cosmic christology" at New Delhi 1961, while raising the awareness of the cosmos and Christ's relation to it to a height, did not clear up the crucial issues. However, New Delhi highlighted the importance of non-Christian religions and initiated the place of "dialogue" with them and solidarity with all humanity. At Montreal 1963 the relationship between general history and salvation history was not only unclear but led to a chaos in the meeting, since participants had too much on which to disagree. Also, the New Testament witness to Christ was seen as multiple and not singular, thereby challenging the basis of the Christological method of ecumenical discussion. In addition to this, some at Montreal rejected the notion of "non-theological factors" in ecumenical discussion; all spheres of human existence were theological, they said. Mexico City 1963 emphasized secularization and dialogue as holding potentials for progress. Geneva 1966 had to confront the implications for the church of the scientific, technological and revolutionary forces in the world and the concept of the "*humanum*" was highlighted as a socio-ethical criterion. In the study on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation the church was defined by its apostolicity alone and therefore seen as dispensable in God's purpose. God's redemptive work in creation was clearly affirmed. Bristol 1967, though

apparently with an openness to the redemption of God outside the church saw the need for a clearer relation of the unity of the church to that of humankind and for a way of understanding secular movements of peace and social justice which neither conflates secularist goals with the gospel nor leads to withdrawal of the church from the world.

Uppsala 1968 worked all these developments into a triumph of the Sign model over the Winner model. The world was taken seriously as the sphere of God's action and as the place where the church's agenda was to be set. The uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ was affirmed especially by means of the concept of catholicity. The church's mission in the world was understood as sign of the ultimate reconciliation of all things in Christ which called the church into solidarity with the world in its brokenness. Non-Christian religions and scientific, technological and revolutionary forces are to be dialogued with for the bettering of human society, but this was not to preclude proclamation of the good news or their conversion into the church, although this was now to be done by mutual witness. While redemption was no longer limited to the church, the distinctness of the church's unity and catholicity from any other catholicity was nevertheless maintained.

Yet the questions raised by Bristol 1967 lingered, especially the relation of the church's pursuit of unity to the unity of humankind and the criteria for evaluating secular movements of peace and justice which would neither identify them with the church nor exclude the church from them. These concerns influenced the shaping of the Sign model in the post-Uppsala 1968 years. The processes of this shaping and how they define the ecumenical movement between its fourth assembly at Uppsala 1968 and its seventh assembly at Canberra 1991 were the concern of chapter four.

In chapter four, then, we saw that the further shaping of the Sign model after Uppsala 1968 took place primarily in the Unity and the Unity/Renewal Studies of the Faith and Order from 1969 to 1990 and in the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism between Uppsala 1968 and Canberra 1991. The former shaped it ecclesiological, the latter shaped it in terms of witness. The WCC assemblies at Nairobi in 1975 and Vancouver in 1983 contributed to both aspects of the shaping. The ecclesiological shaping of the Sign model in both the Unity and Unity/Renewal Studies revealed that the Sign model could be distinguished by a number of characteristics: 1) by its understanding of the church as unique in its relationship to both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and therefore, that the church's pursuit of unity was not to be confused with any other pursuit of unity; 2) by its understanding of the church as called to seek the renewal of human community through solidarity with all forces of life in the world, proclamation of Jesus Christ as the source of the world's hope, and loving example; 3) by its understanding of the church as existing in the world as a prophetic sign, instrument and foretaste of Jesus Christ, of the ultimate reconciliation of all things in Christ, and of a community of justice and peace in the world; 4) by its understanding of the nature of the unity which the church seeks as being an organic unity to be manifested in a eucharistic vision which embraces all creation and which, in the life of the church, is to be seen in a common faith, a common witness and common ways of decision making and teaching authoritatively.

The shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness was initiated by the CWME at Bangkok in 1973. Bangkok 1973 established the legacy of the "ethos of humility" in terms of witness. In this ethos, God's work outside the church was admitted as a truth to



encourage praise of God's mysteries and not as a ground to pinpoint where and how God is or is not at work. Nairobi 1975 emphasized the place of evangelism in the church's holistic witness and held both personal experiential change and the witness for justice and freedom as integral to the gospel. Chiang Mai 1977 and the *Guidelines on Dialogues* that arose from it revealed three purposes of dialogue: 1) the building of local communities of humankind; 2) the fulfilling of the Christian calling to love one's neighbor; and 3) the understanding of the faith of one's neighbor. These reasons for dialogue were consistently maintained through ecumenical thought; dialogue was never seen as a ground for faith unification among religions. Melbourne 1980 made the poor a missional criterion and saw them as legitimate agents of mission rather than mere objects of the church's charity. It also highlighted proclamation as emanating from the local eucharistic community, as always contextual, as having as message Jesus Christ who is Lord and Savior. Melbourne was different from earlier conferences in suggesting that non-Christian religions touch and find God in their seeking and that signs of the kingdom exist among them, especially in their commitments to justice and freedom. However, Melbourne did not see these signs of the kingdom as apart from Christ, also holding to the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ. The 1982 *Mission and Evangelism* may be seen as unique in pulling together the current ideas of ecumenical thought and especially in highlighting the planting of churches as belonging to the "heart" of mission. Vancouver 1983 clarified the distinctions between witness and dialogue and apparently corrected Melbourne 1980's over-confidence with respect to non-Christian religions. Tambaram 1988 revealed the lingering ecumenical questions on the understanding of non-Christian religions and the efforts to reformulate Christian exclusivist claims. San

Antonio 1989 continued the legacy of the “ethos of humility,” seeing the relationship between the uniqueness of Christ and the presence of God in non-Christian religions as a “tension” to be appreciated rather than resolved. Baar 1990 continued the line of Melbourne 1980 and found the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions. Canberra fluctuated between the ethos of humility and Melbourne 1980/Baar 1990 in its position with respect to non-Christian religions. However, the Report of the Report Committee shows that the ethos of humility was the final position which Canberra took. San Antonio 1989 seemed to have been the climax of ecumenical thought in this respect as it, rather than Canberra 1991, was later to be followed by Salvador 1996.

In the shaping of the Sign model in terms of witness some of the elements encountered in the ecclesiological shaping were repeated and emphasized, but some others were revealed or freshly emphasized. These may be summarized as follows: 1) the ethos of humility both with respect to the church and God’s activities outside the church, the understanding of which makes the church acknowledge God’s activities beyond the church as a reason for praise and not as ground to pinpoint where and how God is or is not present; the exception of Melbourne 1980 and the Baar 1990 consultations are here to be noted; 2) the understanding of Christian witness as a two-way process, in which the church witnesses to Christ and is challenged in this witness by God’s presence in the lives of the people witnessed to; 3) the understanding of dialogue as an authentic way to witness to non-Christians but which way ought not to preclude the proclamation of Christ and invitation to all humanity including people of non-Christian faiths to come to know Christ as Savior and Lord; 4) the understanding of the world as the sphere of the mission of the triune God; because God is already present in the world, the church may go to the

world's edges from its eucharistic center and take on the world's agenda as its own; 5) the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ upon whose incarnation, life, death, and resurrection all creation is redeemed and for whose work the church is to be in the world as sign and instrument through solidarity with the broken and poor of the world and proclamation of Christ as Savior and Lord; 6) the inclusion of the non-human world as part of the object of God's world and to which the church's ministry is to be integrally related.

## **II. Understanding the Change in the Models**

It is in the model change from Winner to Sign that we should understand the changes in ecumenical thought. This change, it needs noting, was not in the ecumenical movement's commitment to the uniqueness and universal relevance of Jesus Christ. All the emphasis on dialogue with non-Christian religions clearly held this confession as a non-negotiable aspect of Christian participation in dialogue. Thus, in both the Winner model and the Sign model the uniqueness and centrality of Christ was not at issue; what was at issue was the centrality of the church. The question was not "is Christ unique?" but "is the church the sphere of redemption?" The change in model from Winner to Sign was located in the implications of the answers given to this question.

In the Winner model, as Edinburgh 1937 and Madras 1938 revealed, the church was the sphere of redemption, hence the effort to win the world for Christ and into the church. The goal of mission was therefore conversion into the church such that by means of Christianization the unity of all humanity could be achieved. But in the Sign model, while the church still has an important role to play with respect to the world, the world was the sphere of redemption and the church was itself a fruit of God's redemption of the

world. Unlike the Winner model, for the Sign model, it was no longer in the church that God was primarily at work, but in the world, which includes the church. As Uppsala put it, the world is “the place where God is already at work to make all things new, and where he summons us to work with him.”<sup>1</sup> The idea that humanity was to pass into the kingdom only through the church was set aside. The activity of God in the world was now emphasized as preceding the church’s missional activities, and the church’s missional activities were now seen as only truly missional if they are a participation in God’s mission in the world.

The reason for this position is not, however, an abandonment of the uniqueness of Christ, as if there is another way of salvation apart from Christ. On the contrary, it is a result of commitment to the uniqueness of Christ. While in the Winner model, it was because of the uniqueness of Christ that the world was to be won for Christ (which also meant into the church), in the Sign model, the uniqueness of Christ leads to solidarity with the world as sign of God’s reconciliation of all things in Christ. And as we have also seen through the complex processes of the shaping of the Sign model, this existence of the church in the world as a sign to the world involves not only solidarity, but also proclamation and loving example.<sup>2</sup> This proclamation, as Melbourne illustrates, emanates from the local eucharistic community, is always contextual, always has Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the crucified and risen Lord as its message, and makes an effort to

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 12 – Report of Section I. (Hereafter cited as *Uppsala Report*).

<sup>2</sup> See: The Chantilly draft in Limouris, ed., *Church Kingdom World*, 163-175, cited hereafter as “Chantilly Draft.” The Stavanger draft is published in Thomas F. Best, ed., *Faith and Renewal: Reports and Documents of the Commission on Faith and Order Stavanger, Norway 13-25 August, 1985*, Faith and

reach those who are not acquainted with Christ.<sup>3</sup> But here, the church's activities are not to win the world for Christ but to be a sign to the world of God's work already going on in the world.

Though proclamation, as Nairobi insisted, always involves invitation to repentance and faith in Christ and summons to the fellowship of the church,<sup>4</sup> it is no longer because the church is the sphere of redemption but because God is already at work in the world and through the church builds a community of the kingdom here on earth. It is this understanding which also informs the 1982 *Mission and Evangelism*'s emphasis on the planting of churches as belonging to the heart of mission, as it enables the building of "a cell of the Kingdom" in every human community.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Christian witness now was a two-way process; the church proclaims and witnesses to its experience of God in Christ and listens to what God says to it from the world. The church is no longer the only voice of God; God now speaks everywhere including the church. Rather than a ministry in which the church is the only giver, the Sign model now emphasizes the church as also a receiver. This is why proclamation and dialogue or witness and dialogue were often seen as going together.<sup>6</sup> It is this idea of mutuality that Canberra 1991 expresses in the

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Order Paper No. 131 (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 192-207, cited hereafter as the "Stavanger Draft." Present citation: "Chantilly Draft," 164f. (1:9); cf. "Stavanger Draft," 196 (1:10)

<sup>3</sup> *Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives. Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism Melbourne, Australia 12-25 May 1980* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), 195 (1:6,7); 199 (3:17-20) – Report of Section III; 218 (3:19) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>4</sup> *Breaking Barriers Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November – 10 December, 1975* (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 45, 52 – Report of Section I (hereafter cited as *Nairobi Report*).

<sup>5</sup> Jean Stromberg, ed., *Mission and Evangelism, an Ecumenical Affirmation: a Study Guide* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 39 (para. 25); cf. Priscilla Pope-Levison, "Evangelism in the WCC – Part I: From New Delhi to Vancouver," *International Review of Mission* 80/318 (April 1991): 240-241.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., *Your Kingdom Come*, 180 – Report of Section II.

idea of mission as “sharing.” “Sharing means giving and receiving by all to one another to effect reconciliation and to promote growing together.”<sup>7</sup> This concept of mutuality in witness we saw was integral to the Sign model. For the Sign model, what humanity needs for its salvation is present only in Christ, but not exhaustively revealed in the church since the church is not the locus of redemption. Hence the need for the church to constantly reformulate its faith through contact with the world. It is through this contact with the world that it is renewed to enter into the fullness of the truth in Christ. The church, therefore, has to hear God speak to it from the world and from people of other faiths. This is the idea of mutuality of witness which has been emphasized since New Delhi 1961.

The unity of humankind was therefore not something which the church achieved through Christianization, as in the Winner model, but something which the triune God achieves through Christ’s cosmic redemption. While this redemption is clearly manifested in the experience of the church, it is not limited to the church and is not achieved by the church’s activities. Instead, the church’s activities point to this redemption and the church’s experience manifests this redemption; hence the church’s nature as sign of the redemption of God in Christ. The importance of the church’s witness is not to make God’s work any more real but to bear witness to God’s ongoing work and to be a community in which this work is manifested by faith in Christ. The proclamation of the gospel is necessary because it tells the world who this redeeming

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991* (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 102 – Report of Section III. Hereafter cited as *Canberra Report*. This point has been made by Philip Potter concerning how Canberra 1991 stands with respect to the pre-Uppsala ecumenical positions. Philip Potter, “Mission as Reconciliation in the Power of the Spirit,” *International Review of Mission* 80/319-320 (July/October, 1991): 305-314.

God is and directs the world to this God who is redeeming it in Christ. The church's ministry, as the 1963 Lordship Study put it, gives to God's work outside the church its true context, proper ordering, right proportion and true name.<sup>8</sup>

Over against the view of Van Engen,<sup>9</sup> the processes of movement which we have encountered in the Sign model reveal that the Sign model does not intend by its placement of God's redemption in the world to endorse the radical apostolicity of J. C. Hoekendijk or of the study on "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation." In the view of Hoekendijk, the church is purely apostolary and exists only for its mission to the world. This view was, however, rejected quite early. Geneva 1966, for example, held that the church has a distinctive nature which is to be maintained and not dissolved into the world.<sup>10</sup> It is in one sense the world's "centre and fulfillment" and in another it is its "servant" and "the witness to it of the hope of its future;" it has been called by God to be to the world that "community in which the world can discover itself as it may become in

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<sup>8</sup> Study on "Christ and the Church," North American Section in *Faith and Order Findings: The Final Report of the Theological Commissions to the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal 1963* (London: SCM Press, 1963), part II, 25 – Report of the Theological Commission on Christ and the Church (North American Section), hereafter cited as Study on "Christ and the Church," North American Section. The European Section's report is also included in this book and published as part II of the work of this commission. Study on "Christ and the Church," North American Section.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), esp. 150-153. Similarly, Klaus Bockmuhl thinks that the study on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation is "the manual for understanding ecumenical theology." See his "Pre-Suppositions in Contemporary Theological Debate," *The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents 1964-1976*, ed. Donald McGavran (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 351-359, at 352.

<sup>10</sup> *Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of our Time: World Conference on Church and Society Geneva, July 12-26, 1966: Official Report With a Description of the Conference by M. M. Thomas and Paul Abrecht* (Geneva, WCC, 1967), (Hereafter cited as *Church and Society 1966 Report*), 48 – Message.

the future.”<sup>11</sup> Uppsala also saw the church as the vehicle of God’s mission and as “the sign of the coming unity of mankind.”<sup>12</sup> Uppsala located the “constitutive centre” of the church’s double movement in “corporate worship” where, as it believed, Jesus Christ himself is the one who both calls and sends thereby rejecting a pure apostolary view of the church which fails to anchor the church in its relationship with its Lord.<sup>13</sup> Through the Unity Study and the Unity/Renewal Study we discovered that the efforts to maintain the church’s inalienable identity in its Christological and Pneumatological bearing at the Working Committees at Canterbury in 1969 and Annecy, France in 1981, in all the drafts of the Unity/Renewal Study, and at Vancouver 1983 were successful. But while the church remains essential to the work of God in the world, this was no longer interpreted to mean that God could not work in the world without the church or that God only redeems the human community through the church, or that the church was the only means of renewal and life in the world. What all this meant was that while the Winner model shared the element of the uniqueness of the church with the Sign model, in the Sign model this uniqueness was not interpreted in such a way that the redemption of God was restrictively located in the church.

But in the Sign model, the world takes on a new importance which it lacked in the Winner model. From an object to be conquered, as in the Winner model, the world was now an object to be in solidarity with, as in the Sign model. Taking the world seriously meant, for the Sign model, that the church cannot be understood apart from the world.

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<sup>11</sup> *Church and Society 1966 Report*, 202 – Report of the Working Group on the Theological Issues in Social Ethics.

<sup>12</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 17 – Report of Section I.

<sup>13</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 15 – Report of Section I.



Hence the increasing pro-world methodology of study: from Aarhus 1964's preference of the inductive over the deductive method; to Zagorsk 1968's preference of a dialectical method which combines the strengths of both the inductive and the deductive approaches; to Louvain 1971's inter-contextual method which takes seriously the lived experience of the church; and then, finally, to Geneva 1981's inter-relational method which not only takes the lived experience into consideration but also the context of the church's history. The bottom line of all these methodological changes was that the world was taken more seriously in the understanding of the church. Yet this was done in such a way as to protect the church's inalienable identity.

One of the clearest differences in the Winner and Sign models is in the attitude to non-Christian religions. Over against the attitude of the Winner model which lacked humility in the face of non-Christian religions but considered them to be, at best, preparations for the revelation in Christ, and their adherents people to be won for Christ, the Sign model adopts what we called an "ethos of humility" in its relation to non-Christian religions. Bangkok 1973 was one of the first manifestations of this ethos of humility in the shaping of the witness dimension of the Sign model. In this ethos of humility, as we have seen, God's work is acknowledged to be beyond the church but this should only be a reason for praise and not a ground for pinpointing where and how God is or is not at work outside the church. This ethos was further exemplified at Vancouver 1983 and San Antonio 1989.

However, the CWME at Melbourne 1980 did not see any reasons to hold such restraint but went ahead to find signs of the kingdom in non-Christian religions. The Baar 1990 consultation declared God to be in the seeking and finding of salvation in non-

Christian religions. Canberra tended in that direction but apparently ended in the ethos of humility, as may be gleaned from the clean up given to the affected aspects of the reports by the Report of the Report Committee. These conflicting positions reflect different convictions about the implications of the kingdom of God. Both views agree that there is a divine redemption in the world beyond the church. But whereas the ethos of humility does not think that this is tantamount to pinpointing where and how God is present, or spying on God, as Bangkok would say, the other view thinks that the signs of the kingdom lie in the imperfect good works wherever they are found and should be so pointed out. Both attitudes, however, belong to the Sign model so far as both have emanated from belief in God's wider reaches with redemptive grace. The position of the Winner model would have been to limit God's redemptive grace to the church and to see the kingdom of God as simply the church perfected. However, as we have shown, it appears that the ethos of humility in the Sign model was the more dominant response of the ecumenical movement. The CWME at Salvador, Brazil in 1996 returned to the position of San Antonio 1989 rather than to Baar 1990 or to Canberra 1991's initial tendencies.

In a sense, the Winner model is similar to Melbourne 1980/Baar 1990's appropriation of the Sign model. It, like the Melbourne 1980/Baar 1990 position, too-confidently and may be even arrogantly speaks of how God is present outside the church. Although in the Winner model, God is declared as being redemptively absent, in point of fact it does just the same thing as Melbourne 1980/Baar 1990 appropriation of the Sign model. The clear difference with the ethos of humility is in its refusal to "spy" on God by pinpointing how and where God is or is not at work.

Philip Potter believes that Canberra's position on the reconciliation of all things differs from the ideas of the pre-Uppsala assemblies. He thinks that the difference lies in the pre-Uppsala assemblies seeing mission as "dominating over peoples and nations" while Canberra saw it as "sharing God's own mission of bringing all humanity into communion with God through Christ in the power of the Spirit."<sup>14</sup> To make his point, he illustrates with passages in both Amsterdam 1948 and New Delhi 1961 where the winner motif is present. While Potter is right in showing that Canberra's understanding of mission is as a relationship of sharing, he did not seem to take into account the fact that at Amsterdam 1948, the imperialistic ideas around the winner motifs had been given up especially in ecumenical writings.<sup>15</sup> The idea of mission as domination of one section of the world by another section, as Wolfgang Günther has pointed out,<sup>16</sup> and as we have shown in our second chapter, had begun to be overcome at Jerusalem 1928<sup>17</sup> but was most clearly affirmed at Whitby 1947 in its concept of mission as "partnership in obedience."<sup>18</sup> Amsterdam 1948 also clearly declared that the days of mission as

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<sup>14</sup> *Canberra Report*, 3 – Message.

<sup>15</sup> It is possible that practice may lag behind affirmation, but the affirmation means that the understanding adopted should be interpreted taking that into considerations. You may refer to chapter two of this work, especially pages 67, 82, 93f.

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Günther, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City, Die ekklesiologischen Bemühungen der Weltmissionskonferenzen (1910-11963)* (Stuttgart: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1970), 35-42.

<sup>17</sup> John Mott expressed the hope that the Jerusalem meeting would, more than any other influence, "usher in or accelerate the coming of the day characterized by the new and true conception of the Christian missionary undertaking as a sharing enterprise." *The Jerusalem Meeting of the of the International Missionary Council, March 24-April 8, 1928* (New York: IMC, 1928), 8:13. (Hereafter cited as *Jerusalem 1928 Report*). For Jerusalem, mission to non-Christian nations was not because they "are the worst of the world and they alone are in need," but "because they are part of the world and share with" the Christian nations "in the same human need" of redemption from self and sins, and of abundant life. *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:406.

<sup>18</sup> *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church: Statements Issued by the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Whitby, Ontario, July 5-24, 1947* (New York & London: IMC, 1947),

domination were past.<sup>19</sup> Mexico City 1963's notion of mission in six continents was actually an affirmation of what had already been stated some thirty five years earlier.

What did not change with this affirmation in spite of the imperialistic elements that had been abandoned, however, was the understanding of the church and of the world that was held. This understanding was that the church was the redeemed community to win the unredeemed world for Christ. It is this that was later to change especially in the post-Uppsala years. In this latter period, the church was no longer the redeemed community over against the unredeemed world, but the community aware of its redemption on behalf of the whole world being redeemed. It is here then that we need to locate the change. This change does not merely involve the rejection of domination by one nation over another or one section of the world over the other.<sup>20</sup> The difference was that at Amsterdam 1948 and New Delhi 1961, people were to be reconciled to God by means of the gospel which the church preaches to "win" them for Christ. By contrast, at Canberra 1991, it is God's action in the world through Christ which redeems the world and the church's mission is only to bear witness to this in a relationship of sharing. At Amsterdam 1948 and New Delhi 1961, the church was to win to Christ a "world" from which it was more separate than one with, but at Canberra 1991, the church was to be a sign to a world of which it was part and parcel even though distinct by having come to

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23-34; cf. Kenneth Scott Latourette and William Richey Hogg, *Tomorrow is Here: the Mission of the Work of the Church as Seen from the Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Whitby, Ontario, July 5-24, 1947* (New York: Friendship Press for the IMC), 98-113.

<sup>19</sup> W. A. Visser't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches Held At Amsterdam August 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 66 – Report of Section II (hereafter cited as *Amsterdam Report*). Cf. Hendrik Kraemer's article in *Man's Disorder*, 2:16f. Cf. also the distinctions in countries from the stand-point of evangelism mentioned by Stephen C. Neill cf. Gaines, *The World Council*, 262.

<sup>20</sup> Both Amsterdam and New Delhi clearly rejected such a notion of mission.

know God's redemption of the world. At Amsterdam 1948 and New Delhi 1961 the world won for Christ was seen from the perspective of the world's hostility to God but at Canberra 1991 the world was seen from the perspective of God's already reconciling communion of love in and for the world. At Amsterdam 1948 and New Delhi 1961, the gospel was a matter of life and death whose urgent communication to the world was essential for its salvation, but at Canberra 1991, the urgency of the gospel was in giving a true context and right name to God's already saving work among humanity.

The change within the ecumenical movement was thus clearly not a substitution of socio-political goals for the gospel or a substitution of social action for evangelism, as some evangelicals suggest. Neither was it a movement from Christology to a cosmic pneumatology as John Bolt suggests; in fact, one of the deficiencies of the ecumenical movement has been in the area of pneumatology and even Canberra did not move away from the Christological centrality of ecumenical thought in spite of its generous mention of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit. The change in ecumenism is also not one from a pro-church position to a pro-world position; not even at the peak of its pro-world concerns (e.g. at Geneva 1966 and Uppsala 1968) did it cease to be pro-church; all the tendencies to reject the church's place in mission were rejected in every single conference where such influences took place. Rather, the change in ecumenical thought was from the church as the sphere of redemption to the world as the sphere of redemption. This change affected both the church's understanding of itself and its mission in relation to the world and of the world's place in God's purposes. This change in the church-world

relation is what we have shown to be one from the model, the “Church as Winner of the World” to that of the “Church as Sign to the World.”<sup>21</sup>

We shall now explore some of the theological details of this change in ecumenical thought.

### III. Analyzing the Details of the Change in Models

We have contended that the change in ecumenical thought in the understanding of the church and the world was not necessarily a change in the fundamental doctrines such as Christology or theology, but in the understanding of the church and world. In this section, we want to enter into some of the details of this change as they were reflected in the understanding of mission, the content of the gospel and meaning of salvation, as well as specifics of the church-kingdom and church-world relations. We shall conclude by examining the possible bearing of the “ethos of humility” of the Sign model on the Reformed view of God’s sovereignty. Here we shall explore the theological foundation of the change in ecumenical understanding of mission from a Western to a global enterprise, the profound influence of the concept of *missio Dei*, the problems with ecumenical claims to wholeness of mission especially in view of ecumenical ideologization, neglect of the demonic and the relationship between evangelism and social action. In addition, we shall explore the church-kingdom relation as it affects non-Christian religions.

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<sup>21</sup> Here, it is necessary to recall the methodological parameters of this study. I am using official statements of the WCC as my final guide. My position does not deny that persons associated with the ecumenical family may hold to the views which I have denied as representative of the movement as a whole. The WCC is an open fellowship with a “Basis” that allows for a wide range of beliefs. My thesis does not concern individual opinions and papers rendered, nor any of the trends that may have been associated with members of staff of the WCC. What it concerns, rather, are the officially approved positions by the delegates in conferences and assemblies.

## A. Change in the Nature of Mission

### 1. From a Western Enterprise to a Global Enterprise

At the turn of the twentieth Century, mission was understood as taking the gospel to “non-Christian” nations.<sup>22</sup> The assumption was the uniqueness and superiority of Christianity, not only because of its unique claim to revelation, but also because of its superior cultural manifestation.<sup>23</sup> But at Jerusalem 1928 this view began to be transcended. The theological ground for this change, as Jerusalem 1928 saw it, was the equal sinfulness of all humanity and therefore the equal need of all humanity for the mission of God. Thus, at Jerusalem 1928, though the world was still divided into the two broad categories of “Christian” and “non-Christian” nations,<sup>24</sup> mission to the so-called non-Christian nations was not because they “are the worst of the world and they alone are in need,” but “because they are part of the world and share with” the so-called Christian nations “in the same human need” of redemption from self and sin, and of abundant life.<sup>25</sup> A Cultural shift took place through the recognition that Western culture had too often been mixed with Christianity and that it was necessary to separate the gospel from its close links to Western imperialism. This shift was that mission was no longer seen as

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<sup>22</sup> For a short history of this understanding, see David Bosch, *Witness to the World: the Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 11-14.

<sup>23</sup> J. Verkuyl showed some of the politico-cultural motives behind missionary activities. *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 168-175; other motives are on pp. 164-168. Cf. with J. van den Berg’s treatment of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary movements. *Constrained by Jesus Love: An Inquiry into the Motive of the Missionary Awakening in Great Britain in the Period Between 1698 and 1815* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1956), 106-215; Hans Schärer, *Die Begründung der Mission in der katholischen und evangelischen Missionwissenschaft* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1944), 5-10.

<sup>24</sup> Günther, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City*, 35-42.

<sup>25</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 1:406.

the exclusive work of the West. This more broadened understanding of the Winner model was, however, still limited to the Western culture's need for the gospel; it did not go beyond that into the church's need for the gospel and for a reverse mission practice to the Western church. It was here that the Sign model went further.

In the Sign model, it was not just the Western culture which was seen as sinful, but the church also was. In the Winner model, the disunity of the church, though generally seen as a sin, was not often associated with the church's deep-rooted involvements in its cultural setting. Somehow, the admission that the church's divisions were wrong, an admission which has been made from the earliest moments of the missionary enterprise, was not interpreted to mean any need for the gospel. Already before Edinburgh 1937 and at the Faith and Order Commission at Chichester, England in 1949, the consultation at Bossey in 1951 and the Third Faith and Order Commission at Lund 1952, social and cultural factors had been regarded as important for understanding the church's divisions; but they were seen as "non-theological factors." At Montreal 1963, at the peak of the tension raised in the Winner model by the emerging Sign model, it dawned upon the ecumenical movement that none of these factors could be appropriately described as non-theological. In the Unity/Renewal studies, as Paul Crow Jr. observes, these issues were shown to be in fact evidences of the depth of the church's complicity in the sins that divide society.<sup>26</sup> It was now emphasized that the church, like the world, needs to be evangelized.<sup>27</sup> This realization of the sinfulness of all humanity

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<sup>26</sup> Paul A. Crow, Jr., "Unity and Renewal: Introductory Reflections," in *Faith and Renewal*, 166-168, at 167-168.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. Melbourne's view in this respect: *Your Kingdom Come*, 194 – Report of Section III, 179 – Report of Section II.



and of all institutions led to seeing the church itself as God's mission field in continual need of the gospel.

There was, however, a negative side to this realization. Waldron Scott and David Bosch observed that at Melbourne some were reluctant to evangelize those unacquainted with the gospel because of their heightened consciousness of the church's sin.<sup>28</sup> Apparently, the reasoning was that since the church was sinful, it would be hypocritical and patronizing to "reach out" to people and places unacquainted or insufficiently acquainted with the gospel. Be this as it may, it is important to point out again, as I have done in the previous chapter, that this was neither the official position of Melbourne nor the general position of the Sign model. Nairobi 1975, the 1982 *Mission and Evangelism*, Vancouver 1983, San Antonio 1989 and even Canberra 1991 were all clear on the need for the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.<sup>29</sup> In the Sign model, however, we find the possibility of these contradictory positions.

The emphasis on the sinfulness of all humanity and all systems have often tended towards an emphasis of the systemic alone and a relegation of individual sins to a secondary place. Some critics have therefore decried what they considered the absorption of the individual into the system at especially Uppsala 1968, Melbourne 1980 and Canberra 1991.<sup>30</sup> Although this is not the official position of any ecumenical

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<sup>28</sup> Waldron Scott, "The Significance of Pattaya," *Missiology* 9/1 (Jan. 1981): 69; Bosch, "In Search of Mission: Reflections on "Melbourne" and "Pattaya," *Missionalia* 9/1 (1981): 7f.; cf. *idem*, "The Melbourne Conference: Between and Hope," *International Review of Mission* 80/319-320 (July/Oct. 1991): 512-515.

<sup>29</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 52-54 – Report of Section I; *Mission and Evangelism*, paras. 11 & 12 cf. 41 & 42; *The San Antonio Report*, 351; *Canberra Report*, 100-101 – Report of Section III.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the comments of Eugene L. Smith, David Hubbard, and John R. W. Stott concerning Uppsala 1968 in *The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents, 1964-1976*, ed. Donald

conference or Assembly, there is legitimacy to this criticism in so far as ecumenical documents have a greater emphasis on systemic evils than on personal sins. However, this criticism has to be understood against the background of the history of the WCC. As Lesslie Newbigin pointed out, the WCC “was born in the death-throes of ‘Christendom’,” in a context in which the Christian West was destroying itself in bloody wars.<sup>31</sup> Both the Faith and Order and Life and Work movements were formed as a result of the realization of the systemic evils which pillaged the nations and churches of the West in spite of the churches’ involvement with the missionary activity of “saving the souls” of people of non-Western nations.<sup>32</sup> Hence the emphasis on systemic sins was necessary at the formation of the WCC. Even the IMC, a missionary body concerned with winning souls for Christ, began early in its history to take systemic sins seriously.<sup>33</sup> While this may allow for some ideologizing,<sup>34</sup> it is no justification for a lack of emphasis on individual sins in much of ecumenical discussions. The relegation of individual sins to a secondary place confuses the notion of mission since, as David J. Bosch notes, it is in

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McGavran, Expanded Edition of *Eye of the Storm: the Great Debate in Mission, Including Documents on Bangkok and Nairobi* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1972, 1977), 259-272. See also the comments concerning Bangkok in Ralph Winter, ed., *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1973).

<sup>31</sup> See how Lesslie Newbigin uses this point to show the difference between the WCC and IMC in its initial formation. “A Missionary’s Dream,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/1 (Jan. 1991): 4.

<sup>32</sup> See how Lesslie Newbigin uses this point to show the difference between the WCC and IMC in its initial formation. “A Missionary’s Dream,” *The Ecumenical Review* 43/1 (Jan. 1991): 4.

<sup>33</sup> The influence of Liverpool 1912 and Stockholm 1925 should be taken into consideration in Jerusalem 1928’s systemic thought. This was particularly because of the cross-fertilization of ecumenical minds in the first four decades of the twentieth century; people usually moved from one ecumenical meeting to another and for a while the Life and Work and Faith and Order shared staff.

<sup>34</sup> Ideologizing is understood here as taking traditional Christian concepts and emphasizing their ideological connotations at the expense of other aspects. This does not necessary involve denial of the other aspects, even though it sometimes eclipses them. This issue shall be responded to later in this section

the context of human sinfulness that evangelism is meaningful.<sup>35</sup> And it is in the context of human sinfulness that repentance and faith make sense. “To dispense with the centrality of repentance and faith,” notes David Bosch, “is to divest the gospel of its significance.”<sup>36</sup> “Since humans as sinners corrupt whatever they touch,” notes Boyd Hunt, “the presence of the kingdom always calls for repentance,” hence Jesus inaugurated the kingdom in its present reality with a call to repentance.<sup>37</sup> The fact of human universal sinfulness is therefore crucial to mission. The affirmation of Mexico City 1963 of mission as witness in six continents is therefore a positive improvement which highlights both the universal need of all for the gospel and the universal witness of all to the gospel.

## 2. The Concept of *Missio Dei*

Perhaps the most profound change in mission theology in the twentieth century was the re-orientation that came from the understanding of the priority of God in mission through the concept of the *missio Dei*. The association of this idea with Willigen has been noted along with Willigen’s efforts to avoid extreme formulations. However, it was in the Sign model that the implications of this new understanding resulted in significant changes in ecumenical church-world relations. *Missio Dei* revolutionized missionary history by bringing forth an ecumenical “consensus,” in the true sense of the

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<sup>35</sup> The 1982 ecumenical affirmation *Mission and Evangelism* noted that evangelism’s calling “is to specific changes, to renounce evidences of the dominion of sin in our attitudes and styles of life.” See para. 11.

<sup>36</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 413.

<sup>37</sup> Boyd Hunt, *Redeemed: Eschatological Redemption and the Kingdom of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Pub., 1993), 78.

word; the WCC, the Roman Catholics, the Evangelicals<sup>38</sup> and the Eastern Orthodox<sup>39</sup> have all been influenced by the concept. The *missio Dei* emphasis led to an understanding of history as essentially eschatological. This idea was present in the paper drafted for the Faith and Order by Hendrikus Berkhof on “God in Nature and History.”<sup>40</sup> History has a purpose and this purpose is the redemption of God and its ultimate fulfillment. Salamanca also says that “[t]he Church is called to discern by faith the signs of God’s actions in history, in men and women of other faiths and commitments. Their meaning becomes clear only as they are understood in the perspective of Christ’s coming.”<sup>41</sup>

From *missio Dei* came the insight that the church’s being and mission are to be understood in terms of God’s larger purpose for the redemption of creation. The church, then, has no mission as such but only participates in the triune God’s mission in the world, a mission which includes but is not restricted to the church. “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world,” says Jürgen Moltmann, but “it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way.”<sup>42</sup> This emphasis seems consistent with the Reformed insistence on the priority of God in the church and the world. Mission was now not what

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<sup>38</sup> Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology 1948-1975: Years of Worldwide Creative Tension Ecumenical, Evangelical and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), 333; Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 179f, 239-248

<sup>39</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390-391.

<sup>40</sup> Berkhof’s initial paper was published in *Study Encounter* 1/3 (1965): 142-160.

<sup>41</sup> “The Salamanca 1973” Published in part as “The Unity of the Church – Next Steps” in *The Ecumenical Review* 26/2 (April 1974): 291-303 at 292-293. Present citation at p. 292. Hereafter cited as “Salamanca 1973 Report”.

the church was doing as such but was now seen as the work and life of the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.<sup>43</sup>

The church can, therefore, not be understood apart from the world. This meant that ecclesiology could no longer be defined in such a way that the world was avoided. The church cannot have a self-understanding which separates it from the world; for to do so would be to separate the church's being from its mission. This separation was shown to be problematic by the Joint Statement of the Rolle 1951 Central Committee and a special committee of the IMC.<sup>44</sup> To separate the church from the world would also be problematic for the concept of *ecclesia*, "being called out," which is meaningless without a *world* from which the church is called out and to which it is sent. Nevertheless, as the Lordship Study on "Christ and the Church" presented to Montreal 1963 insisted, "the Church is not dissolved into the world," nor "absorbed in the sinful world."<sup>45</sup> This, as we have noted, is the consistent position of Vancouver 1983 and the Unity/Renewal Study.<sup>46</sup>

The church now, like the rest of the world, is regarded as a mission field of God. This was the understanding of Uppsala 1968 when it included "the churches as an arena

<sup>42</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. J. H. Bavinck's view here in his *The Church Between the Temple and Mosque: A Study of the Relationship between the Christian Faith and Other Religions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 126-127.

<sup>44</sup> The Central Committee's statement on "The Calling of the Church to Mission and to Unity," Rolle, Switzerland, August, 1951, in *The First Six Years*, Appendix A-8, 126. This statement was jointly issued by the Central Committee and a special committee of the IMC. Gaines, *The World Council*, 405.

<sup>45</sup> Study on "Christ and the Church," North American Section, 25.

<sup>46</sup> David Gill, ed., *Gathered for Life: Official Report VI Assembly World Council of Churches Vancouver, Canada 24 July-10 August 1983* (Geneva: WCC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 50 – IG on Taking Steps Towards Unity ; cf. e.g. "Chantilly Draft," 169 (2:34).

for mission” as part of the places of urgent missional needs.<sup>47</sup> Whitby had noted that the church was to be constantly “reconverted” and renewed by a return to the Bible and to its Lord, Jesus Christ.<sup>48</sup> Bangkok 1973 spoke of the church as in need of salvation<sup>49</sup> and Melbourne 1980 said that the church was to proclaim the gospel to both itself and those beyond its fellowship and thereby prepare itself and all people for God’s reign.<sup>50</sup> It is true that some of these descriptions of the church seem problematic because the church already has received the gospel in some sense, and is saved and converted in some sense, but in view of the wholeness of Scripture, they nevertheless seem appropriate; in Scripture, we are saved, we are being saved, and we shall be saved. This way of making the church a mission field would constantly remind the church to understand itself as being worked upon by God even as it participates in God’s mission in the world. The fact that the church is also God’s mission field does not rule out the church’s unique mission towards the world as conscious receptors of God’s grace. The church’s unique mission to the world, as the North American Section of the 1963 study put, is to give to God’s work outside the church its true context and proper name.

## **B. Change in the Content of the Gospel**

We have noticed in our study that in the nineteenth century there was a tendency to see the Gospel preached by the missionary as primarily “proclamation” of the good

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<sup>47</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 32 – Report of Section II.

<sup>48</sup> *The Witness*, 11, 14f.

<sup>49</sup> *Bangkok Assembly 1973: Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1973), 89, 100. (Hereafter cited as *Bangkok Assembly 1973*)

<sup>50</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 195 – Report of Section III; 217 – Report of Section IV.

news with social work as a handmaid. This was changed at Edinburgh 1910, Liverpool 1912 and Jerusalem 1928 among other places.<sup>51</sup> While this change took place within the Winner model, it was in the Sign model that its implication was worked out in more concrete ecumenical programs of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. And while it is undeniable that the ecumenical conferences have emphasized social action much more than personal, individual relationship with God, the wholeness of the gospel has not been denied. At Uppsala 1968, an assembly known for its stress on the socio-economic more than individual relationship with God, W. A. Visser't Hooft made a fresh call for the balance between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of human existence. He advised the WCC, as a movement “which by its nature seeks to embrace the truth of the Gospel in its fulness,” thus:

A Christianity which has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt and is not only insipid in itself, but useless for the world. But a Christianity which would use the vertical preoccupation as a means to escape from its responsibility for and in the common life of man is a denial of the incarnation, of God's love for the world manifested in Christ.<sup>52</sup>

Bangkok 1973, in spite of its well-known liberation emphasis, confessed that “[t]he salvation which Christ brought, and in which we participate, offers a comprehensive wholeness in this divided world” and is “newness of life – the unfolding of true humanity in the fulness of God (Col.2:9).”<sup>53</sup> It is a salvation involving “the soul and body,” “the

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<sup>51</sup> *Christ and Human Need: Being Addresses delivered at a Conference on Foreign Missions and Social Problems, Liverpool, Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, 1912* (London: Student Volunteer Missionary Union, s.a.), 44 – Harry Bisseker; *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:36 – Cheng Ching-Yi; 1:404ff.; 1:404-407 – Message.

<sup>52</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 318.

<sup>53</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 88.

individual and society, mankind and ‘the groaning creation’ (Rom. 8:19).”<sup>54</sup> Nairobi 1975 and other conferences also kept this balanced emphasis.<sup>55</sup>

The claim of the WCC to the wholeness of the gospel, however, needs to be reconsidered in the light of three considerations. The first is the ideologizing which takes place within the WCC; the second is the important omissions within ecumenical missionary thinking which question its conception of the wholeness of the gospel; and the third is the relationship between evangelism and social action. We shall consider these in turn.

### **1. The Wholeness of the Gospel and Ideologization**

In spite of the ecumenical claim to the wholeness of the gospel, it often ideologizes, not only in its assemblies, but also in its Units and Sub-Units. This accusation was very minimal in the days of the dominance of the Winner model<sup>56</sup> but seems to have become more prominent in the process of change from the Winner to the Sign model. Ideologizing can be defined as taking traditional Christian concepts such as salvation, reconciliation, or liberation and emphasizing their ideological connotations at the expense of other meanings that they bear. This was the accusation of the evangelicals

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<sup>54</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 88.

<sup>55</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 45, 52 – Report of Section I.

<sup>56</sup> Such criticisms often came from The Church League of America and other radical conservative evangelicals who thought that the WCC was an “apostate system” from which Bible-believing Christians should stay completely away. It was accused as being a movement to form a world church. See: *Wages of Sin: The World Council of Churches Unmasked: Documented Report from the Research Staff of the Church League of America* (Wheaton, IL: Church League of America, 1979), 14, 30-33, etc.



behind the Berlin Ecumenical Manifesto with respect to the WCC in the mid-seventies.<sup>57</sup> For example, righteousness becomes emphasized more as a righteousness in personal ethics or social justice than as a gift of God to sinful humanity. Hendrikus Berkhof drew up the following list of concepts to illustrate this ideologizing, noting that in the WCC some are, so to speak, writ large while others are writ small as indicated below:

FRUIT OF FAITH	- root of faith
RANGE OF SALVATION	- center of salvation
OUR RESPONSIBILITY	- God's action
SPIRIT	- Word
CONVERGENNCE	- opposition to the world
PENULTIMATE HOPES	- the ultimate hope
DEVELOPMENT	- conversion
FINAL GOAL	- the way of the cross
and so on. <sup>58</sup>	

Berkhof observes that “[a]n ideology is essential for programmes of a social and ethical kind” but that they can also fall into the danger of not remembering that they are only “a temporary selection from the richness of God’s Word.” These selections, are to be “constantly understood in terms of the Word of God, inspired, criticized and relativized by the richness of that Word” or they become “an idol.”<sup>59</sup> Berkhof believes that this may be temporarily justified, but not in the long run since it has no adequate basis in Scripture.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> This is the critique of the Berlin Ecumenical Manifesto. See Walter Kunneth and Peter Beyerhaus, eds., *Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft? Die Berliner Ökumene-Erklärung zur utopischen Vision des Weltkirchenrates* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1975), esp. 16-73. Peter Beyerhaus also accuses the ecumenical movement of the same in his *Bangkok 73: the Beginning or End of World Mission?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), e.g., 12 – Preface.

<sup>58</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, “Berlin versus Geneva: Our Relationship with the Evangelicals,” *The Ecumenical Review* 28/1 (Jan. 1976): 80-86, at 85.

<sup>59</sup> Berkhof, “Berlin versus Geneva,” 84.

<sup>60</sup> Berkhof, “Berlin versus Geneva,” 85.

It would seem that it was this ideologizing which was responsible for deliberate choices in WCC gatherings to emphasize the “horizontal” dimension rather than the “vertical”. Bangkok 1973 was one conference that made that deliberate choice, but this does not mean that Bangkok 1973 abandoned the aspects Berkhof referred to as “writ small.” While Bangkok admitted to deliberately choosing to emphasize “the social, economic and political implications of the gospel,” it insisted that this “does not in any way deny the personal and eternal dimensions of salvation.”<sup>61</sup> This posture counters the accusations of some evangelicals about Bangkok’s one-sidedness.<sup>62</sup> For Bangkok, “God’s justice manifests itself both in the justification of the sinner and in social and political justice.”<sup>63</sup> This notwithstanding, the ecumenical family needs to be reminded to keep in view Berkhof’s advice throughout its socio-political and socio-ethical concerns. But to interpret this choice as a neglect of the gospel would be unfair to the ecumenical family.

## 2. The Wholeness of the Gospel and the Demonic

Though the ecumenical movement claims to proclaim a comprehensive gospel there are biblical themes it ignores. Evangelism and social action are emphasized as the whole gospel, but the content of these are often defined in such a way that they do not include deliverance from demonic influences understood in the sense in which the New Testament speaks about the demonic. This subject of the demonic as part of the whole

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<sup>61</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 87; cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 396; James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 122 who pointed out that what emerged at Bangkok was not “Salvation Today” as it was “Liberation in Christ” cf. Bangkok’s “Salvation in Four Dimensions” which were all socio-political.

<sup>62</sup> See e.g., Winter, ed., *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok*.

gospel has not been adequately dealt with in ecumenical literature and discussion though the literature on the subject is massive.<sup>64</sup> This absence applies to both the Winner and the Sign models.

Gregory A. Boyd has argued that “the biblical authors generally understood all evil in the context of spiritual war,” which is “a cosmic war” from which none was exempt.<sup>65</sup> This fact of spiritual warfare and the activity of Satan and evil in the New Testament and the early church have been conclusively attested to by biblical scholars and church historians.<sup>66</sup> This is a daily part of African Christian encounter and of the experience of many outside the church,<sup>67</sup> but it has not been responded to by ecumenical

<sup>63</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 88.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g. the next three footnotes in this section.

<sup>65</sup> Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>66</sup> See e.g., Otto Böcher, *Das Neue Testament und die dämonischen Mächte* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1972); cf. Edwin Yamauchi, “Magic or Miracle? Disease, Demons and Exorcisms,” in David Wenham and Craig Blomberg, eds., *The Miracles of Jesus* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1986); Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writing* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Ragnar Leivestad, *Christ, the Conqueror: Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament* (London: S.P.C.K., 1954); Tremper Longman, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1995); Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1998); Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1992); Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1984); Elaine H. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995); Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Trevor Oswald Ling, *The Significance of Satan* (London: S.P.C.K., 1961); C. Peter Wagner & F. Douglas Pnnoyer, eds., *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1990); Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert, American ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1951); etc.

<sup>67</sup> For some claims to deliverance from evil spirits by Africans see e.g. Emmanuel Eni, *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness* (Ibadan: Scripture Union (Nigeria) Press and Books, 1987) and Victoria Eto, *Exposition on Water Spirits* (Warri, Nigeria: Shallom Christian Mission). See also Neil Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness* (Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1990); idem, *Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1990); Harriet Hill, “Witchcraft and the Gospel: Insights from Africa,” *Missiology* 24/3 (July 1996): 323-344. For some general works on African religious experiences, some too one-sided to give adequate picture of African present reality, see Rosalind I. J. Hackett, *Religion in Calabar: The Religious Life and*

theology<sup>68</sup> and ecumenical claims to the wholeness of the gospel. This may be the result of a rationalist Western worldview as has been suggested by Paul Hiebert, among others,<sup>69</sup> but it reveals the inadequacy of the sense of gospel wholeness in ecumenical thought for African Christianity. Ecumenical literature needs to come to terms with this reality in many parts of the world.

Similarly, the place of faith healing and/or healing by spiritual gifts have received little or no prominence.<sup>70</sup> Yet it is part of the whole gospel or the Biblical worldview. Canberra 1991 recalls the ecumenical “original understanding of mission” as “preaching, teaching and healing,”<sup>71</sup> but it did not make any reference to the kinds of healing recorded in the New Testament which are directly the result of prayer in the name of Jesus Christ or exercise of authority in Jesus’ name. According to Roger Greenway,

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*History of a Nigerian Town* (Berlin, & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1989, c. 1988), esp. 27-38; Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), esp. 46-56; Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1989), esp. 136-148; David Westerlund, “Spiritual Beings as Agents of Illness,” M. F. C. Bourdillon, “Witchcraft and Society,” and Kathleen O’Brien Wicker, “Mami Water in African Religion and Spirituality,” Jacob K. Olupona, *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings, and Expressions* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 152-175, 176-197, 198-222, respectively.

<sup>68</sup> Even though some evangelicals especially in the Church Growth movement have claimed encountering demonic powers in their missiological experiences. See, e.g. the next footnote.

<sup>69</sup> See e.g., Paul Hiebert, “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,” *Missiology* 10/1 (1982): 35-47; Margarite G. Kraft, “The Problem of the Western Worldview,” in *Understanding Spiritual Power: A Forgotten Dimension of Cross-Cultural Mission and Ministry* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 31-36; Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity with Power: Your Worldview and Your Experiences of the Supernatural* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1989).

<sup>70</sup> See e.g. Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit: a Former Dallas Seminary Professor Discovers that God Speaks and Heals Today* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1993). This is also one of the concerns of Church Growth Movement and John Wimber’s Vineyard Ministries. E.g. C. Peter Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry without Making your Church Sick!* (Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1988); idem, *Spiritual Power and Church Growth*, forward by John Wimber (Altamonte Springs, Fla.: Strang Communications Co., 1986); idem, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Glendale, CA.: Regal Books, 1979); John Wimber, *Kingdom Evangelism: Proclaiming the Gospel in Power* (Ann Arbor, MI.: Vine Books, 1989); idem with Kevin Springer, *Power Healing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); idem, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco, CA.: Harper & Row, 1986).

<sup>71</sup> *Canberra Report*, 252 – Report of Section III.

“[o]ne of the weakest points in Western missions may be the failure to deal adequately with questions relating to sickness, healing, and demon possession.”<sup>72</sup> This neglect raises a serious question for the ecumenism embraced within the WCC and for the missiological breadth of its undertaking. It is a neglect of the missiological experiences of the fastest growing Christian movement in the world today – the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement – and it is also a neglect of the missiological contributions of non-Western nations. This seems to me a big theological loss because it excludes the contextual reality of the majority of Christians in the world. In spite of whatever way Western theological thinking may choose to understand the fact of demons in the New Testament and the place of healing by means of prayers and faith alone, it cannot claim to hold to the wholeness of the gospel when it despises the reality of majority of Christians for whom the gospel’s power is a liberation from the demonic. This lacuna needs to be seriously attended to in ecumenical dialogue with Pentecostals and African Independent Churches.

### **3. Evangelism and Social Action**

When considering the wholeness of the gospel in ecumenical theology we also need to address the tension that often arises between “evangelism” and “social action,” especially as this is highlighted by evangelicals. Some evangelicals, admitting the place of both “evangelism” and social action in the gospel, make the case for the priority of evangelism over social action. This was clearly the position of the 1966 evangelical conference at Wheaton, Illinois which declared “unreservedly the primacy of preaching the gospel to every creature,” while committing itself to demonstrating “anew God’s

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<sup>72</sup> Roger Greenway, *Go Make Disciples! An Introduction to Christian Missions* (Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1999), 98.

concern for social justice and human welfare.”<sup>73</sup> It was also the position of the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 which affirmed that “evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty,” but that “[i]n the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.”<sup>74</sup> Some evangelicals have, however, encountered the problematic with this attribution of priority and have found the need to nuance their position somewhat. John R. W. Stott, for example, argues that this priority is not necessarily chronological, pointing out that social action may be a bridge to, or consequence of, evangelism though always its partner.<sup>75</sup> Boyd Hunt has stressed that the priority of evangelism is a “logical priority” and not a “chronological priority.”<sup>76</sup> In spite of denials by evangelicals, this logical priority seems to also be a priority of importance especially when the distinctions are made in such a way that evangelism is seen as verbal and social action as deeds.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Harold Lindsell, ed., *The Church's Worldwide Mission: Proceedings of the Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission 9-16 April at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1966), 235.

<sup>74</sup> *Lausanne Covenant*, paras. 5 and 6.

<sup>75</sup> John R. W. Stott, ed., *Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, Lausanne Occasional Paper, no. 21 (Wheaton, ILL.: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1982), 20ff.; cf. J. Sider and J. R. W. Stott, *Evangelism, Salvation and Social Action* (Auburn, MA.: Grove Books, 1977), 22.

<sup>76</sup> Hunt, *Redeemed*, 102-107.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. George Vandervelde, “Harare as Evangelical-Ecumenical *kairos*,” *ER* 50/2 (April 1998): 173-183; cf. e.g., Wagner’s many distinctions in *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, 35f., 56f. See also J. R. W. Stott who sometimes makes this distinction, e.g. J. R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 24, 28. Wagner also notes different kinds of ways in which the relationship between evangelism and social action may be held: there are, for him, the secular humanists who insist only on social action without evangelism; there are the ecumenical missiologists who hold to both evangelism and social action with priority on social action; there are some evangelicals who hold to both evangelism and social action without any prioritizing; there are other evangelicals who hold to both evangelism and social action with priority given to evangelism; and there are older, early twentieth century conservatives who hold to evangelism alone without social action.

This view, which considers evangelism as consisting of words and social action as deeds, has been described by J. Andrew Kirk as a “misunderstanding” of God’s intention for the church in so far as it separates what was supposed to be kept together.<sup>78</sup> David J. Bosch also finds this separation to be an inadequate understanding of the gospel insisting that rather than two separate components or parts of mission, evangelism and social action may be better understood as two “dimensions” of the one gospel: thus evangelism is “the inviting and *ingathering dimension of the total mission*,” and “the other involvements,” which may be summarized as social action, “represent the serving, self-emptying and humanizing dimension.”<sup>79</sup> And these two are mutually supportive because as Emilio Castro reminds, evangelism has no life of its own separate from the church’s total ministry.<sup>80</sup> Evangelism therefore always has to deal with the issue of credibility – the credibility of the witness borne.

The ecumenical approach within its official documents, as we have seen, has been very sparing in its use of the term “evangelism;” the word “witness” seems to be preferred. As Martin Lehmann-Habeck and Priscilla Pope-Levison have demonstrated, this preference reflects the ecumenical commitment to wholistic evangelism.<sup>81</sup> The documents of the WCC, when they refer to such matters have been careful to point out

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<sup>78</sup> J. Andrew Kirk, *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 103f.

<sup>79</sup> David J. Bosch, “In Search of a New Evangelical Understanding,” in Bruce Nicholls, ed., *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Exeter, Devon: The Paternoster Press, 1985), 63-83, esp. 79-82

<sup>80</sup> Emilio Castro, “Liberation, Development, and Evangelism: Must We Choose in Mission?” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 2 (1978): 87-90, at 88.

<sup>81</sup> Martin Lehmann-Habeck, “Wholistic Evangelism: A WCC Perspective,” *International Review of Mission* 78/289 (Jan. 1989): 7-16 and Priscilla Pope-Levison, “Evangelism in the WCC – Part I: From New Delhi to Vancouver,” *International Review of Mission* 78/18 (April 1991): 231-243.

the equal importance of evangelism and social action as two dimensions of the church's one witness without setting priorities. Nairobi 1975 may be the clearest declaration in this respect in its balance of elements of the gospel. The closest to prioritizing in ecumenical works would be the practice of ideologizing, but this would only mean that ecumenical prioritizing of social action over the gospel is not in any clear-cut statement to that effect but only in the concentration of ecumenical activities. While some individuals and members of staff associated with the WCC may have been guilty of prioritizing, this has never been the official position of the WCC.

If evangelism is understood as involving both word and deed, then it would seem that to prioritize proclamation or social action over each other would be like deciding which comes first, the chicken or the egg. If in practical details of life there is no chronological priority, as even the evangelicals admit, ought it not be the concern of the Christian in witness to seek at all times to hold both proclamation and social action together as inseparable dimensions in his or her witness? Why should the church not just bear this total witness? Why should it choose to consciously prioritize one over the other thus create an unhealthy duality in the gospel?

### **C. The Meaning and Nature of Salvation**

This discussion on the wholeness of the gospel highlights the theological change in the meaning and nature of salvation which had come into ecumenical thought. David J. Bosch has helpfully stated that "one's theology of mission is always closely dependent on one's theology of salvation" and thus, "the scope of salvation – however we define



salvation – determines the scope of the missionary enterprise.”<sup>82</sup> The general ecumenical understanding is that which Bangkok 1973 clearly stated, namely, that salvation involves the “the social, economic and political” and the “personal and eternal” dimensions.<sup>83</sup>

However, this broadness of salvation has not been generally well received among evangelicals. Donald McGavran defines salvation as “a vertical relationship (of man with God) which issues in horizontal relationships (of man with men),” insisting on faith as the only requirement for salvation and finding no place for social action in salvation.<sup>84</sup> At the gathering of evangelicals in Grand Rapids in June 1982, Ronald J. Sider and J. I. Packer together addressed the issue of the broadness of salvation in Scripture. Though they found broad views of salvation in both the Old and New Testaments, they still concluded that salvation language is to be restricted to those who consciously confess faith in Christ. Scripture, they contended, never speaks of the kingdom of God apart from conscious confession of Jesus Christ.<sup>85</sup>

It is however not clear that the kingdom of God is only associated in the Scriptures to conscious confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Many passages relate to faith in Jesus, but as the Lordship Study on “Christ and the Church” submitted to Montreal in 1963 emphasized, the kingdom of God is a mystery, and several scriptures speak to its mysterious nature (e.g. Mk. 4:26-33). It is the kingdom of “God” and therefore it is God

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<sup>82</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 393.

<sup>83</sup> *Bangkok 1973 Report*, 87; cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 396; Scherer, *Gospel, Church, and Kingdom*, 122 who pointed out that what emerged at Bangkok was not “Salvation Today” as it was “Liberation in Christ” cf. Bangkok’s “Salvation in Four Dimensions” which were all socio-political.

<sup>84</sup> Donald McGavran, “Salvation Today,” in Winter, ed., *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok*, 31-32.

alone who determines how it works and how to bring it to reality. In fact, the kingdom of God is never a function of people's response. Instead, it is a function of God's action, and God is still King in spite of the absence of conscious faith. That is how God is King of the nations even though many nations do not know God (Psa. 22:28; 29:3-4, 10; 47:2, 6-8; etc.). That was how Cyrus could be God's "chosen" even though he may not have consciously had faith in God. The kingdom belongs to children who do not have explicit faith in Christ (Mark 10:14). It is because God's action is determinant of the kingdom that Jesus speaks of it as present in his miracles and of having come even in the midst of those who accused him of acting by Beelzebul (Matt. 12:28 cf. Luke 11:20). This kingdom was present in the preaching of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:12; Luke 16:16) and was present even among the Pharisees (Luke 17:20-21). All this underscores the mysterious nature of the kingdom, present with or without explicit faith. That is the only way it could be present in John the Baptist as it is extremely doubtful (Jn. 1:29 and such passages notwithstanding) that John's disciples all had explicit faith in Jesus (cf. Acts 19:1ff). John's disciples were not baptized upon explicit confession of faith in Jesus Christ but upon repentance within the context of John's preaching. If Scripture is indeed the guide of Sider and Packer, then the language of salvation should reflect the position of the totality of Scripture which they themselves have found. In both the testaments, as even Sider and Packer discovered, the concept of salvation is broader than faith in Christ. Salvation in the Old Testament simply rules out the issue of explicit faith in Christ because Christ was not explicitly known. It is true that it is by Christ that this salvation in the Old Testament or anywhere else is realized, but not only by explicit faith. The

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<sup>85</sup> Ronald J. Sider and James Packer III, "How Broad is Salvation in Scripture?," in Nicholls, ed.,

kingdom is always the sovereign and free rule of God and God realizes it by Jesus Christ and not absolutely through explicit faith. Faith is always a “means” and not the “source” of God’s grace (cf. Eph. 2:8-10).

Against the positions of McGravan, Sider and Packer, one must re-emphasize the comprehensive view of salvation to which the Bible attests and, which Sider and Packer also acknowledge. McGravan’s view is the result of identifying salvation only with pardon or forgiveness of sins, or with the forensic aspect of our justification. Such a view fails to see that in the Bible salvation has a past, a present and a future which are all related but which all must be taken into consideration in order to understand the gift of salvation which God offers to humanity. Bosch has advised, in this respect, that we are not to limit salvation to only Christ’s pre-existence (as in what he thinks is the Greek Patristic model), nor to Christ’s early life (as in the ethical model) nor to Christ’s death on the cross (as in the Anselmian satisfaction theory).<sup>86</sup> Salvation, as the Reformed are quick to underscore, has to do with all aspects of Christ’s life and death – his holy incarnation and birth, his life and teachings, his miracles, his passion and death, his burial, resurrection and ascension, his heavenly session and intercession, his gift of the Holy Spirit and his second coming.

This is also the ecumenical approach to salvation in both the Winner and Sign models. This is Bangkok 1973’s approach which does not deny the personal and eternal dimension but holds it along with the socio-ethical and socio-political dimensions. It is this understanding that makes Bangkok’s position that the church is itself in need of salvation from its enslavements biblical. Our salvation is never spoken of in the Bible as

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*In Word and Deed*, 85-108.

completed by our justification, understood in the sense of a forensic declaration that we are in the right. The righteousness of God is not only imputed but also imparted. God does not only declare us righteous but God also makes us righteous and both are part of our salvation and both are completely the work of God's grace. We await the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23) and Christ comes again the second time without sin for our "salvation" (Heb. 9:28), in which our vile bodies shall be made like Jesus' glorious body (Phil. 3:21). It is important that mission emphasizes this wholeness of salvation.

However, no aspect of this one work of God should be treated as if it is the work of the church or that of any human being; every stage of our salvation is the work of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and every aspect is the gift of God. Our justification, our sanctification and our glorification are all the work of God and all belong to our salvation.

#### **D. Change in the Church–Kingdom and Church–World Relations**

The twentieth century ecumenical movement from its earliest beginnings in the missionary movements of the nineteenth century was eschatological in its consciousness.<sup>87</sup> In this eschatological commitment, the church was seen in relation to the kingdom as the one and only means of entry into the kingdom even though somewhat distinct from the kingdom in its perfected form. In this view, the church was simply the kingdom in its beginning stages and the work of the church in mission was the expansion or extension of the kingdom, the completion of which would lead to the full

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<sup>86</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 399-400.

<sup>87</sup> E.g., van den Berg, *Constrained by Jesus' Love*, 160-164; Hunt, *Redeemed*, 69 cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper, 1959), 135, 150f.

establishment of the kingdom, which is in fact, the church perfected. From the nineteenth century to Whitby 1947, the church–kingdom relationship existed in this stable form. It was probably at Madras 1938 that this notion was first challenged by E. Stanley Jones and others who complained about Madras’ starting point as being from the church rather than the kingdom and thought that it needed the ideal of the kingdom. What Jones wanted to see, as was obvious from the discussion, was a view which did not restrict God’s redemptive activities within the church, but which was open to “the Kingdom-of-God movement,” which extends beyond the church, and “includes within itself those elements in the churches which embody the kingdom-of-God life and everything outside the churches which works for Kingdom-of-God ends.”<sup>88</sup> Whereas the Lordship Studies in the 1950s and early 1960s were by no means clear on details of whether or not God acts redemptively in the world, they gave up, for the most part, the absolute identification of the church as the sphere of redemption. It was in the study on “The Missionary Structure of the Congregation” that there was a first confident and clear claim of God’s redemption outside the church. This study noted that the *missio Dei* is not the *missio ecclesiae* and the churches’ mission is to serve the *missio Dei* in the world by pointing to “God at work in world history” “on the basis of revelation.”<sup>89</sup> Uppsala 1968 saw the world as “the place where God is already at work to make all things new, and where he summons” the church “to work with him.”<sup>90</sup> From Uppsala onwards, God being at work in the world beyond the church appeared to be a generally assumed fact. In the Unity

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<sup>88</sup> Jones, “What I Missed,” 705f.

<sup>89</sup> *The Church for Others*, 16 – The Western European Working Group.

<sup>90</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 12 – Report of Section I.

Study and the Unity/Renewal Study, God's work in the world becomes the ground for the fresh emphasis on the church as sign and mystery of God's redemption of the world. At Bangkok, God's work was acknowledged to be in the world but not to be pinpointed.<sup>91</sup>

Unlike the Roman Catholic position in which the church "is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom"<sup>92</sup> and "the sign and instrument of the reign of God that is to come,"<sup>93</sup> with the definite article defining the church's place, the general tendency in the ecumenical documents, with a few exceptions, was to see the church as "a" sign rather than "the" sign.<sup>94</sup> In the Roman Catholic view, the kingdom is the perfection of the church and, as such, non-Christians who are saved are somehow defined into the church, as in Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christians."<sup>95</sup> But the general ecumenical approach in the Sign model was to see the church as one of the signs of the kingdom, as "the leaven in the lump, the salt of the earth and a sign of the kingdom to come."<sup>96</sup> The general sense of ecumenical renderings is that the church should no longer think of itself as the only people to be redeemed in the kingdom

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<sup>91</sup> *The Bangkok Assembly*, 77.

<sup>92</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 5. All citations shall be from *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Austin P. Flannery (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

<sup>93</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 59.

<sup>94</sup> "Salamanca 1973 Report," 292; "Towards Unity in Tension," 10; *Your Kingdom Come*, 236 – Message to the churches; 193 – Report of Section III; 190 – Report of Section II.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Bernard Przewonzy, *Church as Sacrament of the Unity of all Mankind in "Lumen Gentium" and "Gaudium et Spes" and in Semmelroth, Schillebeeckx and Rahner* (Rome: "Miscellanea Franciscana", 1979), 56-81; cf. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 174-177.

<sup>96</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 190 – Report of Section II. See also: *Towards Visible Unity*, 2:198-199 – Report of the Working Group on Creation; 2:221 – Report of the Working Group on Mission; "Chantilly Draft," 167 (2:24). *Church and World*, 2 (1:7).

This posture resulted in an attitude of greater respect for the religious values and spiritualities of non-Christian religions. One of the changes in the Winner model which occurred before Amsterdam 1948, as we have seen, was a comparatively more positive approach to world religions. At Jerusalem 1928 and Madras 1938 desire was expressed to have these non-Christian religions join Christianity in the betterment of society.<sup>97</sup> By 1937, J. H. Oldham had already stated that the church cannot “do its work in the world without entering into combination with other movements that are reshaping human institutions.”<sup>98</sup> Madras called on “all who care for the peace and health of mankind” to “lend their aid to the Church” in healing “the shattered fragments of humanity” evident in the nations of the world.<sup>99</sup> All these show that there was beginning to develop an understanding of commonality, to some extent, between Christian systems on the one hand and non-Christian and non-church systems on the other hand. This commonality, however, had to do only with the good of humanity and not with the salvation of humanity in the limited religious use of the word. This meant that while dialogue as we have come to understand it did not exist at this stage of the Winner model, there was “dialogue” of sorts, that is, the idea of working together with people of other faiths for the good of society based not upon a common essence of the faiths but a common humanity.<sup>100</sup> This aspect of what later became generally understood as dialogue with

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<sup>97</sup> *Jerusalem 1928 Report*, 8:16-17; 1:411; 3:176-177; 3:183.

<sup>98</sup> Oldham, *The Church and Its Functions in Society*, 219.

<sup>99</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, 16 cf. 116. See also practical relations between church and state in pp. 122-127.

<sup>100</sup> It may be important to point out here that not even in the Sign model was dialogue to be undertaken for a commonality of essence. Whereas it was discussed especially at Nairobi 1975, the general decision was that the church has no way of knowing if there is a common essence in the world's religions.

people of other faiths and ideologies was therefore compatible with the Winner model. S. Wesley Ariarajah, longtime staff member and director of interfaith dialogue of the WCC and now Professor of ecumenical theology at Drew University School of Theology, Madison, New Jersey acknowledges this about Lesslie Newbigin and “a number of writers who may call themselves “conservative evangelicals’.”<sup>101</sup> Though the Winner model only learned about inter-faith dialogue later, it was aware of the need to work with non-church agencies and people of other faiths.

In spite of this understanding, however, non-Christian religions were generally denied any salvific value in the Winner model. At Madras, for example, Hendrik Kraemer’s position had a great influence. Although Kraemer was not satisfied with his own view of non-Christian religions and had to modify it more than once after Madras,<sup>102</sup> his position was not amended in its basic assumption, namely, that religion is

[a] fundamental “being in error’; a field in which we can trace God’s own footmarks; noble aspiration and tremendous capacity for creative action; and in the light of Jesus Christ humiliating aberration.<sup>103</sup>

Kraemer also had his opinions about particular religions which were more or less annotations on this position expressed here.<sup>104</sup> This was clearly a Barthian view even though, as David J. Bosch points out, Kraemer was closer to Emil Brunner than to

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David M. Paton, ed., *Breaking Barriers Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975* (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 76. In all cases, the Chiang Mai’s lead in dialogue has been the general position of the Sign model in which dialogue is chiefly for building local communities of justice and peace.

<sup>101</sup> Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbour*, 107.

<sup>102</sup> His work that was responded to by participants at Madras was *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House press, 1938).

<sup>103</sup> H. Kraemer, *Why Christianity of All Religions?* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 104.

<sup>104</sup> E.g. Kraemer, *Why Christianity*, 160f., 216f., for his views on Hinduism and Islam; cf. *The Christian Message*, 142-283.



Barth.<sup>105</sup> Unlike Barth, who found no revelation in nature or creation, and therefore no point of contact with non-Christians, Kraemer, like Emil Brunner, found a general revelation in creation and did in fact criticize Barth's views.<sup>106</sup> Kraemer's "Biblical realism," however, was consistent with Barth's view because he found salvific revelation only in Jesus Christ and saw Scripture as the only authentic record of this revelation.<sup>107</sup> Madras did not wholly adopt all of Kraemer's views but stood generally with his position in spite of dissenting voices.<sup>108</sup>

The Sign model took a different position from the Winner model with respect to non-Christian religions. Great care must be taken here not to mistake the difference between the two models. Like the Winner model, the Sign model also affirmed the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ. This, as we have seen, has been the consistent position of all ecumenical conferences without exception. Thus, the difference between the Winner and the Sign models with respect to non-Christian religions is not that one affirms the uniqueness of Christ while the other denies it. Secondly, the difference is also not in a shift from Christology to a pneumatology which is broader than

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<sup>105</sup> Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 169 cf. Barth's and Brunner's views in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Emil Brunner and the reply "No!" by Karl Barth* trans. from the German by Peter Fraenkel with an intro. John Baillie (London: G. Bles, The Centenary Press, 1946). For the influence Barth on Madras see Bosch, *Witness to the World*, 164-167.

<sup>106</sup> Kraemer, *The Christian Message*, 130-141.

<sup>107</sup> Kraemer, *The Christian Message*, 69-85.

<sup>108</sup> For instance, Madras could see the values of non-Christian religions as responses to God's "yearning after His erring children" and not just simply the people's yearning for God." See *The World Mission of the Church*, 20 cf. 44f. It is important to note the apparent dissent by the German Delegation in pp. 150-151. For differences on the Christian approach to non-Christian religions see the various positions at Madras in *The Madras Series*, I, especially the contributions of Hendrik Kraemer, A. G. Hogg and Walter Marshall Horton, among others. It is important to highlight the fact that in spite of the differences among contributors to the meeting on the religious values of other faiths, the uniqueness and absolute

Christology.<sup>109</sup> Whereas there have always been voices that tended to hold to a pneumatology which was considered broader than Christology, even at Canberra 1991, and whereas these have sometimes attempted to seek by means of this broader pneumatology to explain how God is present in non-Christian religions, this has not been the official position of any ecumenical Assembly or conference. The difference is also not in a shift from cosmic Christology to a Trinitarian view of God, as if that would allow for a greater openness to the world than does Christology.<sup>110</sup> As we have seen, the ecumenical movement adopted no Trinitarian position that devalued the centrality of Christ in revelation or in the *missio Dei*.

The difference exists on two other levels. One was attitudinal; here, the Sign model was comparatively more humble about Christianity in the face of non-Christian religions. The attitude of the Sign model was influenced by the conviction that in other faiths it was possible to perceive “a spirituality, dedication, compassion and a wisdom” which should forbid the Christian from “making judgements about others as though from a position of superiority.”<sup>111</sup> God’s call upon the church in the light of this realization was now seen as a call to repentance, humility, joy and integrity.<sup>112</sup>

The other level of difference was theological. And here, two ways in which the Sign model appropriates the belief in God’s presence in creation beyond the church are

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indispensability of Christ and Christianity still triumphed in the official findings and statements of the conference.

<sup>109</sup> Contra John Bolt, “The Ecumenical Shift to Cosmic Pneumatology,” *Reformed Review* 51/3 (Spring 1998): 255-270.

<sup>110</sup> Contra Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>111</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*, 12 (para. II:21).

<sup>112</sup> *Guidelines on Dialogue*,

revealed. One is the Melbourne/Baar approach which attempts to pinpoint signs of the kingdom in non-Christian religions. This was done by identifying from within the church's faith some signs of the kingdom or fruit(s) of the Spirit and searching for them in non-Christian religions. Melbourne 1980 pointed to such signs in non-Christian socio-political pursuits of justice.<sup>113</sup> Baar 1990 did the same with love, holiness, etc.<sup>114</sup> At Canberra 1991 calls were made for the church to discern the Spirit's presence in non-Christian religions with the "primary criterion" of the Spirit's Christological bearing and the secondary criteria of the "fruits" of the Spirit including love, joy and peace.<sup>115</sup> This approach, however, was not the more common approach within ecumenical church-world relations.

We must note, however, that this position of the Sign model was very different from that of the William Hocking's Commission of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry in the early 1930s. It may be recalled that the missionary's task, as this Commission saw it, was "to understand and fulfill the religious life of the Orient," to live with them as "brothers in a common quest" and not bearers of any salvific message of redemption in Christ.<sup>116</sup> The missionary was a bedfellow in "a common search for truth," "a co-worker with the forces which are making for righteousness within every religious system," standing with them upon "the common ground of all religions."<sup>117</sup> As the view was expressed, it was not exclusively in Jesus Christ and in Christianity that the final

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<sup>113</sup> *Your Kingdom Come*, 187, 191 – Report of Section II.

<sup>114</sup> "The Baar Statement," 298-299.

<sup>115</sup> *Canberra Report*, 117 (6:39) – Report of Section IV.

<sup>116</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, 16, 31.

truth exists; “all fences and private properties in truth are futile: the final truth, whatever it may be, is the New Testament of every existing faith.” Christianity is to co-exist with all other religions “each stimulating the other in growth toward the ultimate goal, unity in the completest religious truth.”<sup>118</sup> The Hocking’s Appraisal Commission differed from the Sign model in that it lacked anchorage in the uniqueness of Christ. The Sign model operates from the assumption of Christ’s uniqueness and from his universal relevance. It does not attempt to reduce or minimize Christ in order to exult the triune God’s or the Spirit’s action. This difference is important as it places the Sign model in a category of its own rather than being clustered with general relativistic positions.

Whereas the Melbourne/Baar approach may be indeed the preference of some within the ecumenical movement and can be considered as consistent with post-Vatican II declarations within Roman Catholicism,<sup>119</sup> it was not the common way that the Sign model appropriated God’s work in creation. The more common way is that which we earlier called the “ethos of humility.”<sup>120</sup> This position, as exemplified in Bangkok 1973, sees God’s work outside the church as a reason for praise and not for determining where God is or is not at work. This tension has been generally characteristic of ecumenical documents. At Nairobi 1975, it was expressed as the tension belief and unbelief.<sup>121</sup> At

<sup>117</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, 35, 47, 40, 33.

<sup>118</sup> *Re-Thinking Missions*, 44 cf. G. H. Anderson, “American Protestants in Pursuit of Mission: 1886-1986” *International Review of Mission* 12/3 (July 1988): 107.

<sup>119</sup> E.g. *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

<sup>120</sup> Please refer to the Shaping of the Sign model in terms of Witness in the previous chapter, especially pp. 213-215.

<sup>121</sup> *Nairobi Report*, 73, 74 – Report of Section III.

Lima 1982 it was the tension between created life and new life in Christ.<sup>122</sup> It was likely the background to the objections of Canterbury 1969 and Annecy 1981 to the identification of the church's unity with other forms of catholicities. At Vancouver 1983 it found expression in the refusal to be categorical about the nature of God's work in non-Christian religions or in recognizing "God's creative work in the religious experience of people of other faiths;"<sup>123</sup> Vancouver 1983 could only recognize God's creative work in non-Christian "seeking for religious truth."<sup>124</sup> In this position, the admission seems to be that the church can only speak of what it knows, namely, that in Jesus Christ God is uniquely revealed for salvation but cannot, because it is not equipped to, speak about the presence of that salvation in any other religious body or movement, yet giving God the freedom to be God. This tradition of caution was continued at the CWME conference at San Antonio in 1989. San Antonio declared that while we "cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ" we cannot at the same time "set limits to the saving power of God." It also noted that the Christian claim to uniqueness is in tension with the Christian belief about God's presence with people of other faiths but that "we appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it."<sup>125</sup> This position has remained the general approach of the ecumenical family to the question about whether and how God is present in the lives of people of other faiths. The church can only speak about what it knows which is basically God's revelation in Christ; everything else outside is God's business!

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<sup>122</sup> *Towards Visible Unity*, 2:202-203 – Report of the Working Group on Creation.

<sup>123</sup> The initial draft on this subject as cited by Wesley Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbour*, 107-108.

<sup>124</sup> *Gathered for Life*, 40 – IG on Witnessing in a Divided World.

<sup>125</sup> *San Antonio Report*, 33 (para. 29).

At the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism at Salvador, Brazil in 1996, San Antonio's position was returned to rather than that of Melbourne 1980, Baar 1990 or Canberra 1991.

The Melbourne/Baar approach is problematic on at least two levels. On one level, it fails to recognize the ambivalent nature of God's work in history,<sup>126</sup> that is, though through faith we may claim that God leads the world to salvation, having been created for Christ (cf. Col. 1:20), God also acts in the world for judgment as a result of the brokenness of sin. This reality should always make the church keep some restraint in its judgment about God's work outside the church. It is in this sense, and perhaps only to this extent, that Calvin's double voice in redemption and creation is of value and the view that general revelation as different from special revelation also meaningful.<sup>127</sup> A second level of problems is that which Bangkok points out about such an approach, namely, that it is to "spy" on God. In other words, this approach fails to give God freedom but thinks that discernment of the Spirit is a ground to speak monolithically and apodictically about realities which are, in the nature of the case, ambivalent and ambiguous. Melbourne takes upon itself the task of distinguishing God's working in creation by means of signs set up from within the life of the church in which God's redeeming and creational-preserving works both exist. Did not Jesus himself warn that his kingdom is not of this

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<sup>126</sup> This was clearly pointed out at Lima 1982. Cf. *Towards Visible Unity*, 2:209 – Report on the Working Group on History.

<sup>127</sup> For the problematic of this distinction between general and special revelation, see Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, rev. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999, c. 1979, 1986), 49-52, 82ff. Berkhof calls for a dialectic understanding of the relationship between the revelation in Christ and that outside Israel and the church.

world?<sup>128</sup> And does not the Melbourne/Baar approach seem to be guilty of making God's kingdom what could be located by signs in this world?

It is exactly for this same reason that the Winner model's attitude of defining how God works in non-Christian religions is problematic. Like the Melbourne/Baar approach, the Winner model spies on God in categorically declaring that God is not redemptively present outside the church. This is one of the respects in which the "ethos of humility" may serve as a corrective to the Winner model. The problem with the Winner model is not in its commitment to preach the gospel to all nations and make disciples for Christ; it is in its belief that this discipling task is a conquest of which it is the agent. In making this assumption, the Winner model apparently regards itself as taking to the world a God who is not already redemptively at work within it, or who is only at work generally and not specially (general revelation over against special revelation), or whose work in creation is only a preparation for the gospel to be proclaimed by the church. It is this assumption which the Sign model questions. Both the Winner and the Sign models would readily accept the call to make disciples of all nations, but whereas the Sign model thinks that this involves a relationship of sharing because the church is still part of the world in which God is redemptively at work, the Winner model thinks that it alone has God redemptively to take to the world. Whereas the Sign model interprets its action within the world as a humble testimony to the world about Christ, the world's redeemer, the Winner model assumes that the church possesses Christ exclusively but needs to take him to the world, and that without its preaching to the world this Christ is not

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<sup>128</sup> John 18:36; this was one way that David M Stowe attempted a critique of Melbourne, even though he also admits that Melbourne "specifically referred at times to the fullness of the Kingdom beyond time and in spiritual dimensions." "What Did Melbourne Say?" *Missiology* 9/1 (January 1981): esp. 32f.

redemptively present to the world. It is in this that the difference between the Sign and Winner models exists.

However, the strength of the Winner model lies in its acknowledgment of the context of evil which is at warfare with the good. While it is weak in not sufficiently realizing this evil also within its own very life, it is, at least, a model which raises the issue of conflict. The Sign model does not lack this, but it fails to sufficiently see this evil within individual lives and only locates it within systems. It seems to assume an evil world and a good humanity, as if the evils in the world are not the result of humanity's failure. In this sense, as we have already noted, the Winner model would seem to be a corrective to the Sign model. But the difference between them lies in the assumptions made. For the Sign model, its witness to the world cannot exclude it from being, like the world, in need of the gospel. For the Winner model, its witness to the world assumes that God is mediated to the world through its unilinear witness.

Another possible strength of the Sign model lies in its closeness to the language of Paul in the 1 Corinthians 9:18-23 where Paul speaks of himself as having become all things to all – Jews, Gentiles and the weak – in order to win them and save some. However, it is to be noted that scholars are divided concerning what Paul meant here. Whereas some have argued that the entire ninth chapter of 1 Corinthians be seen as an apologetic text in which Paul's chief concern is the defense of his apostleship,<sup>129</sup> others have argued that it is part of the context of chapters 8-10 in which Paul was discussing

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<sup>129</sup> E.g. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 392-397; Charles Kingsley Barrett, "Things Sacrificed to Idols," *New Testament Studies* 11 (1965): 138-153 at 150; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 152.



the issue of food offered to idols.<sup>130</sup> Thus, while some with the former opinion think that Paul is here referring to evangelizing non-Christians, most in the latter opinion see the text as speaking of Christian living in the believing community. This latter opinion relies on Paul's understanding of "the weak" in chapter 8 who were evidently Christians (cf. 1 Corinth. 8:9-12). This would mean that the idea of winning some here in Paul's view is not the same as the Winner model's idea of winning the world for Christ. Even an evangelical like Craig Blomberg has been forced by this consideration to say that Paul's use of "win" in this text is "in the broader sense of winning to a more mature form of Christian faith."<sup>131</sup> Blomberg's view would seem supported by Paul's view that he does this "winning" in order to share [in the blessings of the gospel?] with those being won.<sup>132</sup> Along this line of interpretation, Richard Hays also held that the idea of salvation involved here is to be seen in terms of 1 Corinth. 1:18 in which believers are being saved rather than saved once and for all.<sup>133</sup> If this interpretation is correct, it would mean that the Winner model is no continuation of Paul's commitment to "win" some in this passage of Scripture. Nevertheless, the possibility that this could be what Paul was referring to, as some scholars hold, makes this a possible strength for the Winner model.

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<sup>130</sup> E.g. Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997), 146-158, esp. 149; Wendell Lee Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians*. SBL Dissertation Series 68 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 271-275.

<sup>131</sup> Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians. The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Texts to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 184.

<sup>132</sup> Paul did not say that those being won were to share in the blessings with him, but that he was to share in it with them. The Greek of verse 23 is not as in the NRSV "I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings" but rather "Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*" as in the New King James Version. Paul's point was that he did what he did in order to be a fellow-participant in the gospel with those "won." This would seem to indicate that he was speaking to Christians rather than non-Christians. More so, the Winner model's idea of the world sharing with the church in the blessings of the gospel would appear to be reversed in this passage if this is what Paul meant.

<sup>133</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 155.

### E. “The Ethos of Humility” and the Sovereignty of God

We may now ask a last question with respect to the models: does not the “ethos of humility” of the Sign model comport better than the Winner model with the sovereignty of God’s grace which is so precious to the Reformed tradition? G. C. Berkouwer, following Herman Bavinck, noted that in view of Christ’s answer, “strive to enter,” given to the question as to whether those to be saved will be few or many, “the Church may not function as a fearful border guard, but rather as one who brings good tidings.”<sup>134</sup> Lesslie Newbigin noted that:

An entity can be defined either in terms of its boundaries or in terms of its centre. The Church is an entity which is properly described by its centre. It is impossible to define exactly the boundaries of the Church, and the attempt to do so always ends in an evangelical legalism. But it is always possible and necessary to define the centre. The Church is its proper self, and is a sign of the Kingdom, only insofar as it continually points men and women beyond itself to Jesus and invites them to personal conversion and commitment to him.<sup>135</sup>

Commenting on Jesus’ response to the disciples’ question as to whether the time has come for the kingdom to be restored to Israel, Newbigin pointed out that “[i]t is not possible to be either optimistic or pessimistic about the sovereignty of God!”<sup>136</sup> He also notes that the call upon the church by God is to bear witness to Jesus Christ and that God has promised the Spirit in this task of witness bearing. However, whereas the corporate life of the church may be “the locus” and “the occasion” of the Spirit’s witness, Newbigin

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<sup>134</sup> Berkouwer, *The Church*, 162; cf. also Herman Bavinck’s view elsewhere: *The Last Things: Hope for this World and the Next*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 164-166; cf. J. H. Bavinck, *The Church between Temple and Mosque: A Study of the Relationship between the Christian Faith and Other Religions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 126f.

<sup>135</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Sign of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 68; cf. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 65: “We cannot therefore say *what* the church is in all circumstances and what it comprises in itself. But we can tell *where* the church happens.” (emphasis in original text).

continues, the Spirit's witness is always the work of the Holy Spirit alone, "always something which is beyond anything that can be explained as the work of the Church."<sup>137</sup> The insight of Newbigin means that the church cannot claim to exhaust the Spirit's work, as the Spirit is not an agent of the church but the church is an agent of the Spirit. In this respect, Jürgen Moltmann explained that the church does not administer the Spirit but it is the Spirit that "administers" the church with the events of word and faith, sacrament and grace, offices and traditions." He further notes that if the church understands itself as "with all its tasks and powers, in the Spirit and against the horizon of the Spirit's history," then it will see itself in "its particularity as one element in the power of the Spirit" without any "suspicion or jealousy at the saving efficacies of the Spirit outside the church" but in thankfulness for them "as signs that the Spirit is greater than the church and that God's purpose of salvation reaches beyond the church."<sup>138</sup> All these positions underscore the freedom of God in mission to the world and would seem consistent with the Reformed affirmation of God's sovereign freedom.

But does not the insistence on explicit faith as a condition for salvation required by the Winner model limit this free, sovereign grace of God? How necessary is faith for salvation? Again, G. C. Berkouwer would seem a good guide here. He points out that "the "necessity" of faith does not mean that faith constitutes salvation" and the

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<sup>136</sup> Newbigin, *Sign of the Kingdom*, 35.

<sup>137</sup> Newbigin, *Sign of the Kingdom*, 35-43. Elsewhere he wrote: "At no point may the Church point to itself as the place of redemption. It authenticates itself as truly the fellowship of the Holy Spirit when it points beyond itself and all its works, and invites men's attention to Christ, to the Mercy Seat, to the Name given under heaven by which men can be saved." Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World* (London and New York: IMC, 1958), 20.

<sup>138</sup> Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 64-65.

“*miser cordia Dei* is not “dependent” on human, explicit faith.”<sup>139</sup> Herman Bavinck

notes that

the Reformed refused to establish the measure of grace needed for a human being still to be united with God, though subject to many errors and sins, or to determine the extent of the knowledge indispensably necessary to salvation. Furthermore, they maintained that the means of grace are not absolutely necessary for salvation and that, also aside from the Word and sacraments, God can regenerate persons for eternal life.<sup>140</sup>

Apparently, Bavinck refers to the position of John Calvin with respect to the regeneration of infants.<sup>141</sup> According to Calvin, while for adults “the Word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration,” “we deny the reference from this that infants cannot be regenerated by God’s power.” This, says Calvin, would be “as easy and ready to him as it is incomprehensible and wonderful to us.” To deny this possibility, he adds, would be “an unsafe argument that would take from the Lord the power to make himself known to them in any way he pleases.”<sup>142</sup> This position on infants seems to have been the consistent view of Reformed theologians since Calvin.<sup>143</sup> Can one move beyond this to consider the possibility of salvation by the grace of regeneration beyond the church and explicit faith in Jesus Christ? Could Calvin’s understanding of the Lord’s “power to

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<sup>139</sup> G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church*, trans. James E. Davison (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 160

<sup>140</sup> Bavinck, *The Last Things*, 165

<sup>141</sup> Bavinck cites as endnote Calvin’s *Institutes* IV.xvi. 9.

<sup>142</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles, in Collaboration with the editor and a Committee of Advisers (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), IV. xvi. 18 (cf. 17-20), esp. 35-38.

<sup>143</sup> Bavinck, *The Last Things*, 164-166.

make himself known . . . in any way he pleases”<sup>144</sup> be legitimately extended to include those outside the church or those who lived in Africa and many other parts of the world long before Christ’s historical event?

From the fact that Calvin evidently had on mind only infants of believers, great caution may need to be exercised in making this extension from within the traditional Reformed theological framework of which Calvin may be said to be representative. This framework maintains a sharp division between God’s work in redemption and God’s work in creation, limiting redemption and sanctification to the church and seeing God’s work in creation as that of general sustenance and preservation of creation. This framework also reads salvation history from the perspective of the incarnation and not from Christ’s pre-existence. At best, God’s action in creation, in this framework, is only a preparation for the gospel.<sup>145</sup> Extreme caution would therefore be needed to operate from this traditional starting point of the framework. Perhaps the possibilities of this extension would be more hopeful if the starting point of the Reformed framework is not the unique historic redemptive event of the incarnation-cross-resurrection but Christ as Creator, who made the world for himself, and to whom the world ultimately returns (cf. Col. 1:15-17).

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<sup>144</sup> Herman Bavinck thinks that a handful, from the earliest moments of the church’s history, have held to the possibility of God extending regenerating grace to those who did not explicitly confess Christ. See his *The Last Things*, 164-166.

<sup>145</sup> For a short summary of Calvin’s two worlds with reference to the church and the world see: John Bolt, “Spiritus Creator: The Use and Abuse of Calvin’s Cosmic Pneumatology,” in Peter De Klerk, ed., *Calvin and the Holy Spirit: Papers and Responses Presented at the Sixth Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies Sponsored by the Calvin Studies Society held at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan on May 6 and 7, 1987* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Calvin Studies Society, 1989), 17-33, esp. 27; cf. Calvin, *Institutes* I.v.14; II.i.4; II.ii.22; II.x.2; III.vii.6; IV.xx.3, 9.

Be this as it may, from the framework of the Sign model and the ethos of humility, there is no need for any extension since God's work already takes place redemptively in creation. The question this raises for the Sign model is how to understand this cosmic reach of God's redemptive work with the particular incarnation-cross-resurrection event in Jesus Christ. This surely would need more development in the Sign model. However, what we have seen in this study is that the Sign model's understanding of God's work in creation does not see a different or additional salvific revelation in creation apart from the one salvific revelation in Jesus Christ, but it shifts the place where this is occurring from the church, as in the Winner model, to the world. So then, if the Sign model does not hold to an additional revelation but the one and only revelation in Jesus Christ, and if it seeks by its "ethos of humility" to protect God's sovereign freedom, could it be that the Sign model is not altogether foreign to the Reformed understanding? If God's electing love is boundless, could not the Sign model only be another way of protecting that which is precious to the Reformed tradition? G. C. Berkouwer's and Herman Bavinck's views already cited in this section would seem to be consistent with the "ethos of humility" even though the basic frameworks differ. Is there a possibility that the ecumenical "ethos of humility" can serve as an inspiration to Reformed thought especially in its view of God's sovereignty?

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The ecumenical movement of the twentieth century traces its roots to the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910. Through this missionary conference three streams of ecumenical concerns emerged in the Universal Christian Council on Life and Work (Life and Work), the Faith and Order Movement and the

International Missionary Council (IMC). The Life and Work Council attempted to apply Christian ethical principles to socio-political concerns. The Faith and Order Movement pursued the church's unity and the IMC continued the missionary concerns of the ecumenical movement. In 1948 Life and Work and Faith and Order came together to form the World Council of Churches, with the IMC joining in 1961. It has been contended by many observers that the WCC has changed from its original mission and "Basis."<sup>146</sup> In this dissertation, I have attempted to show that these changes are best understood in terms of two models of church-world relations – "the Church as Winner of the World" (Winner model) and "the Church as Sign to the World" (Sign model). The former model describes that understanding of the church-world relation in which the church is seen as called to win the world for Christ by means of the Christian gospel and thereby to realize the oneness of humanity. The latter model describes that understanding of the church-world relation in which the church is not to stand over against the world or to win it for Christ but is to be in solidarity with it as a sign to it of God's reconciliation of all things in Christ. It is in changes in elements from the Winner to the Sign model that the changes in ecumenism may be more broadly understood.

I have shown that from Edinburgh 1910 to Whitby 1947 the ecumenical movement's understanding of the church-world relation was maintained in terms of the Winner model. In this model, as it was inherited at Edinburgh 1910, Christ was seen as unique and universally relevant as God and Savior. And because Christ is fully revealed only in Christianity, all other religions were seen as aberrations of the truth and, therefore, false. It was, therefore, necessary to be a Christian in order to be saved. The

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<sup>146</sup> See Chapter One of this work, especially pp. 1-4.

church, then, saw its task as that of winning the world for Christ through the preaching of the gospel which was primarily verbal and secondarily social. It was by means of the church's Christianizing effort that the unity of humanity would be achieved. The church, therefore, was to be united for the sake of its mission in the world. This model was shaped ethically, ecclesiological and evangelistically from Edinburgh 1910 through Whitby 1947 through the three streams of ecumenical activities which emerged from it.

At Liverpool 1912 the criterion of "humanity" was emphasized for mission and ethics. At Stockholm 1925 the church's socio-ethical uniqueness was shown to lie in the spiritual ideal of the kingdom of God. At Oxford 1937, the context of totalitarian states led to the emphasis on humanity's true worth as existing in relationship with God. Also, the church's unavoidable ambivalent appropriation of the ethical ideal of the kingdom as a result of its sinfulness was noted and the need for interdisciplinary studies for ethics was underscored. At Faith and Order at Lausanne 1927, in spite of differences in the church's nature, the one gospel that the church has as its message was highlighted to be Jesus Christ. At Edinburgh 1937, the church was seen as the sphere of redemption. At the IMC meeting at Jerusalem 1928, the universal need for the gospel was freshly reemphasized and that began to shape mission in such a way that the idea of mission as what the Western nations did alone was dropped. This continued through Madras 1938 and Whitby 1947 when the concept of mission as "partnership in obedience" between the older and younger churches came to stay. Also at Whitby, the place of evangelism in mission was highlighted.

At Amsterdam 1948, this model was inherited virtually unchanged, but a Christological emphasis largely inspired by Karl Barth accented Christ as the winner



rather than the church. Yet Amsterdam still affirmed the church as the winner of the world. Lund 1952 maintained the Christological accenting of the model. However from Willingen 1952 and through the other assemblies and ecumenical conferences in the 1950s and 1960s, this Winner model was challenged in several respects. Because God was now understood to be in mission primarily to the world which includes the church; because Christ is the hope of the world which makes the world have an eschatological bearing in him; and because the world is the sphere of God's action, elements of the Sign model began to challenge aspects of the Winner model. Through these challenges, the ecumenical movement's ecclesiology changed. The previous view that the church was the sphere of redemption was given up for the view that it is the world which is the sphere of redemption. The world was taken seriously as the place where God was already at work apart from the church. The world was no longer seen as an object to be conquered by a church separated from it but as itself the recipient of God's loving action. God's activity in the world apart from the church meant that the church had to consider itself as only a part of the cosmic *missio Dei*. Mutual witness and listening was called for. The church existed for the world as a sign of humankind's ultimate unity in the kingdom of God as a community of justice and peace. This change, which gradually emerged through the 1950s and 1960s, came to a climax at the fourth assembly of the WCC at Uppsala in 1968. From Uppsala through Canberra 1991, this new model was shaped both ecclesologically and in terms of witness.

Through this change a different attitude developed in ecumenical understanding and practice of church-world relations. The church was still taken seriously but now its self-understanding was to take into consideration the world from which it was called and

to which it is sent. Its witness in the world was still important, but now, not as a conqueror winning a hostile world to God but in solidarity with the world as a sign to it of God's already continuing action of redemption within it. The church is called to live in this world in a relationship of mutuality and sharing, not only with other human beings but also with the whole creation. It was to manifest this commitment to all of creation through pursuits of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Its life of unity in which it seeks a common faith, a common witness and common ways of decision making and teaching authoritatively was to be one of the means by which it lives as sign to the world pointing to what the world is to become in Christ. Non-Christian religions are now not to be judged as evidences of Satanic scheming, but as dialoging partners whose witness about God and the world must be taken seriously, and before whose spirituality the church was to be humble. Yet the church still owes them its witness to Jesus as God and Savior according to the Scriptures. In this way, God's presence among non-Christian religions as in all the world was affirmed. But while some took this as a reason to discern the signs of the kingdom among non-Christian religions, the general trend was to see God's presence outside the church as a reason for praise to God and not as a ground to pinpoint where and how God is or is not at work.

Throughout every stage of this change, and in both the Winner and Sign models, the uniqueness and universal relevance of Jesus Christ was affirmed. It was this understanding that led the Winner model to its commitment to winning the world for Christ and to seeing all other religions as false and idolatrous. But it was also this conviction that led the Sign model to seek to witness to the salvation of Christ in all the world and in all realms of life. But whereas in the Winner model, the activities of this

unique Christ were limited to the church and to the mission of the church, in the Sign model the activities of this unique Christ go beyond the church to the world, a world that includes the church. And whereas in the Winner model, the church is the only body which has received the love of this universally relevant Christ, and the world only receives this love through the church's missionary activities, in the Sign model, the world is already the recipient of this love and the church only witnesses to this already present and active love of God in the world, a love which is experienced by both the church and the world, and on account of which the church should listen to the world just as much as the world listens to the church. For the Winner model, the uniqueness of Christ is the ground for Christianization of all the world, but for the Sign model, the uniqueness of Christ is the ground for being in solidarity with all the world and participation in justice and peace. In the Sign model, invitation to Christ and conversion remain important, but they are not essential goals of the church's mission. Such conversion is God's work, not the church's, and failure to respond in explicit faith to the Kerygma does not restrict the possibility or scope of God's loving work.

The change, then, within ecumenical understanding of the church-world relation is not one in which there was a movement away from the initial ecumenical eschatological vision of the one human family to a concentration on the church, as would seem to be suggested by the tendencies which Bert Hoedemaker discerns, such that church unity was no longer regarded as a manifestation of a broader vision, and the "wider issues" were now regarded as *addenda* to the agenda of church unity.<sup>147</sup> The ecumenical vision has consistently kept its eschatological sense unshaken. In the Winner

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<sup>147</sup> Hoedemaker, "Unity of Humankind," 311-312.

model, however, this eschatological sense was only a possibility realizable through the church's Christianizing work. By contrast, in the Sign model, eschatological hope shifts back to God as a reality which God was already realizing and to which the church is called to bear witness as sign. As sign, the church points beyond itself to the greater reality of Christ, and to the kingdom of God in which all humanity will be one through the reconciliation which is being worked out in the world by Christ. The church's successes and failures were now no longer believed to be what determines human destiny; human destiny was now properly located in God and the church was now seen as an essential means that God chooses to use but not an absolutely necessary means to human destiny.

Also, the change is not, as Konrad Raiser suggests, a movement from a "Christocentric universalism" which did not allow for the wider vision of the unity of humankind and of all life to a Trinitarian position which does.<sup>148</sup> As we have seen repeatedly in this study, the unity of humankind has been an operative goal from the beginning of ecumenical missionary understanding. Secondly, it was the Christocentric universalism which was used to argue for the unity of humankind. Human unity was simply considered a Christological reality. Thirdly, no view of God was taken which questioned the centrality of Christ in ecumenical thought. Even the appropriation of the idea of *missio Dei* at Willingen 1952 centered this mission of God in the cross of Christ. For Uppsala 1968, the Holy Spirit's catholicity of the church is the quality by which the

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<sup>148</sup> Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, chapters 2 and 3.

Church permeates the whole of creation with “the fullness of life in Christ.”<sup>149</sup> At Canberra 1991, the primary criterion of discerning the Holy Spirit was the Spirit’s pointing to the redemption *in Christ*. It is therefore not accurate to say that ecumenical thought shifted its focus from a cosmic Christology to a Trinitarian view of God. The cosmic Christ is a Trinitarian Christ.

In the same vein, it is not accurate to designate the change in ecumenical thought, as John Bolt has argued as a move from Christology to cosmic pneumatology.<sup>150</sup> Christian witness to non-Christians, though involving dialogue, was always to proclaim Christ as God and Savior. As Canberra confessed: our “conviction that Jesus Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit is “God’s saving presence for all” is not hesitant or partial.”<sup>151</sup> The primary criterion for discerning the Spirit outside the church was the Spirit’s Christological witness.

For this same reason, the position of many evangelical critics who see a shift from the initial commitment to reach the unreached to social humanization and human unification by means of religious pluralism and syncretism<sup>152</sup> cannot be demonstrated by appeal to the official ecumenical documents. The Sign model did not lack the place of conversion but did it in a different attitude from the Winner model.

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<sup>149</sup> *Uppsala Report*, 13 – Report of Section I; Nikos Nissiotis, “The Pneumatological Aspect,” 12. Nissiotis notes Polycarp’s use of catholicity in which he spoke “of the catholic Church which is throughout the oikumene,” noting that “[h]ere the Church is qualified as catholic and only as such and because of this qualitative, unique and distinctive sense can she exist and should she be extended in the whole world.” 13.

<sup>150</sup> John Bolt, “The Ecumenical Shift to Cosmic Pneumatology,” *Reformed Review* 51/3 (Spring 1998): 255-270.

<sup>151</sup> *Canberra Report*, 101 – Report of Section III.

<sup>152</sup> See, for example, the Berlin Ecumenical Manifesto and the many contributions of evangelicals making the same point. Walter Künneth and Peter Beyerhaus, ed., *Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft?*

The changing face of ecumenism is thus to be discerned in the changed understanding of the church and of the world and their relation to each other rather than in Christology or the doctrine of God. The ecumenical movement began with the conviction that the church was the sphere of redemption, called to win the world for Christ and thereby realize the unity of humankind. Between Amsterdam 1948 and Uppsala 1968, this idea was challenged on several fronts. By Uppsala 1968 a new understanding was already in place in which the world was seen as the sphere of redemption and the church was seen as called to be in solidarity with the world as a sign to it of God's already on-going work of reconciliation of all things in Christ. The changing face of twentieth century ecumenical thought is best seen in the changed understanding of the relation between church and world, a change I have characterized as a shift from the Winner to the Sign model. Gert Ruppell suggests that this involves a growing maturity of understanding of the unity of humankind away from a narrow, partial and one-sided Western concept to a broader global conception.<sup>153</sup> Yet, a simple Western/non-Western dichotomy does not give the full picture. The change in its broadest sense involves a shift in understanding of the church and the world, and the relationship between them with respect to the redeeming work of God, a shift I have characterized as moving from the Winner model to the Sign model.

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*die Berliner Ökumene-Erklärung zur utopischen Vision des Weltkirchenrates* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1975).

<sup>153</sup> Gert Ruppell, *Einheit ist Unteilbar: die Menschheit und ihre Einheit als Thema in der ökumenischen Diskussion zwischen 1910 und 1983* (Rottenburg: Ernst Lange-Institut für Ökumenische Studien, 1992)

## **APPENDIX:**

### **THESES FOR DISSERTATION DEFENSE**

#### **I. THESES RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION**

1. Twentieth century ecumenism may be understood in terms of two models of church-world relation – “the Church as Winner of the World” and “the Church as Sign to the World.” In the former model, the church understands itself as called to win the world for Christ by means of the gospel and thereby to unite humankind in Christ. In the latter model, the church understands itself, not as standing over against the world to win it for Christ, but as being in solidarity with the world as a sign to it of God’s reconciliation of all things in Christ. The changes in twentieth century ecumenism may be best understood in terms of the change from the Winner to the Sign model.
2. The ecumenical movement has consistently affirmed the uniqueness and universal relevance of Christ and has never in any of its official assemblies or declarations denied this Christian uniqueness.
3. The eschatological understanding of the unity of humankind has been a consistent affirmation of the ecumenical movement from its earliest beginnings and this has always been understood Christologically.
4. The ecumenical movement, in its official assemblies or declarations has never held to a view of dialogue with non-Christian faiths and ideologies which sees dialogue as a means to the unification of all faiths and/or ideologies. Dialogue has been chiefly for building local communities of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, and for mutual understanding of the faiths.
5. According to ecumenical thought it is important to recognize the redemptive work of the triune God as also taking place outside of the church. Acknowledging this is not to be seen as a second or additional redemption and revelation to that given in Christ. It is not a revelation for the church to pinpoint or a ground for theological speculations about God’s presence and actions, but a reason for praise. This attitude describes the ecumenical “ethos of humility.”
6. The ideal of the Kingdom of God has been the ethical guide of the ecumenical movement from its earliest beginnings. But from the Church and Society meeting at Geneva in 1966 and onwards the humanity of Jesus has been seen as the representation of this ethical ideal.
7. The commitment to social work was not a later addition to twentieth century ecumenism but was an integral part of the ecumenical understanding of the gospel from its earliest beginnings. There has been no departure from the gospel to

social work in its official positions, but an enlarged understanding of the gospel in which social action is an integral part.

8. The understanding of J. C. Hoekendijk in which the church was defined purely in terms of its apostolicity was a misuse of the *missio Dei* concept. No ecumenical assembly or conference endorsed this interpretation. Rather, the church was always seen as essential to the mission of God in the world, though not absolutely essential.

## II. THESES FROM COURSE WORK

9. One's view of the doctrine of revelation has a tremendous significance for one's view of the church's missionary calling.
10. The divine command and natural law theories of ethics may, in the final analysis, be both reducible to the nature of God.
11. The doctrine of predestination as held by the Council of Dort is not the doctrine of double predestination as understood by the Protestant Reformed Church since, in the view of the former, election and reprobation are not symmetrical decrees.
12. John's Calvin's interpretation of Romans 1:21ff., as David Steinmeitz rightly pointed out, was original and different from both the patriarchal and medieval exegetical traditions as well as Calvin's contemporaries.
13. Reinhold Niebuhr defined sin as pride, but Valerie Saving thinks that pride is the sin of men and not of women. Whereas Saving's approach helps highlight ways in which women in some cultures may be more prone than men to reflect human common sinfulness, it fails to see the basic place of pride in all human sin.

## III. MISCELLANEOUS THESES

14. Any mission of the Christian church that does not deal with the demonic in the world and in human experience cannot claim to be wholistic and would be ultimately irrelevant for Africa.
15. One of the clearest evidences of the move of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Reformed Churches in West Michigan would be the presence of non-Dutch names on the churches' membership records.



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