



The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World

Lausanne Occasional Paper 24

Cooperating in World Evangelization: A Handbook on Church/Para-Church Relationships

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LOP 24: Cooperating in World Evangelization: A Handbook on Church/Para-Church Relationships

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Foreword

Recent years have witnessed a rapid increase in the number of Christian organisations around the world. These specialised ministry groups have, for the most part, grown out of a genuine desire to help fulfil the task of world evangelization. But they have not always been seen in that light by the Church in its congregational or denominational expression.

It must be said with equal emphasis that some of these "parachurch" groups have not always shown the respect and acceptance which characterised the Christ who "loved the Church and gave himself for it."

It is, therefore, not surprising that a spirit of prejudice and mistrust has developed between these two entities, though both strive to extend the Kingdom of God, of which they are part. This has often deteriorated to the point where co-operation in the mission of the Church becomes impossible.

In his Theological Preamble which follows, John Stott, with clarity and brevity, suggests that church/para-church tension is a reflection of "the age-old tension between authority and freedom." Christians are urged, in that same preamble, to recognise that *independence of the church is bad, co-operation with the church is better, service as an arm of the church is best.*

But herein lies a further problem. Many para-church groups contend that it is precisely this kind of accountable relationship which blunts the cutting edge of their

ministries. Such an arrangement would, they feel, spell failure to their programmes because of bureaucracy, red tape and the quagmire of ecclesiastical decision-making.

It was because of this impasse that the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization established an international Commission on Evangelical Co-operation. As part of the Consultation on World Evangelization, which convened in Pattaya, Thailand, June 15th-27th, 1980, the Commission was conceived as having a supportive role. Its purpose was to enhance the possibility of carrying out the strategies drawn up by the 17 mini-consultations which formed the major part of the gathering.

Six sub-commissions were appointed to enable the Commission to bring recommendations to the entire Consultative Council at Pattaya. Two of the six were seen as having ongoing relevance in the task of world evangelization. Consequently, following the submission of brief statements from all six sub-commissions (which were adopted and included in the Thailand statement), it was felt desirable to do further work on "Church/para-church relationships" which would include some limited aspects of "church-missions relationships." The group consequently reconvened throughout the second week to grapple with the issues outlined in this document, in which it is referred to as "the Commission."

It soon became obvious that we could in no way come near completion of this task in the time available. It was, therefore, proposed that I should bring together the multiplicity of contributions and conclusions, do whatever further research was necessary and draft a document which would help us to co-operate in our evangelistic task.

Unforeseen illness regrettably delayed the drafting process, but on its completion in early 1983, LCWE approved the release of the report for publication. At that time I was also asked to prepare a study guide, so that our findings could be more productively discussed by leaders in both church and para-church alike.

Even a cursory thumbing through these pages will suffice to note that this paper was not written as an academic exercise. Other than the work underlying Appendix A, on para-church validity, these are essentially practical, down-to-earth suggestions. Those of us who took part in the discussions are actually involved in the day-to-day task of world evangelization. The pleas and cries for help are therefore coming from the heat of the battlefield and not from our ivory towers.

Many of our thoughts were born out of the painful procedure of exposing our own weaknesses. We found it necessary to humbly confess our sinfulness and to seek strength to change our selfish ways. We believe we saw what you see and felt what you feel, as Christian leaders. It will not be surprising, therefore, if you also experience that pain as you read and respond. This is particularly true because we decided to "tell it like it is" about the problems which prevent our working together. Some of our observations will appear quite blunt, and many of these are of a rather personal nature. But we are convinced they must be brought out into the open. For as we have struggled together, we have learned that co-operation in evangelism cannot be built on the shaky foundation of strained relationships.

The ten of us packed 22 sessions into two short weeks. But we have come to love and trust one another. Though from five continents and vastly differing backgrounds and cultures, we were able to enter into open, honest dialogue. Because our common bond in Christ transcended other differences, we came to realise that when we could trust our brother's motives, we did not have to agree with him.

The need to resolve these issues is now more acute than ever. But it is our hope that this document will not become a mere focal point for *discussion*. The need is for *action*. We would therefore pray that this will be but the beginning of an ongoing determination to actually scale those walls which will otherwise divide us and paralyse our evangelistic initiatives to reach the unreached peoples of the world.

Keith A. Price
Chairman, Church/Para-church Relationships
LCWE Commission on Co-operation
March 1983

1. Theological Preamble

Our starting point is Paul's exhortation to the Philippians: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (1:27). It is clear from this Scripture that Christian conduct which is worthy of the gospel (that is, authentically "evangelical") will be marked by stability and unity in the gospel. Those who share "the faith of the gospel" (the "evangelical faith") are both to "stand firm" in it and to "strive side by side" for it. We are to do so "in one spirit" and "with one mind."

Paul reverts to his theme in the second chapter, begging his readers to complete his joy "by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (v.2), and he goes on to argue that this "one" mind is a "humble" mind, the mind of Christ who first "emptied himself" of his glory and then "humbled himself" to serve (vv.5-8). Unity and humility are twins. Or better, unity is humility's child. This being so, repentance and self-abasement are always the uncomfortable conditions of reconciliation.

This Christian unity is not to be exhibited only in fellowship, however, but also in co-operation. That is, it is not sufficient that we have together embraced the gospel and therefore recognise each other as fellow-members of God's family.

The gospel occupies a central place in the lives of "evangelical" Christians. We not only believe the gospel, but also are concerned to "defend and confirm" it by apologetics (Phil. 1:7,16) and to "further" or "advance" it by evangelism (Phil. 1:4,12), and are willing if necessary to suffer for it (Phil. 1:28-30; cf. 2 Tim. 1:8, 2:9). Moreover, we are to engage in these activities *together* so that a true "partnership" in the gospel develops (Phil. 1:5).

It is true that in Philippians 1, Paul refers to envy and rivalry between different gospel-preaching groups and declares that even in this situation he rejoices. Yet this fact is to be understood as a symptom of Paul's humble Christ-centredness, and not as an excuse for rivalry. What made him rejoice was that *Christ* was being preached, not that some of the preachers had ulterior motives (Phil. 1:15-18).

It is this New Testament emphasis on "striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" which lies behind paragraph 7 of the Lausanne Covenant, which is entitled "Co-operation in Evangelism." It reads:

We affirm that the church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation. We recognise, however, that organisational unity may take many forms and does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work and witness. We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission. We urge the development of regional and functional co-operation for the furtherance of the church's mission, for strategic planning, for mutual encouragement, and for the sharing of resources and experience (Jn. 17:21,23; Eph. 4:3, 4; Jn. 13:35; Phil. 1:27; Jn. 17:11-23).

Three relevant points may be made about this paragraph.

First, it begins with the theological affirmation that unity in truth is God's purpose, rather than with the pragmatic statement that disunity undermines our gospel and mars our testimony. We endorse this order as a right and biblical emphasis.

Secondly, the unity in truth which is God's purpose is described as "visible." Although it is added that "organisational unity may take many forms" (and evangelical Christians are not in full accord with each other about this), we are agreed in our rejection of the two extremes of rigidity and formlessness. For on the one hand "the church is the community of God's people rather than an institution" (Para. 6), that is, its essence is people not forms; and on the other, we refuse to take refuge in a concept of spiritual unity which nobody can see. Some kind of visible structure is indispensable.

Thirdly, God's summons to unity is strengthened by his summons to evangelism. The two were closely related in the teaching and intercession of Jesus; he pleaded and prayed for his disciples' love and unity, so that the world might believe (Jn. 13:35; 17:21,23). We cannot preach reconciliation if we do not exhibit it. God is creating through Christ a new community, even a "single new humanity" (Eph. 2:15); it is for the bringing into being of this people that Christ died

(Titus 2:14). So the church is an essential part of the Good News, and every church proclaiming it must embody it. The people of God must be seen to be what they claim to be. We have no liberty to duck the challenges to a visible fellowship of love.

Co-operation or Competition?

It is sometimes argued that competition in Christian work is healthy, on the ground that it stimulates and challenges people, and brings the best out of them. This may be true, as an observed fact. In evangelism, as in athletics and commerce, competition can be a spur to success. But an empirical fact is not necessarily a theological truth. Can the competitive spirit in Christian service be defended biblically? Some have attempted to do so by appealing to the law of the jungle and the survival of the fittest. But, though evolutionists may find this argument compelling, it holds no weight with those of us who believe that "nature red in tooth and claw" is contrary to God's perfect will, and who cherish the eschatological vision that one day "the lion shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Is. 11:6ff). Others appeal rather to the market than to the jungle and urge that competition secures better and cheaper products and is therefore ultimately for everybody's good. Again, this may be an observable fact. But we must not assume that the world is necessarily to be a model for the church. We can certainly defend from the Bible the principle that human beings bearing God's image should be free to develop their creative gifts. But it can also be argued from the Bible that they should not use these in such a way as to harm others, especially those who go under in the struggle to survive. Moreover, sometimes the attempt to glorify the spirit of competition among us thinly disguises a sinful evangelical power-struggle of which we need to repent in dust and ashes.

At the same time, it is perfectly true that, in general, Christians are exhorted to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (Heb. 10:24); and that, in particular, Paul used the example of Macedonian generosity to stir up the Corinthians to contribute sacrificially to his collection (2 Cor. 8:1-7), just as he had previously used the zeal of the Corinthians to stir up the people of Macedonia (2 Cor. 9:1-5). Nevertheless, we need to observe that the "provocative" nature of Christian example is here only within a common Christian life and work. That is to say, it was in the same local church that the Hebrews were to provoke each other to love and good works, and it was in the same joint enterprise (Paul's collection to relieve Judean Christians' poverty) that the churches of Northern and Southern Greece were used to stimulate each other to generous giving. These important examples may be said, therefore, to encourage mutual stimulus in co-operation not the rivalry of competition.

Certainly, the biblical emphasis is rather on co-operation than on competition.

Sunergos, "fellow-worker," is a favourite word of Paul's. Though himself an apostle, with a unique position of authority by Christ's appointment, he nevertheless worked humbly and harmoniously with his brother apostles, with the churches and with the individuals who formed his missionary teams. A number of his associates he called *sunergos*, like Timothy (Rom. 16:21 and possibly 1 Thess. 3:2) and Titus ("my partner and fellow-worker in your service," 2 Cor. 8:23). Also Priscilla and Aquila ("my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus," Rom. 16:3) Urbanus (Rom. 16:9), and Philemon "our beloved fellow-worker," (Philem. 1). Twice he listed a whole group under this epithet, namely Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke "my fellowworkers" (Philem. 24) and Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus as being "at least during his Roman imprisonment" the only Jewish people "among my fellow-workers for the Kingdom of God" (Col. 4:10,11). He also included women among his fellow-workers, like Euodias and Syntyche. They "have laboured side by side with me in the gospel," he wrote, "together with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers" (Phil. 4:3). Sometimes he added the word "fellow-soldier" which is what he called Archippus (Philem. 2). Thus Epaphroditus was "my brother, fellow-worker and fellow-soldier" (Phil. 2:25) All these were Paul's co-labourers, working with him in the spread of the gospel. John uses the same word when urging local churches to support missionaries, for then, he writes, "we may be fellow-workers in (or with) the truth" (3 Jn. 8). At the same time, if the churches were working with the missionaries, the missionaries regarded themselves as working with the churches, not lording it over them, but labouring with them for their joy (2 Cor. 1:24; cf. 1 Cor. 16:16). And in all this, there was the further recognition that they were working together with God (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1) and God with them (Acts 14:27; 15:4).

Limits to Co-operation

With sorrow, we have to add that co-operation is not always possible. Christian fellowship is not an unprincipled inclusiveness. It has both doctrinal and ethical limits. Thus serious doctrinal error is ground for non-co-operation or separation. Anybody who denies the full deity and humanity of Jesus is "antichrist" (1 Jn 2:22), and anybody who contradicts the gospel of free grace Paul anathematized (Gal. 1:6-9). He even opposed his fellow apostle Peter to his face when his conduct was "not straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:11-14). Serious moral misconduct comes under the same ban. The local church is called upon to excommunicate a person who is "guilty of immorality or greed" or who is "an idolater, drunkard or robber," and is impenitent (1 Cor. 6:9-13). Such extreme denials of revealed truth and righteousness call in question the Christian profession of those who are guilty of them. In such cases it is right for us to remember that light and darkness, Christ and Belial, God and idols have nothing in common (2 Cor. 6:14ff).

In this paper, however, we are discussing co-operation among evangelical brethren "brothers and sisters, that is" who are agreed in the essentials of the gospel and the gospel witness. On these matters the Scripture is plain or perspicuous. Our problem is rather over the non-essentials, or what the 16th century Reformers called the *adiaphora*, the "matters indifferent." Although it would be difficult to make a list of these, it may be sufficient to define them as doctrines and practices regarding which equally biblical Christians, equally concerned to be submissive to Scripture alone, reach different conclusions. On these matters we must give one another liberty. We may privately regard others as having a "weak" or overscrupulous conscience in some matter, but the apostle teaches us to respect and not violate consciences, even if they are "weak."

So, although there are grievous situations in which separation is not only permitted, but enjoined, the overwhelming emphasis of the New Testament is on fellowship. We are to accept and not reject one another, remembering that all of us are responsible to Christ as Lord (Rom. 14:1ff).

Unity and Diversity

The summons to fellowship and co-operation must not be interpreted as a warrant to impose a stereotype and to stifle initiatives. The same New Testament which calls us to unity of mind and spirit recognises and encourages diversity of service. The classic passage is Ephesians 4:3ff, in which, after strongly emphasising that there is "one God and Father of us all," "one Lord," "one Spirit," and therefore "one faith," "one hope," "one baptism" and "one body," the apostle immediately goes on to the diversity of the charismata which equip God's people for a diversity of tasks.

We have, therefore, to avoid two opposite mistakes. On the one hand, we must not emphasise our unity in Christ in such a way as to suppress or even hinder the diverse ministries to which God calls his people and for which he gifts them. On the other hand, we must not so revel in the diversity of our gifts and ministries that we make them an excuse to break the unity of Christ's body. Paul envisages this possibility in 1 Cor. 12:14-26, where he condemns both false modesty and false confidence in relation to our gifts. We are neither to denigrate our own gifts and envy others', nor despise others' and exaggerate our own, but rather to recognise and respect each other's gifts, and rejoice in this God-given diversity.

Church and Para-church

So-called "para-church" agencies and their relationship to the church were discussed at the Lausanne Congress. Their legitimacy is still under debate. All are agreed that specialist functions require specialist organisations (e.g., for Bible translation, student evangelism and crosscultural missions); but who should initiate and operate them? That is the issue. The argument in favour of para-church organisations is largely historical, namely that under God they have made a much greater contribution to world evangelization than has the church. This is indisputable. The contrary argument begins with Scripture rather than history, asserts that only the Church can claim to be a divine creation, and concludes that ideally the Church should itself undertake necessary specialist tasks. It is not easy to reconcile these appeals to history and Scripture, to reality and to the ideal. But since evangelicals desire in all things to be guided by the Bible, we should be able to grade specialist activities thus: *independence of the church is bad, co-operation with the church is better, service as an arm of the church is best.*

In some parts of the world, the language of sociology is being used. The term "sodality" has been in use for several centuries, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, to describe "a religious guild or brotherhood established for purposes of devotion or mutual help or action." It is, therefore, a voluntary and usually rather loose association, which exists for a precise and limited purpose. In contrast, a "modality" (a much more modern word) tends to be a more formal social structure with clearly defined membership and leadership, and with accepted rules for both. For our purposes, a local church is a "modality," while a para-church organisation is a "sodality." Because, however, the use of these terms is neither widespread nor consistent, it seems wise to employ the more traditional vocabulary.

What theological guidelines may be laid down for specialist church (or para-church) organisations? One may perhaps say that Paul's missionary team supplies some biblical warrant for the development of voluntary missionary societies today. At the same time, we need to recognise the cooperative spirit in which Paul

worked. Though an apostle, whose commission and gospel came from God not human beings (Gal. 1), he was nevertheless anxious that his ministry be recognised by the Jerusalem apostolate, and that the whole apostolic band work in harmony (Gal. 2). Further, the first missionary journey was not his own idea; nor was it revealed to him directly. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit spoke to a group of five Antiochian church leaders ("prophets and teachers"), instructing them to set him and Barnabas apart for the work to which he had called them. After prayer and fasting "they laid their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:1-3). Context and grammar suggest that the "they" who did this were the other three "prophets and teachers." Whether they did it as individuals or as leading representatives of the Church of Antioch is, however, disputed. Certainly Luke's emphasis is that they were "sent out by the Holy Spirit" (v. 4). On the other hand, they returned to Antioch after the first missionary journey (14:26) and "gathered the church together" to make their report (v. 27). Would they have done this if the church had not shared in their commissioning? Acts 18:22,23 suggests that the same pattern followed the second missionary journey.

It is also significant that when a problem and controversy arose, a conference was called to solve it. Thus, when the Greek-speaking and Aramaic-speaking Jews in Jerusalem began to quarrel over the treatment given to their widows, "the twelve summoned the body of the disciples" (Acts 6:1, 2). And when the circumcision controversy threatened to split the Body of Christ, the church of Antioch appointed a delegation "to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question" (Acts 15:1-3). The issue was then settled amicably because the Spirit led them to a common mind. There was no autocracy even by the apostles alone. Certainly, no individual made an independent decision which was then imposed upon the church. Instead, the mind of the Spirit was sought by and made known to "the apostles and the elders" as a body.

Today the tension between church and para-church becomes more acute when a cross-cultural element is added to the structural problem, that is to say, in the relations between national church and foreign mission. There have been faults on both sides. Sometimes missionaries have been insensitive, aggressive or independent (and mission boards have sometimes used their human and economic resources as a power base from which to secure submission to their will), while at other times national church leaders have been short-sighted, autocratic or unappreciative. Once again, the ideal is plain: a humble, brotherly partnership, in which the autonomy of the national church is acknowledged, and both mission and missionaries fulfil a servant role.

But what about the sad realities which reflect our human fallenness? Whether we are thinking of national church and foreign mission, or of church and para-church, or of modality and sodality, how should they relate to one another? It would not be possible, or even desirable, to lay down rules and regulations. The overriding principle should, however, be clear. On the one hand, we should encourage and not hinder individual initiatives. Throughout biblical history, especially in times of widespread apostasy among his people, God has called individuals (e.g., prophets) to challenge the establishment, and even to stand over against it. Such individuals are uncomfortable to live with, as are the groups they form around them. Yet we should be extremely wary of surrendering to our natural desire to bring them under control. For we may find ourselves *quenching the Spirit of God*. On the other hand, whatever initiatives an individual or group may believe themselves called by God to make, they should wherever possible seek the counsel, goodwill, support and co-operation of the church. Indeed, they should desire to be a part of the church's work rather than independent of it. They should not be over-hasty in pronouncing it dead, washing their hands of it. For they may find themselves *sinning against the Body of Christ*.

Here then are the two extremes to be avoided. The tendency of the "establishment" to control individual initiatives runs the risk of *quenching the Spirit*. The tendency of voluntary organisations to insist on their independence runs the risk of *ignoring the Body*. It is the age-old tension between authority and freedom. To quench the Spirit and to ignore the Body are both serious sins; they grieve the Christ whose Body and Spirit they are. It is, therefore, basic to our evangelical responsibility that in all our labours and relationships we should magnify Christ by seeking simultaneously to give honour to his Body and liberty to his Spirit.

John R.W. Stott

2. Introduction

The place and role of so-called para-church organisations have been ongoing subjects of discussion and, sometimes, sources of tension and contention in church circles. That debate has frequently had the effect of polarising participants into distinct camps and impeding evangelization endeavours.

Some Christians seriously question the validity of all groups other than traditional congregations. Others have no problem in accepting their own denominational groups (such as seminaries, mission-sending agencies or the denominational structure itself) but reject, or at most concede secondary status to non-denominational organisations (see [Appendix B](#)).

At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who advocate acceptance of para-church agencies not merely as biblical, but as equally "church," in the congregational sense (see [Appendix A](#) for an elaboration of this position).

Most, however, would probably adopt a position somewhere between these two extremes. They would recognise those special non-congregational Christian ministries (or para-church groups) as necessary tools in the Kingdom of God, while clearly differentiating between them and churchly congregations of believers. (Appendices to this paper delve more deeply into the historical background of this issue and the various attempts to suggest illustrative analogies.)

But while theologians, missiologists and sociologists theorise and help us to grapple at a conceptual level with the terms, definitions, historical background and analogies, many Christians find themselves dealing with raw reality. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, they share his concern to reach people everywhere with the Good News and to disciple those who have been reached. They are aware that churches and para-church agencies are involved in Christian work around them. As members of churches, how are they to relate to those organisationsâ€"in terms of co-operation, involvement, prayer and support? Or, if the Christian involved is a pastor of a church or a leader in a para-church agency, how is he or she to relate to the other group?

Thus, in preparing this study, we have recognised that we are not grappling merely with a theoretical question unrelated to real life.

Our procedure, therefore, has been, first, to face squarely common areas of concern in relationships between churches and para-church agencies; and, then, to suggest practical guidelines for those actually involved out there in "striving side by side for the faith of the gospel." The discussion, the guidelines and the self-check tests should be especially useful for the pastor in a small town, the organisation staff member in a city suburb, the denominational leader in danger of getting out of touch, and the Bible school or seminary teacher whose seed thoughts will grow into fruit-actions, whether they are right or wrong.

It is a down-to-earth document, grappling positively with the facts of disharmony and disunity. It is for those of us desperately concerned and deeply involved in the task of world evangelization, often "you in your small corner, and I in mine."

It is hoped that the larger theological and missiological issues will continue to be thrashed out by those so qualified. But we cannot wait! We must work concurrently, moving ahead to wrestle with the conflicts that could otherwise tear us apart, allowing nothing to detract us from the task, at the local, national, or global levels.

It is the prayer of the Commission that these pages will contribute to that end.

A. The Need for Dialogue

In our deliberations, we were repeatedly confronted with the pressing need for dialogueâ€"open, honest, transparent dialogueâ€"between pastoral or church leaders on the one hand and those spearheading Christian organisations on the other.

Michael Cassidy of African Enterprise, for instance, wrote in his preliminary paper to the Commission: "Time and again, in speaking to different church leaders on this subject, I have had the importance of communication and understanding underlined. Archbishop Bill Burnett of Cape Town put it this way: 'One of the essential features of co-operation is the development of confidence in one another. If those who are responsible for oversight in the church see that the work done by para-church organisations is effective and healthy, they, in turn will give their support'"

The process of operating independently without love and mutual understanding is "both spiritually and practically hazardous," concludes Cassidy.

As we began to wrestle with possible answers to these problems, it quickly became obvious to us that, in most of them, the urgent need was dialogue. It actually reached the point of embarrassment to us that we were not showing enough creativity and variety in coming up with different kinds of solutions. But we had to be honest in our recommendations. For dialogue is most certainly, in our opinion, the primary need. If only we were really open to it! Dialogue has been sometimes wrongly seen by evangelicals as that which belongs to a false ecumenismâ€"the kind of thing that produces a watered-down compromise of one's

beliefs. Our traditionally high view of Scripture makes us more readily in agreement with declaration and proclamationâ€”tools which are, by common assent, vital to our communicating our faith. Yet our God, the sole possessor of the unadulterated truth, says, "Come now, let us reason together." We were made for dialogue, and nothing opens the door of understanding and acceptance as does this.

B. A Simulated Dialogue

In his paper, Michael Cassidy quickly brought us to the point with a simulated dialogue between a church and a para-church leader. Although most of the problems raised will be discussed more extensively in the body of this paper, a concise overview will help to put us all in the middle of the tension that existsâ€”tension so deep that one pastor feels the two sides are already on a "collision course."

(i) Church leader to para-church leader

(a) I know you are my brother in Christ, but often I do not feel it. At worst, I feel judged, criticised and ignored; at best, patronised. In short, you do not take me seriously.

(b) I can accept that you and your organisation have a specific calling and a limited purpose whose fulfilment is needed by the Body of Christ as a whole. But your emergence, when it does not happen in fellowship and dialogue, often seems a threat to me, because it appears a judgment on me and on the weakness or ineffectiveness of the church.

(c) Often I do not know what your basic goals are, or how they will help the church. Yet you want my support and you ask my people for their money. Note also that dozens of other organisations are doing the same, and this is breeding confusion both in me and my people.

(d) Your organisation also seems to overlap in aim and purpose with certain others; so that an impression of duplication, if not rivalry, is often created. This does not seem to me healthy.

(e) Sometimes you actually seem to be opposing or contradicting what we are doing in the church. You seem constantly to minimise what we are doing while exalting your own programme. You also set up rival calls, claims and programmes run by churches. Or else you win converts, related to our church fellowship, but redirect them to other local fellowships because you do not see some of our churches as "Bible-believing" or sufficiently "evangelical." You say we are not sound; perhaps before you make such presumptuous judgments, you should sit with us:

(i) to discover what we do or do not, in fact, believe about the Bible;

(ii) to discover what "being sound" means; and

(iii) to examine the *long-term* not the *short-term* consequences of directing our members, nominal though some of them may have been, to other fellowship

(f) You say you are serving the churches, but who gave you that mandate? I do not feel you are, in fact, always sensitive to what the church is, or where we are in terms of our needs, even in terms of assistance with evangelization. Should not true service to us involve setting this right?

(g) As I read my New Testament, I see only two basic concepts of the Church. One is the Church *universal* (the whole company of believers) and the other the *local* church (e.g., at Ephesus or Corinth). Now I accept you as part of the Church universal. But you and your like often have little or no real involvement in a local church, and this weakens both you and the local church. You need to learn, give and receive more fully and holistically, and the local church needs your gifts, insights and energy. To miss out here is to land not only in a distorted ecclesiology but in truncated and impoverished spiritual growth for all of us.

(h) You speak of having a specific mission which the church cannot or will not fulfil. Please do not force a disjunction between church and mission, because we feel the church which is true to itself is the church in mission. So you weaken the mission of the local church when you do "your thing" outside it, or with no reference to it. You contribute to the local church's losing its missionary vision and dimension. Thus, even whenâ€”or ifâ€”you say you only want to cooperate in local, regional or world evangelization, I find this hard to receive unless I have first experienced your cooperation at other levels and especially in fellowship and in comprehension of my view of all this.

(i) Truthfully, I also admit there are times when I envy the freedom, success or effectiveness of the para-church agency and I must rid myself of feelings of jealousy, rivalry or self-condemnation. Your fellowship and love would help me in this.

I must also share an ambivalence. On the one hand, I can and do understand that there are tasks and assignments which we who are caught up in the church structures cannot fulfil. And I recognise that God can and does raise up specialist agencies to tackle these. And we need to look at these in Christian togetherness so that we are clear as to who is doing what, and why. On the other hand, I confess to a lingering feeling that there is something anomalous, something slightly theologically eccentric, in the para-church agency. I can't help feeling that the existence of para-church agencies says somehow that we in the church structures have failed. The church has failed in some way to *be* what it exists to *become*. Perhaps you know that even the great missionary-minded Hendrik Kraemer argued that the maintenance and extension of missionary societies amounted to the perpetuation of a deformity of the Church. There is also the fact that local churches everywhere are catching renewed glimpses of the task of evangelising which we need to undertake. Whether this feeling of anomaly or ambivalence can be resolved, I am not sure, but we need to discuss it.

(k) Another point. Para-church agencies often do excellent evangelistic work, but because you do not thoroughly integrate both the endeavour and its fruit within the local church(es) the effects are short-term and of passing value.

In conclusion, I recognise the need for us to meet and talk and theologise and plan and pray. We need to do it at four levelsâ€”local, regional, national and world.

Maybe this Lausanne network of which you speak could be the catalyst for this. I know of it, but many of my colleagues do not. So you may need to do a bit of public relations to get this going. At the local level you could simply encourage Lausanne individuals, wearing whatever hat is most appropriate, to take the initiative. I suspect it may have to begin from the para-church side of the fence. Anyway, I am ready. Are you?

(ii) Para-church leader to church leader

Thank you, my Lord Bishop, Mr. Moderator, Mr. President, brother, Archbishop, or whatever label you like (you know I'm not much into the church scene myself). Let me respond.

(a) More seriously, I think I do come from a model No. 2 type parachurch agency which seeks to be pretty responsible about relating to the church leadership. And most in LCWE would profess the same sort of thing. But even so, I have probably not taken you seriously enough. For this I apologise.

(b) I like your idea of the need for communication at four levels and am willing to cooperate.

(c) I agree LCWE could be the catalyst.

(d) However, I want in response to say a word about the history of my type of structure. I recognise that there is no talk of a "missionary society" in the New Testament, though some have interpreted the actions of the congregation in Antioch (Acts 13) as more or less those of a missionary society. I admit that in the first centuries there is very little which points to a missionising structure alongside the church. However, it has been suggested that the position began altering with Constantine, when the church became the state church; and the consequent superficialisation resulted in the protest out of which the monastic movement was born. Numbers of these communities and cloisters in due time engaged actively in mission, as archbishops, bishops and even priests disengaged. Missionary initiative shifted to the Orders, and this process continued throughout the Middle Ages. In fact, by the end of the Middle Ages, it was secular and often colonial powers (e.g., Portugal and Spain) which sent out missionaries

under patronage. In the 19th century, the situation improved and successive popes took an interest in missions. Yet even today there are more *Order* missionaries in Roman Catholicism than those, directly sent forth by bishops which are relatively few. What does this say?

(e) Turning now to *Protestantism*, we note the extraordinary fact that the Reformation churches had a very poor missionary record for almost three centuries. The reason, believes missiologist David Bosch of South Africa, is that "it had no Orders at its disposal." Luther and the other reformers having almost tossed out the baby of missionary outreach with the bath water of monasticism. Those Protestant efforts which did develop in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had, according to Bosch, one thing in common – "in not one of these instances was the official church involved"... The initiative lay with individuals, or kings, or colonial powers, or with some few emerging societies once we get into the 18th century (e.g., The Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts - 1701). Then came the Moravian "brotherhood" (first half of the 18th century) with its powerful missionary push. But still the official church stood aloof.

Missionary-minded believers were thus compelled, in the late 18th century and early 19th century to form "Missionary Societies." This process accelerated in the 20th century, especially in the U.S.A. In the entire period up to 1900, 75 mission agencies were formed. But in the 80 years since then, six new societies – on average – per year have been formed, a total of between four and five hundred. And almost half of all North American Protestant missionaries are in service with organisations having no formal connection with churches.

So you see, it seems that the development of sodality* structures has, in fact, often happened historically because the official churches were inward looking and doing very little about mission.

(f) Now, brother, what do you say to that? It still seems to many of us in sodality* structures that you modality* chaps rarely actually get into effective missionary evangelistic undertakings, in spite of pious talk. Your energies are occupied with keeping your structure going. And often you are also too involved with internal theologising, ecumenics, or oiling creaking machinery to get on with the task of world evangelization. Sorry if I offend you, but this is often how it seems. Please show me if I am wrong.

*See **Appendix A** for explanation of sodality and modality.

(g) While on this, I must also quote the view of some mission specialists that even in a number of Third World situations, the national churches are actually hindering mission societies (sodalities) from getting to people who cannot be reached by the usual near-neighbour evangelism from the churches. By doing a "thumbs down" on missionaries, they are frustrating the fulfilment of the Great Commission. May we add this problem to our agenda for discussion?

(h) In that connection, you may know that the late Max Warren argued that it has frequently happened in history that church leaders have been slow to grasp the missionary need, and have shown a frustrated response to it by embracing the view that modality leadership is the Church. Says he: "Official leadership does not by itself constitute the Church. Nor is the central administration of a denomination the Church. The Church is far bigger than either."

(i) In any event, I recognise that we have not sought adequate feedback and comment from you. And perhaps we are, therefore, in the dark as to what you are not only thinking, but feeling, and why.

(j) Basically, as I see it, we sodality people should be your shock troops, your commando units and your sub-contractors tackling those specialist tasks and functions which have "seemed good to (all of) us and to the Spirit" (Acts 15:38). This will help both parties to come to a clear description and understanding of the specific aims of the sodality concerned. Perhaps where you see different sodalities having confusing or counter-productive overlap, you should say so and help the respective bodies to eliminate this, both with each other and with you. Or else again, we could encourage LCWE to help in this.

(k) Perhaps this brings us to the warp and woof* idea. Modality and sodality, church and para-church, must function as members, one of another, and partners together in the gospel.

*See **Appendix A** for explanation of *warp and woof* concept.

We sodality people must discourage the proliferation of agencies unrelated in fellowship to churches. Conceivably we should go further, and say with Prof. David Bosch that the missionary society has a right to exist only if it keeps ties with the Church. But you modality leaders must cooperate from your side, alter some of your perceptions and make room in your thinking, relating and planning for sodality endeavours genuinely spawned and led by the Holy Spirit.

Cassidy concludes: "It seems to me that this type of encounter and dialogue is long overdue – even when it may not initially have a direct and immediate bearing on world evangelization. My point is that without this type of initial and more basic encounter, it is impossible to move on to the agenda of mutual co-operation in world evangelization. A lot of relational debris and misunderstanding must be resolved first. This is a basic prerequisite to getting on to our priority concern."

We must not forget that part of the Commission's mandate was also to suggest ways of furthering co-operation between the different para-church groups themselves. While some specific areas of conflict will be discussed in the next section, we repeat that dialogue is again the first priority. It may well be that lack of communication and understanding is an even more serious problem here; because as Cassidy says, "While para-church agencies occasionally tip their caps in the direction of seeking church blessing, they do it even more rarely with each other. The need therefore is for contact and togetherness both formally and informally."

C. Results of Thailand Dialogue

Dialogue such as that above took place throughout our sessions in Thailand, especially in the first week of the Commission's deliberations. Of the ten participants, two of us (Madinda and Clarke) were, as diocesan bishops, strongly representative of churchly and denominational concerns; seven others (Arana-Quirez, Isan-Chan, Kyle, Landreth, Smedjebacka, Stiller and Tooke) represented the views of a variety of societies or organisations, and one (Price) an equal involvement in both pastoral and para-church ministries.

As the second week wore on, having thrashed out a number of theological issues, we felt we were ready to brainstorm and specify some of the hindrances to co-operation we knew existed. We divided into working groups and finished up with a lengthy list of well over one hundred areas of conflict or friction – either between church and para-church, or between the different Christian organisations themselves. To simplify the task, these were reduced in number and put into five categories:

- (i) *Dogmatism about non-essentials and differing scriptural interpretations* (matters of theology, conviction, terminology, tolerance).
- (ii) *The threat of conflicting authorities* (matters of validity, mandate, accountability, fear).
- (iii) *The harmfulness of strained relationships* (matters of attitude, prejudice, personality, fellowship).
- (iv) *The rivalry between ministries* (matters of goals, duplication, specialisation, umbrellas).
- (v) *The suspicion about finances* (matters of fund-raising, publicity, overhead, overseas aid).

The specific suggestions of the Commission are not listed together in a separate section. Rather, they are frequently included in the actual discussion of the problems, and more briefly referred to in the self-check tests which follow each category.

There follows, therefore, a consideration of each of these five areas. Some problems overlap and tend to recur in two or three of the categories. It must be emphasised again that the purpose envisaged is not a sophisticated theological discussion of the issues. It is rather a straightforward, easy-to-grasp presenting

of the problems, providing the average pastor or leader in a local situation with that which will better equip him to overcome hindrances that exist in the task of local, national, regional, or world evangelization.

3. Hindrances to Co-operation: Dogmatism about Nonessentials and Differing Scriptural Interpretations

Churches and para-church agencies usually have precise statements of faith which outline their doctrinal convictions. An examination of those statements would reveal a large area of shared beliefs common to most of them. Indeed, an outside observer would probably conclude that there were few essential differences between them. If that is true, one would feel that there should be few tensions both between evangelical churches and in overall church/para-church relationships.

Since, however, those tensions do exist and hinder co-operation it is imperative that we inquire why this should be the case. A fundamental reason would seem to be a dogmatism about non-essentials and differing scriptural interpretations. The larger areas of fundamental and essential agreement are soon eclipsed by secondary matters which quickly become the sole focus of attention.

Some are so convinced about such matters that they show an unwillingness to even listen to another position. The title of a book or the name of an author or publisher is enough to elicit negative feelings, with a consequent refusal to read any further. Yet even a cursory examination of a book's "contents" page can be enough to indicate that there is at least a rational basis for another view. Without such knowledge it is difficult to have even respect for, let alone agreement with, another position. John Robinson, the pastor to the Pilgrim Fathers, was open to such thinking. This is obvious from his wise counsel that "there is still yet more light to break forth out of the Word of God." Openness and respect seem to us to be the foundation materials on which bridges of co-operation are built.

A. Problem Areas

(i) *Red flags in terminology.*

Words can build bridges or erect insurmountable barriers. Depending on the hearer, a word can be soothing ointment or a caustic acid. Some use words with intention to shock, while others, without due care or forethought, create unnecessary walls. Even biblically derived words such as "evangelical," "ecumenical," "charismatic," or "eucharist" can make the blood of some biblically strong Christians boil, simply because of current usage or exclusive adoption of the word by suspect groups. While we may not be walking dictionaries, we should at least use our mine detectors when passing through a battle zone. We must also exercise Christian love before branding fellow Christians with unfair labels, and show extra caution before judging between Christian and non-Christian or between evangelical and liberal.

(ii) *A refusal to forget history.*

An inadequate grasp of church history or a woeful unawareness of the roots of a particular church or denomination frequently makes co-operation difficult. Some Christians are so painfully and resentfully aware of incidents in recent (or not so recent) history that they are constantly perpetuating them onto a generation largely ignorant that the problems ever existed. Even a casual reading of the broad sweep of church history will provide a clearer focus and discourage our majoring on minors. It will also remind us of our common heritage and encourage co-operation in evangelism. We should make time to include this in our reading.

(iii) *Pet doctrines as yardsticks.*

Cultural, denominational or personal convictions provide most of us with special plumb-lines by which to detect any semblance of heterodoxy. Such dearly-held truths are not usually of a fundamental nature. While thousands of Christians would understandably languish in prison rather than deny the deity of Christ, some appear ready to be burned at the stake rather than compromise their interpretation of matters less essential (to the rest of us). Yet church government, eschatological views or the mode of baptism are but a few of the matters which seem equally important to many. Some have suffered for such truths. The cost of their purchase is too high to permit a sellout. A group unconvinced of the importance of an issue would do well to invite those with stronger convictions to address them. This may at least generate a respect for their positions, helping to break down walls which hinder co-operation in evangelism.

(iv) *Understanding of "the Body" of believers.*

The very use of the term "para-church" to describe them is seen by some organisations as indicative of an inadequate ecclesiology on the part of the user. They feel they are not merely equally "valid" in the Kingdom of God but equally a manifestation of "the Body," even in the local sense. On the other side are churches which find it hard to grasp why organisations dispensing neither sacraments nor discipline see themselves as a biblical alternative for a discipling ministry to new Christians. Some of these question the very validity of any group other than the churches themselves. Barriers are thus erected because of differences both in understanding of and commitment to the local church. Some denominations have a narrow definition of the Church and frequently insist on every ministry being evaluated only in the light of its potential to help the local church. The most rigid in such groups would interpret "local church" to mean only their own brand. To express the unity of the Body by helping *another* local church would be quite foreign to their thinking (unless it involved their own denominational missions). It is debatable whether their downplaying of the scriptural concept of the one Body (Eph. 4) is the cause or the result of such an attitude. Such differences are more easily resolved at the Bible school or seminary level than they are after having been practised for years in a local church situation. The Commission urges denominational educators to expose their students to the differing viewpoints held by equally biblically-minded Christians before soon-formed habits are cast in concrete. (The para-church issue is discussed in greater detail in Appendices A & B.)

(v) *Fellowship or separation?*

While it is a comparatively simple task to highlight the many biblical passages encouraging unity and fellowship with other Christians, it is not all that difficult to excerpt those verses which stress purity and separation from others. One-sided publications which ignore the passages endorsing the opposite view seem to have aggravated their opponents to rush into print. We would encourage the objectivity of a disinterested researcher to lay out the scriptural passages side by side. For, as Frank Colquhoun says in his booklet *The Fellowship of the Gospel*, "It is possible to lay too much stress upon the ideal of fellowship and to create a false unity, lacking a secure and solid foundation in Christian doctrine ... To strive for unity by going beyond the boundaries of truth is to manufacture a purely artificial fellowship." But, "it is possible to go to the other extreme and to overemphasise the duty of 'separation' from anything and everything that is regarded as false, through a desire to create a pure church. No doubt, the motive that promotes such separation is admirable and reflects a passionate jealousy for the honour of God's Holy Word; but it often results in a series of quite unnecessary and useless splits among Christian brethren and is accompanied, all too often, by a proud, intolerant and pharisaical spirit." The reader may even find himself at this moment with a pen in hand underlining this very document in order to justify his own determination not to cooperate with those outside his group. The Commission makes a plea for balance, particularly at the seminary-training level. In addition, honest, consecutive exposition of the New Testament will provide balanced teaching for each church. While differences in emphases will remain, it is possible to cultivate in any local church a healthy respect for the views of other Christians. This opens the way for greater co-operation in evangelism.

(vi) *The love-truth pendulum*

Truth without love becomes harsh and critical, but love without truth encourages a sloppy sentimentality. Love needs strengthening by truth, while truth, in turn, needs softening by love.

The love-truth see-saw has greater potential for division than most differences. Little ire a Christian with a warm love for humanity more than an unbending church leader always quoting the letter of the law. Again, few things upset that leader more than the thought that he might slacken up in applying every jot and tittle of Scripture with equal vigour. He just cannot relate to those emphasising love, as he often sees them as having no backbone of conviction.

For years, liberals slotted evangelicals in the truth camp. The nineteenth century stress on the fundamentals of the faith appeared to them as harsh, while they saw themselves in the love camp. Such generalisations are scarcely justified; yet, properly defined, they may still be more realistic than the opposite.

The letter of the word can easily over-ride the spirit of it until, as Spurgeon said of one denomination, "They go into the forest of God's Word and chop it up into toothpicks." Conversely, we can so emphasise the love of God for the world that we wrongly translate it into equal acceptance for all into the fellowship. Such action ignores the boundaries of truth and sets up its own unbiblical standards and definition of love.

Truth and love then, need to be kept in balance. The condoning of either gross immorality or major doctrinal error would indicate an emphasis on love (or rather, a caricature of it) at the expense of truth. On the other hand, the urging of separation over secondary doctrinal matters, or over less serious moral issues, would indicate an emphasis on truth (pursued relentlessly) at the expense of love. We would all do well to constantly evaluate our thinking, and to strive to maintain a balance which will help rather than hinder co-operation.

(vii) Guilt by association

This tendency has become more prevalent in some circles in recent decades. Its essence is "if you fellowship with him, I'll not fellowship with you." While many followers of the best known nineteenth century proponent of this view appear to have learned their lesson, other denominations, refusing to learn from the past, are now making these same mistakes. To make separation from other Christians the condition of communion could be to insist that the sin of schism be the basis for Christian fellowship. In such cases we must choose between offending God or offending those who set themselves up as lords over God's heritage. While we reject an unprincipled inclusivism, the Commission also recognises that the biblical emphasis on fellowship is far more extensive than that on separation. In this light, we feel that in a doubtful case, it is better to err by inclusion rather than by exclusion of a Christian brother or sister. This principle should not encourage an unscriptural laxity, but give confidence when our wisdom seems inadequate. Refusing to receive as a brother one whom Christ has received, is the essence of schism. Such sin is, in Scripture, grouped with idolatry, sorcery and drunkenness. We read that those who practise such things "will not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21).

(viii) Denial of liberty of conscience.

One of the prominent emphases of the Reformation was the proclamation of liberty of conscience for individual believers to follow Scripture as they were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. While we deplore the individualism which characterises some evangelicals, we feel that leaders would be going beyond their God-given mandate to impose on others their own preferences in secondary matters. Some, in their zeal, deny their flocks the freedom of inter-denominational contact, out of fear of doctrinal contamination. The Commission is convinced that, in non-primary doctrinal issues, freedom of conscience and consequent diversity of opinion need not be disharmonious. Such liberty should enrich the ministry rather than threaten the fellowship of the body. Some will disagree with the use of the terms "primary" and "secondary" with reference to the truths of Scripture; it must therefore be emphatically stated that all Scripture is important to be believed. Interpretation may vary on many issues without the need to disrupt fellowship. Yet it is our conviction that there are certain truths which must be considered absolutely essential to be agreed upon if we are to foster co-operation in evangelism. In spite of differing lists, there will surely be those truths (such as the Deity, Incarnation, Atoning Death and the Bodily Resurrection of Christ) which will be commonly believed by all who hold to the historic Christian faith. Helpful insights will be gained from a discussion by those who differ, on the question of what truths are essential to be believed, in order for a person to be considered a Christian.

The Commission strongly supports a regular diet of Bible exposition to prevent a gradual watering-down of the demands of the faith. We also with equal fervour wish to caution our evangelical brothers and sisters that in our zeal for doctrinal purity, we are sometimes in danger of reducing Christianity from a way of life to a statement of faith. Let us constantly be on guard to preserve the balance of "speaking the truth in love."

B. Some Basic Considerations.

(i) The purpose of unity: so that the world may believe.

The divine purpose of our expressed unity is enunciated by the Lord in his prayer in John 17:21 as "so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." This belief comes about when the world sees Christians express that oneness in their mission, and when it hears them declare with one voice the message of reconciliation. Our tendency to forget this goal causes us to make increasingly detailed doctrinal demands as the basis for unity. Martin Marty contends that we already have enough unity to work together in the cause of world evangelization, and that resumed mission will enhance the quest for unity. Otherwise, he argues, "World unifying forces could repeat the tragedy of 1910," when modern ecumenism was born out of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. When the originating purpose of evangelization is lost, such groups very quickly deteriorate into debating societies.

(ii) Doing must catch up with talking.

The Lausanne Congress of 1974 spawned a large number of conferences, conventions and consultations, and perhaps these gatherings, by their very nature, received more publicity than the direct programmes of evangelization which also took place around the world. But while conferences are seen as desirable stepping-stones to action, we need to confess our tendency to talk about the issues as a substitute for, rather than a prerequisite to, taking the Good News to the lost.

Sir John Glubb (Glubb Pasha of "Arab Legion" fame) writes in *The Fate of Empires*, "The spread of knowledge seems to be the most beneficial of human activities, and yet every period of decline is characterised by this expansion of intellectual activity. 'All the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing' is the description given in the Acts of the Apostles of the decline of Greek intellectualism."

"As in the case of the Athenians, intellectualism leads to discussion, debate and argument, such as is typical of the Western nations today. Debates in elected assemblies or local committees, in articles in the press or in interviews on television, endless and incessant talking. Men are interminably different, and intellectual arguments rarely lead to agreement. Thus, public affairs drift from bad to worse, amid an unceasing cacophony of argument. But this constant dedication to discussion seems to destroy the power of action. Amid a Babel of talk, the ship drifts onto the rocks."

Those eager to get on with the task of evangelization are unlikely to join debating societies to determine the correct way, unless they see that action is concurrent with discussion. While we acknowledge the scripturalness of the prayer, "Teach me thy way, O Lord" (Ps. 27:11), we need to be just as eager to pray, "Teach me to do thy will" (Ps. 143:10).

(iii) Levels of agreement.

John Howard Yoder, in *The Ecumenical Movement and the Faithful Church*, reminds us that there are definite levels of agreement: "The extent to which it may be possible to do things together will depend entirely upon the degree of agreement already reached. Less unity is needed to converse than to commune; less unity to advocate morality than to apply discipline; less to attack liberalism together than to agree on what is sound doctrine. The essential for obedience in this realm is to go neither farther nor less far than existing agreement permits. If we refuse to converse because we cannot commune, we fail to go the first mile (to say nothing of the second) toward restoration of fellowship, as did the Apostle Paul and the Anabaptists. If, on the other hand, we commune where there is actually only sufficient unity for conversing, we cheapen both unity and truth and do our brother no good."

Lesslie Newbigin, a former Bishop of Madras, said, "The disunity of the Church is a denial of the promise and a contradiction of the purpose for which the Church is sent into the world. How can the Church give to the world the message that Jesus is able to draw all men to himself, while it continues to say, 'Nevertheless, Jesus is not able to draw us who bear his Name together'? How will the world believe a message which we do not appear to believe ourselves? The divisions of the Church are a public denial of the sufficiency of the atonement. The search for this kind of Christian unity is primarily a matter of repentance. It is not primarily a matter of organisation."

SELF-CHECK TEST NO. I

Dogmatism about Non-essentials and Differing Scriptural Interpretation

1. In my interaction with others, am I more eager to find points of agreement or of disagreement? (Read 1 Cor. 13:4-7 and rethink your strategy.)
2. Do I need to confess a tendency to talk, theologise and argue "while having little desire to go out and evangelise?"
3. Do I frequently use words or expressions which annoy, offend or even shock other Christians? Do I do it purposely, or without thinking? Is there someone I can ask to keep tabs on me?

4. Have I ever taken time to phone that para-church leader and tell him he is appreciated? What would encourage me if I were in his position, differing as we do on some doctrines?
5. What is the, ultimate goal in my overtures of fellowship towards pastors of other churches? Merely that they will like me? Or is it really to build bridges for evangelism, "so that the world may believe"?
6. Am I determined not to listen to arguments supporting another leader's viewpoint? Or will I call him today and ask him to recommend the best book supporting his belief? Do I really have an open mind?
7. Is there a slot of time in my next week's schedule where doing something with another pastor could more profitably replace more study? Am I willing to take the initiative?
8. Do I get "overheated" when I discover a doctrinal difference with another leader? Imagine your conversation if both of you were in the same prison for your faith's sake. What would draw you together? Why not focus on those things now?
9. Am I an uncompromising doctrinal purist needing to be softened by love? Or am I a sentimental inclusivist needing to be strengthened by truth? Am I always on one side of the see-saw? How can I become more balanced?
10. Am I guilty of forcing my views on secondary matters upon other Christians? Have I given the impression that their differing with me will affect our fellowship? (Remember that uniformity is the characteristic of graveyards. Life is always a rich and colourful diversity. Will you allow for it in the spirit of unity?)
11. Is my purpose healthy for gathering a mass of information about Christianity and Scripture? Am I really planning to put it into practise, or merely storing up ammunition to win verbal and theological battles?
12. Do my denominational colleagues emphasise *separation* more than *fellowship*? What can I do today to build more bridges than walls, and so reverse the trend?

4. Hindrances to Co-operation: The Threat of Conflicting Authorities.

Incentive to examine the validity of a ministry group frequently becomes stronger when that group is invading our home territory. Motivation for research and an eagerness to question is intensified when the "intruder" is attracting interest and getting results in the immediate neighbourhood. True, whether the intruder is another church or organisation, it is especially the case when a para-church group operates without reference to the churches in the area. If such groups appear to be more competitive than supportive, they can expect their validity to be questioned. Pastors and leaders with uneasiness on these matters should initiate dialogue (in the friendly setting of the home, if possible) with those who can give the needed input and help. In this way many potentially explosive situations could be avoided. (Appendix A examines the validity of para-church agencies.)

A. The Question of Mandate and Accountability.

"Who gave you your mandate?" is a question frequently in the minds of those who listen to special ministry groups describing their work. "To whom are you accountable in matters of doctrine, morals, administration and finances?" "Who checks up on you, hires you, fires you or sets you straight?"

In answering the questions, there are those who insist that parachurch groups are biblically no more accountable than denominations. But whereas some, with Howard Snyder (Appendix B), would see a denominational network as equally para-church, many would agree with Paul Rees (Appendix A) that such networks at least "owe their existence and are answerable to assemblies of believers amongst whom may be found the 'notae' of church reality."

Because Scripture urges us to submit to one another, the Commission suggests that groups not directly accountable to the churches go out of their way to establish some line of voluntary accountability, particularly in matters moral and doctrinal. We feel it desirable to think of accountability both in its personal and corporate dimensions.

(i) Personal accountability.

We would all do well to consider the comments of Alan Cole (quoted in full in Appendix A). The Commission endorses the statement that "*it is clear that every member of a para-church organization should be not only a member of a local church ... but an active member of that church.*" As Cole says, "This will ensure the corrective discipline and wise pastoring that all Christians need." Whereas reasons for joining certain local churches have not always been clear when there is an organisational ministry needing support, the Commission believes a Christian worker's active involvement in a congregation will not only provide a modality-sodality balance but also ensure that each member of the sodality is under biblically recognised authority in matters moral and doctrinal.

But what of administrative and financial accountability? And what if the policies of the organisation are not in keeping with the clear principles of Scripture? Do the local churches where the personnel worship have any right to interfere? Or are they left only with the alternative of denouncing that which they otherwise appear to condone by harbouring the personnel?

It is at this point that the problems become more complex, and it is here also that the para-church staff member struggles with conflicting loyalties. Whom does he follow? The church or the organisation? In most cases, the church is helpless for, in reality, it has no more control over that sodality than it does over the church of another denomination down the road. (This is, of course, from a purely legal viewpoint. The exhortation that we, in the body, are to be "subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" will be discussed later, together with the fact that, for Christians, moral obligations should be as binding as legal ones). Dialogue between the leader of that organisation and the pastor of that church would do much to clarify the situation.

(ii) Corporate accountability.

An organisation may claim that its board of directors (or local committee) is interdenominational. But while all the members may come from different churches, usually few of them actually *represent* their church, being appointed, not by the church, but by the sodality board. While the board member may well reflect the thinking of his church, to properly represent it, he must be appointed by it. So he can neither speak for his church nor be replaced *by* his church. This leads to loss of interest and frequent alienation on the part of the congregation.

The Commission suggests some ways which may help overcome this sense of helplessness felt by the churches. First, the agency would do well to request the church to officially appoint the desired member to the organisation's board. In this way, official representation could be achieved. The difficulty sometimes encountered in this approach, however, is that many pastors and church boards are reluctant to have their most gifted people drawn away from congregational affairs. (Only frequent preaching on the expressed unity of the body will produce the kind of congregation which sees this as a privilege rather than a necessary evil). Furthermore, those with the best potential for directorship are: not usually the type eagerly responsive to being told on which boards they should serve. But we must keep in mind our goal of unhindered evangelization and persevere in bridge-building attempts. The organisation leader may need to spend time with the pastor, telling him what will be required of the board member and describing the kind of skills specifically being sought. Pastors need to be unselfish in recommending those they feel would be most useful, and in urging their church officers to so appoint. They should clearly inform their elders or deacons of the honourable desire of the agency to be corporately accountable, dispelling any suspicions of an ulterior motive. If this is done, the entire church should be informed of the appointment and encouraged to communicate to the appointee suggestions or concerns regarding the ministries of the organisation concerned. If this plan succeeds, a bridge will have been built and the frustration of the pastor overcome. Above all, a degree of accountability will have been achieved.

When these procedures prove unworkable, the Commission suggests that the organisation place itself in a voluntary reporting role to the local evangelical ministerium, encouraging feedback, guidance, and even admonition if necessary, thereby guaranteeing a vehicle for two-way communication and corporate accountability. In addition, an occasional phone call or letter to each pastor, asking for his frank reactions to the programmes, would do a lot to establish credibility and confidence in the organisation.

Those not truly committed to finding a workable solution may well give up the attempt as unnecessarily wearying. Some sodalities may consider this striving to

please the churches counterproductive to their *raison d'être*. It is claimed, and with no lack of convincing historical evidence, that the genius of sodalities is their very freedom from this type of control or accountability. At the same time, a determination to be independent and totally unrelated to traditional church structures is surely a pragmatic pill too difficult for a theological digestive system to swallow. The Commission finds itself largely in agreement with John Stott that: "independence of the church is bad, cooperation with the church is better, service as an arm of the church is best."

We would therefore encourage those involved in these other Christian ministries to persevere in the search for a workable procedure, and to make every effort to establish such channels of accountability. Because of national, legal or constitutional distinctives, some will have to pioneer, cutting their way through hitherto impenetrable jungle. But "where there is a will, there is a way," and the determination to succeed is likely to be maintained provided we do not lose sight of our goal "that the world may believe."

Through all this trial and error, failure and success, we must be careful that lessons learned are shared with others in similar situations; for if our objective is to evangelise the world, then everything that helps overcome even the smallest barriers must be communicated to others. The Lausanne Committee is eager to disseminate helpful information to this end, and would welcome hearing of ideas which are working in different regions of the world.

B. Territorial Jurisdiction (Comity)

Underlying many of the problems to do with authority and accountability is the thinking that certain groups have a right to certain ministries. Denominational, geographical or chronological reasons are sometimes given to substantiate these claims. Occasionally the mere possession of skills, or the fact of government or public recognition, is considered adequate justification. Perhaps the prototypes in this field were the "understood" (or "courtesy") arrangements known as "comity agreements." These came about when mission societies multiplied to the point of competition and rivalry. Groups or denominations participating agreed to work in certain well-defined geographical areas, avoiding overlap and duplication. Warren Webster points out, however, that "in many places churches grew up whose members had no choice in the matter of denominational loyalties." When a family moved to "an area served by another mission, they might become Anglican or Presbyterian overnight." "For the most part," Webster concludes, "comity agreements tended to perpetuate division and denominationalism on a regional basis. They proved to be half-way measures at best, stopping short of real Christian fellowship and unity" and having "little meaning for the Church as the Body of Christ, which cannot be contained or divided by lines on a map."

Such courtesy arrangements, undesirable though many see them to have been, continue to be perpetuated in camouflaged forms and are often based on presumed territorial rights. "We were here first" is the argument presented by a variety of groups jealously guarding their ministries. Student evangelism is a prime example, with agreements by the organisations involved not to duplicate each other's efforts by establishing two clubs in the same educational institution. Ministries—particularly in the West (like those among professional athletes)—tend to be embracing a similar "hands off" philosophy. Again, umbrella groups seem to be multiplying, and apparently competing for almost monopolistic control of certain facets of ministry—including, amazing as it may sound, exclusive rights for organising cooperative ventures. As larger and larger umbrellas are created, those with the true spirit of selfless service are soon recognised by their willingness to yield their rights for the sake of the gospel.

In some countries, the council of churches—recognised by government—has the sole right to decide whom to let in. In other countries, governments work only through the state church. For decades, in mainland China, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) has been the only legally authorised channel.

Not to be forgotten is the peer-pressure of majority authority. Where one church is dominant in a country, it can make life so difficult for those not in its fold that its power surpasses that of any appointed authority.

It would not be difficult to produce a long list of both the advantages and disadvantages of having these unwritten laws and gentlemen's agreements. But surely in this age of widespread proliferation of Christian groups, we would all do well to heed the Apostle's plea. In the very context which speaks of the unity and diversity within the Body, he urges that we "walk ... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance toward one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Such humility and forbearance would surely include a repentance from an "I'm the king of the castle" attitude by those claiming territorial rights, whether ecclesiastical or organisational. It would also include a gracious and respectful consulting with incumbents on the part of those who would rush in where angels fear to tread. It is the conviction of the Commission that common courtesy, quite apart from Christian brotherliness, demands that there be both prior consultation and an equal openness to receive others who will "strive side by side for the faith of the gospel."

C. Fear of Loss of Power

To many of us pastors and church leaders, the thrusting by the Holy Spirit of more labourers into our corner of the vineyard represents more of a threat than a help. This should not happen if our ultimate consideration is the gathering of the harvest. Yet human pride frequently usurps that throne, and we see the intrusion as a challenge to our authority. For example, having previously been the only church in town, it mattered not which part of it our members lived in. But a new church of another denomination can become a real threat to the resident pastor. This sometimes results in his establishing a rival work next to the "competition," thus staving off wholesale sheep-stealing, especially from those living in that end of town.

In some cases, particularly if the counter-attraction proves too strong, his own church membership may drop. Sensing a loss of control and even motivated by personal resentment, measures are sometimes adopted which will prevent the members from being further exposed to the new ministry. Some pastors go as far as refusing to allow para-church groups into the church, lest they provide a counter-productive link with the rival church. Names and addresses are carefully guarded lest regular contamination come by way of newsletters. It is our view that such a defensive reaction grows in the soil of an inadequate ecclesiology.

A sense of personal or pastoral inadequacy in any of us produces similar reactions. A well-run seminar, a dynamic speaker or a gifted expositor may be avoided lest they show up our inefficiency, and cause our people to question their own choice of a leader. Even when the door into the pulpit is thus barred, a pastor's fear of gifts emerging from within can also precipitate a stifling of congregational initiative. Home Bible studies and other potential splinter groups are discouraged, unwittingly leaving potential "lay" leaders in the congregation even more open to the overtures of para-church groups, who offer to utilise their latent gift. By so doing, they drive in further the wedge of resentment by the pastor.

Para-church staff involved in ministering in the pulpits of others need to develop a greater sensitivity to these very real fears, thus ensuring that they contribute to the edification rather than to the dividing of congregations. Especially is this so in the case of those looked upon as specialists in any one area of Christian endeavour. Conversely, let self-appointed experts no longer assume that they are indeed the specialists. The mushrooming of para-church groups, while increasing the number of "experts" often brings a deterioration in standards, with the very real possibility that several sitting in the pews are more highly qualified.

Those aspiring to true greatness in church and para-church alike, need to cultivate the spirit of servanthood, esteeming others better than themselves. In the face of such humility, threats and fears diminish and the work of world evangelization is enhanced.

D. Fear of Being Swallowed Up

Large organisations can easily threaten churches or smaller agencies. The fear of being swallowed up, or of being made to look like someone else's statistic causes many to avoid any risk of an encounter. This is particularly true in developing countries where a multi-national Christian corporation subsidises a project, plants its "ownership" sign on the front lawn and invites the world to view its creation. Imagine, too, the frustration in the heart of a dedicated pastor, who has invested years of hard work into training a gifted national leader, only to have a well-paying Western agency entice him away, boasting, "Look at our man."

Quite apart from the Christian impropriety of such methods, it is a known fact, among the churches of the Third World, that leaders so bought rarely regain the confidence of their compatriots. While the end result is usually an increased ability to impress the home constituency with the big catch, it is brought about at the awful expense of the weakening of the national church.

Such activities are deplored by the Commission with the plea that we do everything in our power to build up, rather than exploit, such human resources. A good start would be to develop a framework in which the power of such agencies is self-limited, while still retaining the flexibility which is the essence and genius of such structures. Nationals should be given a greater hearing in the desirability or otherwise of their conferees being invited to serve on boards or staffs of international agencies. We, therefore, urge those in this category of ministry to adopt policies which will develop, rather than destroy, a sensitivity to the feelings

of others.

SELF-CHECK TEST No. 2

The Threat of Conflicting Authorities

1. Is my organisation eager to see each staff worker as an active and responsible member of a local church? If not, why not? What do I do for my own church between Sundays?
2. Am I, as a para-church leader, willing to establish a line of voluntary accountability to a church or churches in my community, at least in personal, moral and doctrinal matters?
3. Can I do anything to ensure that local church leaders are encouraged to give input to our organisation's policies?
4. Am I willing to help organise a forum where church and parachurch leaders in my community can sit together occasionally, to discuss this matter of authority and accountability? Is a prophet-priest type of relationship a workable parallel?
5. Am I, as a pastor, willing on request to recommend that the church appoint and commission one or two of our key leaders to boards or committees of para-church organisations?
6. Am I, as a para-church leader, open to a church or denomination suggesting they appoint a key businessman to my board? If not, why not?
7. When did I, as a para-church leader, last call on or telephone a local pastor, just to bring him into the picture on our activities?
8. What do I really think of John Stott's statement that "independence of the church is bad, co-operation with the church is better, service as an arm of the church is best"? What are my reasons? Whom can I contact to initiate some action?
9. Do I need to repent from an "I was here first" attitude, or conversely, from invading someone else's territory without prior discussion?
10. Am I trying to bring others under my umbrella? What am I really trying to do? With whom did I discuss it?
11. Am I part of a religious consortium which brings unkind pressure on those not wishing to "join"? Must all think alike to cooperate in evangelism? And if some are not ready to cooperate can I not still encourage them in their work while we do ours?
12. Are denominational or para-church flags flying over projects or programmes in our city? "figuratively speaking? Are there unwritten yet carefully observed territorial rights? Is all this really promoting a unity which the world sees as positive? Or does it rather help build someone's empire? What can I do that will bring about an even better working relationship?
13. Do I as a pastor really see the new church going up around the corner as competition, or as an opportunity to express the oneness of the Body of Christ? If the latter, what have I done about it? If the former, how can I change my attitude? Have I visited the leaders to welcome them? Have I invited the new pastor to lunch?
14. Do I jealously guard my pulpit? "even from those who are sound in the fundamentals of the faith? Why? What am I afraid of?
15. Do I, as a para-church leader, take unfair advantage during opportunities to speak in a local pulpit? Have I put myself in the pastor's shoes? Do I back him up, or show him up? Am I paternalistic, or do I show gracious submission?
16. Have I virtually cut off my flock from links with other Christian groups or churches? Am I willing to re-evaluate the damage I can cause? Do I realise what an unhealthy view of the Body of Christ I am perpetuating? Am I taking "orders from 'Above'," or bowing to peer group pressure from fellow pastors? Am I willing to stand alone for the expressed unity of the Body?
17. Which is more important to me? Building my own empire by increasing membership and attendance; or promoting unity within the Body of Christ regionally? Am I extending God's Kingdom, or my own kingdom?
18. Am I nursing a grievance because another church or group engaged in sheep-stealing from my staff? Why am I resentful? Am I willing to graciously go to the offending party, discuss the wrongdoing and put the relationship right?
19. Is my organisation guilty of wooing, from Third World countries, personnel who are the "cream of the crop"? Am I aware of the resultant loss to a developing church? Am I sensitive to growing alienation between us and that national church? Am I willing to suggest self-limiting parameters to stop wrongful exploitation of human resources?
20. As a multi-national Christian organisation, to what degree do we really let national leadership make the decisions in matters involving their personnel or their churches?
21. Am I a member of a ministerium which could (even unsolicitedly) arbitrate areas of friction between church and para-church groups? Can we encourage our country's national evangelical fellowship to set up some guidelines? Could I help educate Christian leaders in the value of our expressed unity being seen by the world? What about brief articles or "envelope stuffers" published by our ministerium? What about the next generation?

5. Hindrances to Co-operation: The Harmfulness of Strained Relationships

The Thailand statement called for "a change in our personal attitudes." This reflected the reports of several of the mini-consultations. Whereas the primary concerns there expressed our attitudes to those being evangelised, a similar change is now called for in our attitudes to one another as we "strive side by side for the faith of the gospel."

George W. Peters, expressed this conviction at the Green Lake '71 Foreign Missions Study Conference Retreat: "Christianity is basically a religion of relationships. Relationships are of deeper significance than organisational structure and identity. The struggle for the preservation of organisational identity must not be permitted to disrupt spiritual relationships, whatever our rights may be."

In expressing our deep concern for the generally poor quality of relationship existing between church and organisation and between the organisations themselves, we felt it necessary to spell out some contributing causes in addition to those contained in other sections of this document.

We need to repent of the pride and selfishness, which often appear to be at the root of deteriorating relationships. But eradicating wrong attitudes is only part of the Commission's concern. Such attitudes must also be replaced by those which are right and positive, so that the groups involved will each take the initiatives necessary to bring about harmony and co-operation in evangelism.

A. A Superior Attitude

A superior attitude on the part of some churches or organisations can be a major cause of resentment. Such an attitude, if exhibited by a pastor or organisational leader, soon contaminates the supporting staff. The kind of paternalism frequently seen in the mission fields of the past century is not altogether stamped out. Those who came with the message felt that "in the gospel" they were possessors of information which, being "from God," was superior to anything hitherto known by the recipients. The consequent development of a teacher-student relationship soon set the stage for decades of paternalism as the national church grew. Similar attitudes are bred where a church looks back on centuries of proud history and sees itself, therefore, superior to all later arrivals.

Conversely, some para-church organisations treat such a heritage as most undesirable, going out of their way to show that because they are new and

computerised, their machine is more efficient and more productive. Still others appear to reflect the thinking of large secular corporations, and act as though, because they are the largest, they should be treated with the utmost respect. They see their size as evidence that God has blessed them, and are often insensitive to being seen by others as a threatening steamroller ready to flatten everything in sight. Similarly, specialist organisations sometimes give the impression that they are the ultimate gift from God. Feeling they have superior expertise, some have, on occasions, arrived at a church and virtually taken over—even using expensive equipment which has been purchased with funds provided by these very churches, or their members. How easily can we appear to have all the answers, and instead of encouraging the congregation, leave it with a somewhat paralysing feeling of total ineptitude.

B. Deeply Ingrained Prejudices

Longstanding prejudices can seriously hinder working relationships between individual leaders in groups and churches. Despite recent progress, racial, national, and regional prejudices are still a major problem. Almost every area of the world is affected. Quite apart from the more obvious prejudices, denounced as un-Christian by the Lausanne Covenant, two others were singled out by the Commission as being particularly divisive:

First, the Atlantic Ocean at times seems like a "great gulf fixed" between that which is American on the one hand and that which is European on the other. To a large degree, the British Commonwealth countries have joined the more conservative, less public-relations conscious Europeans in rejecting (or at least opposing) what they see as flamboyant North American overtures, programmes and ideas. The vast potential for fund-raising in America appears at times to nauseate them. This breeds a resistance to much that invades Europe from west of the Atlantic. The Commission expressed concern as much about the European attitude as it did about frequent North American insensitivity to other cultures, and urges that those of us involved in this or in parallel situations around the world so open ourselves to the Holy Spirit that pride and prejudice can be more effectively dealt with on both personal and corporate levels.

The second area concerns the resurgence of the spirit of nationalism across the world. Instead of working towards the breaking down of national barriers (well exemplified in Eph. 2) some Christian leaders seem to have imbibed this same spirit, often to the point of determination to fly their national flag in church and organisation alike. We are unanimous in our belief that Christians must be neither wallbuilders nor empire-builders but bridge-builders. We believe that because Christianity transcends racial, national, cultural and social barriers, we should do all in our power to demonstrate that the gospel is a unifying rather than an alienating force. The reconciling power of our message will not be taken seriously until we, the messengers, learn to work together harmoniously. We urge that nominating committees of organisational boards explore ways of bridge-building as they make their recommendations; and that each para-church group in particular considers the expressed unity of the Body of Christ an indispensable part of its responsibility.

C. A Competitive Spirit

This matter has already been addressed in the Theological Preamble to this document. It bears repeating, however, that while some argue in favour of competition, seeing it as healthy stimulation for Christian growth and outreach, "an empirical fact is not necessarily a theological truth." Galatians 5:26 is clear that "provoking" (used only here in Scripture and meaning to challenge competitively) is unbecoming of those who profess to "walk by the Spirit." We need to take seriously John Stott's reminder that "sometimes the attempt to glorify the spirit of competition among us thinly disguises a sinful evangelical power-struggle of which we need to repent in dust and ashes."

A rigid denominationalism or parochialism, which sees only its own, is viewed by the Commission as paralleling a selfish "my organisation first" attitude which permeates much of the "para-church" world.

The Commission, gratifyingly aware of success in serious attempts to cooperate rather than compete, pleads with denominational, church, and para-church leaders to actively pursue that kind of fellowship and co-operation which will result in a more convincing evangelical thrust.

Michael Cassidy says, "Nairobi-based para-church organisations are on the right track with their regular monthly meeting of para-church organisations' leaders for prayer and fellowship." The Christian activities at the 1976 Montreal Olympics were coordinated by an ad hoc organisation known as "Aide-Olympique," as a result of initiatives taken by the Canada National Strategy Group at the 1974 Lausanne Congress. Some 55 evangelical denominations and organisations worked together in areas of witness and service—to make a much-felt impact on both the Games and the City of Montreal. It was no flash-in-the-pan. At the time of writing this paper, six years later, several organisations with offices in the same building not only still meet together almost daily for prayer and sharing, but also work like different departments of the same sodality, sharing equipment and information in such a way as to avoid needless duplication. Consequently, others have remarked that it is now no easy task to work in the Montreal downtown area without being drawn into the family by a process of divine osmosis. Many such examples could be cited.

It is the belief of the Commission that interdenominational groups working in such harmony can do much to break down barriers in urban areas in particular. Could not a Nairobi-style monthly get-together be developed in other centres? Pastors and church leaders would surely see it as a useful vehicle for airing their concerns, in much the same way as a ministerial meeting is the ideal opportunity for para-church groups to present an inter-church programme. Such initiatives provide for the much needed dialogue, so indispensable to the dispelling of fears and misunderstandings.

D. An Unforgiving Spirit

Several denominations, as well as a number of Christian agencies, have started because of power struggles, personality conflicts, or opposing philosophies (see section 6). Bad experiences either during the divorce or since are sometimes kept uppermost in the minds of the leaders, together with a determination not to forget what may have been a very hurtful episode. Such an unforgiving spirit has enormous potential to seriously damage the Christian witness, quite apart from killing the relationship. Because it is our scriptural duty to admonish one another, third parties in both church and para-church leadership should consider it essential that they (even unsolicitedly) intervene where such deteriorating relationships are perpetuated by one or both groups. Where such differences are amicably resolved, and particularly where the two organisations start to foster a positive relationship, the church is strengthened and the potential for effective evangelism increased.

E. Disparaging Talk

As a Commission, we have noted the ease with which we find ourselves able to indulge in, or respond to, negative talk about other churches and other Christian ministries. We believe we are not alone in this and acknowledge the need for true repentance, which will, of necessity, involve a forsaking of our sin. We, therefore, urge that we learn to treat each other with family loyalty. To frequently show our love and respect for other groups is one certain way to discourage disparaging talk by others. We would encourage pastors in a community to come together with para-church leaders from time to time for prayer, fellowship and discussion of mutual interests. At such a time, they could covenant together to discourage such negative talk. We need to be reminded that, in keeping with Eph. 4:29-32, we must "speak that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

F. Personnel-Stealing

Inconsiderate enticement of leaders from one ministry to another is seen by the Commission as having the potential to create almost irreparable damage in church/para-church and inter-organisational relationships. Particularly does this seem to cause a rift when a personal overture from one group receives a negative response from the person approached, who then relays the facts of the attempt to his superiors. Strained feelings result, and suspicions about the initiating group's motives grow fast.

Whereas the Commission naturally differentiates between healthy recruitment procedures and unfair enticement of personnel from one ministry to another, it nevertheless urges all those involved in such activity to go out of their way to prevent unnecessary alienation by considering the feelings of others before acting hastily.

The Commission also urges those Christians involved in personnel work—whether in secular or distinctively Christian ministries—to sit down together and provide guidelines for denominational and organisational use in this sensitive area. LCWE could be an ideal catalyst in initiating such discussion. Meanwhile, it is felt that in spite of the possible immediate sacrifice, there is always more to be gained in the long term by an openness and a transparency. Such transcends church or organisational interests and promotes unity, rather than the underhanded schemes which bring division and resentment.

G. An Indifferent Attitude towards Unity

There seem to be relatively few who give much more than lip service to striving to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It was observed from local efforts that building bridges for evangelistic co-operation was looked upon by most as an optional extra to be indulged in only as time and other demands permitted. We are often so determined that such will not take precedence over our own denominational concerns that we think of it as something we should do when we run out of things to do. Yet, just as we do not look upon overseas missions as something we do only when we've done everything possible for home missions, we need to foster the unity of the Body concurrently with building up our own congregations. The Commission believes that an unselfish example of giving a portion of our time to furthering such unity will, in the long run, do more than purely denominational pursuits to make a church healthy and flourishing. Our question should therefore be not "What can I get out of this for the church or the organisation?" but rather "How will the church of Jesus Christ worldwide benefit from what I propose to do?" Such an attitude, it is scriptural to expect, will influence the world for Christ.

One way to foster positive attitudes is to select a number of articles or illustrations which further fellowship and co-operation and regularly use them as envelope stuffers when writing church or para-church correspondence. If national fellowships and local ministerial groups would take it on themselves to provide the material, the Christian world would feel the positive effects. The following article is merely one example of a well-written, to-the-point allegory:

Recently, I was strolling along a lonely beach on one of the islands in the Bahamian chain. The wide expanse of hard golden sand, the whisper of the Casuarinas, and the dancing translucent waters caught me in their spell. The tide was unusually low that day. At one spot I came upon several acres of exposed brown rock. Carefully, I picked my way over this jagged surface to examine more closely the exposed formation. The entire area was pockmarked with small pools that swarmed with tiny marine life. Stooping down, I began to interview the little creatures. "How long have you been living here?" I asked boldly. "Oh, for a long time," one replied, "ever since the tide went out." "Well," I remarked, "I see that you are not alone. You have plenty of neighbours just like you. Why, there's a pothole full of them right next to you here." "But we have nothing whatever to do with them!" snapped one gregarious wiggler. "Those people left us, you know. We used to be all together, but they got mad and broke away when the tide went out." . . . "That's really too bad," I observed. "They look like you, they behave like you, and they probably relish the same foods. In fact, I can't see any difference between you and them at all." "But there is a difference," insisted my friend. "They are extremely shallow fellows, and really have no depth at all." "What do you mean?" "Well, look for yourself. Their pothole is only seven inches deep." "And how deep is yours?" I inquired. "Ours? Why ours is eight-and-a-half inches! In fact, we have one spot that is over nine." I scratched my head in puzzlement while he continued. "But let me tell you something else. Those people are quite narrow, too." "Narrow?" I asked. "Sure, their pool is only ten inches wide. Ours is eleven and a quarter!" The little swimmer swelled up as he made this significant pronouncement. My curiosity now unrestrained, I chanced one more question. "Say, what do you call your . . . your place here?" "This, sir," and now he really did expand, "is the Atlantic Ocean!"

I picked my way back over the rocks. High tide came in six hours later. Those acres of potholes were completely covered, and all those little creatures were swimming together again. I looked and then cried, "Lord, send in Thy tide today!" (C. Ernest Tatham, in *Let the Tide Come In*, Creation House Publishers)

Note: It is timely that we once more emphasise that our goal is to encourage that type of co-operation which will result in more effective world evangelization not merely co-operation for the sake of cooperation, worthy though even that may be. Our purpose is to reach the world's unreached peoples, and each restored relationship has the potential to help achieve that purpose.

SELF-CHECK TEST No. 3

The Harmfulness of Strained Relationships

1. Is pride or selfishness behind some of the attitudes I have towards other Christian leaders? Is there something I need to forget? Is there as much need of confession, repentance or reconciliation on my part as there is on theirs? Even if I think not, am I willing to take the initiative, as Jesus taught?
2. Am I concentrating on putting right some ecclesiastical, mechanical or administrative wrongs, while all the time ignoring personal prejudices and strained relationships with Christian leaders? Will I carry these to my grave? Why?
3. Who is there, close to me, who can "flash a red light" each time I engage in disparaging talk about another church or Christian leader?
4. Is my staff aware of any superior attitude I have towards some Christian groups? Is this then reflected in their own dealings with these groups? How can I correct the situation?
5. Do I feel my denomination or organisation is more prestigious (longer history, larger size, etc.) than others? If so, is this reflected in my having a chip on my shoulder? Have I prayed about my attitude?
6. As a para-church leader do I have a habit of making churches or pastors feel uncomfortable? What can I do to alter this?
7. What are my major prejudices? Racial? National? Intellectual? Socio-economic? What am I doing to correct them?
8. Am I considered a strong personality? If so, do I have difficulty getting along with other strong personalities? Which one will I try to build a bridge with today?
9. Do I tend to take sides in the problem of "the Atlantic divide," or a parallel situation in other regions of the world? How can I become more objective?
10. Am I at present in a power struggle with a Christian leader? What exactly am I trying to prove? What do I want to see happen? How does this attitude hinder the cause of evangelism?
11. Do I see the furthering of Christian unity merely as an optional extra? If everyone were as active as I, would the Church make much progress in this direction?
12. Do I need to confess an unforgiving spirit towards another Christian leader? Do I need to contact him, or is this one between God and me alone? Can I let the sun go down on my wrath?
13. Do people know me as a peace-maker or a trouble-maker? Am I aware of some friction where God could use me to restore harmony? Have I prayed that the door may, open?
14. Do I really pray for other pastors and para-church leaders in my town or city? (A mule cannot kick while he is pulling, nor pull while he is kicking.)

6. Hindrances to Co-operation: The Rivalry between Ministries

The dramatic increase in the number of para-church agencies was of major concern to the Commission. The reasons given for starting new societies or keeping old ones alive are not, in our view, always healthy. Overlap of effort, needless duplication and organisations vying for the position of umbrella are becoming common problems. Pastors and other leaders are often quite amazed as they watch what they see as competition becoming more intense each year.

We need to be more careful to avoid potentially threatening situations. We must also learn how to better communicate our intentions and goals so as to minimise misunderstanding and suspicion.

A. Becoming a Threat to Others.

The para-church organisation, particularly when it functions nondenominationally, can easily become a concern both to local churches and to other voluntary societies. Whether large or small, specialised or general, it seems inevitable that someone or some group will be threatened by its existence. Usually those so affected do not divulge their true feelings and the matter is left to fester, while relationships deteriorate, ministries become less effective and the functional unity of the Body is destroyed. We feel that such a threatening situation is precipitated for at least three reasons:

(i) Because an organisation is more specialised.

Churches, by their very nature, are comprehensive, or general, in their ecclesiastical functions—even though they may have within their structures special ministries concentrating on worship, witness or service. Para-church agencies, on the other hand, because of the specific needs which usually call them into existence, tend to be specialised, at least at the start. Such ministries have the potential to show up the generalist in their particular area of expertise. If they broaden the scope of their ministries, the quality may suffer and the cutting edge be lost.

A commercial analogy may help us make an objective evaluation. A chain specialising in the ubiquitous hamburger opens a business in a town which, for years, has had just one restaurant. As the restaurant is of a general nature, it immediately feels threatened by such expert competition in the popular hamburger field. It tries hard to improve its product but has little chance of success due to the specialised nature of the new chain. Having previously enjoyed a monopoly, it now loses more and more of its regular customers. The proprietor becomes increasingly resentful and takes every opportunity to criticise the new establishment. (After all, the chain did not consult the restaurant owner, nor advise him of its intentions to move in.) Having won the hearts of the townspeople, the specialist decides to expand his line of products, moving next into the lucrative breakfast field. Eventually he becomes involved in too many specialty lines, and is less and less able to maintain the high standards of his one-product days. By this time, the public is over the novelty; and both businesses, now with similar menus, settle down to a resigned co-existence as generalists. Another new chain then moves in with its specialty, bringing about a repeat of the cycle.

Certain church/para-church scenes closely resemble this. As stated, local churches by definition, are generalists. But para-church agencies are usually, at the start, specialists; and the threat is very real for the pastor of a local congregation. Whether inebriated by success, motivated by ambition, or thirsty for power, the agency expands its horizons with the conviction that "it worked for the first ministry and it can work again." Gradually the standards deteriorate and the novelty wears off.

The problem is not only with the churches. Other Christian organisations may now view the newcomer with a similar degree of apprehension, for while the general churchly functions of a congregation may be no threat to their distinctively para-church ministries, the newcomer is treading flatly on their toes. The success of the sharply focused specialist will, likely, always be a thorn in the flesh of church and parachurch alike. And those groups which may have a genuine call from God to such a ministry need to be cautious and sensitive, so that the cause of Christ will be furthered rather than hindered.

(ii) Because an organisation is too similar.

When the threat of specialisation appears to be minimised, a new problem is lurking in the shadows—the threat of sameness, with its potential for competition. Recent history has recorded the voyages of some well-intentioned organisations in their journeys, not only from specialist to generalist, but also from para-church to church. Not satisfied with the ceaseless adding of new ministries to their repertoire, they move into distinctly churchly realms, those of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper as well as the exercising of ecclesiastical discipline on members who do not measure up. Once this line is passed, there is little left to distinguish such organisations from local congregations of believers. Because a considerable percentage of these function in residential community, the reality of their churchly status is obscured. In spite of the odyssey outlined above, such groups have sometimes been reluctant to acknowledge their evolution. It is considerably more difficult to raise funds and recruit staff once the status is admitted. The Commission sees such groups as pre-congregational or pre-denominational, while recognising that many of them may never develop beyond that stage.

While the sameness may be camouflaged, the developing of a competitive spirit cannot be concealed. When two groups (one church, one para-church) want the same people, the same programmes, the same dollars and the same authority, a clash is inevitable and both ministries suffer. The possibility of co-operation in evangelization fast fades.

(iii) Because an organisation has the potential to absorb others.

Para-church leaders frequently try to bring together pastors and church leaders, or those in similar ministries in a certain geographical area. Although the response is often most gratifying from the vantage point of apparent Church unity, there are not lacking those who inwardly resent being herded by some self-appointed ruler. We have noted that this is particularly the case if the initiator is young, from another region or country, a newcomer, or from certain kinds of para-church organisations. We have noted also that he must earn the right to function in such a capacity, or else run the risk of alienating the very groups he seeks to bring together.

Even when a pastor of a congregation is a good leader, with vision and more than his share of intelligence and imagination, he often finds himself inhibited by the prison bars of his church walls. His sole responsibility is there, and not beyond. He may be more gifted and altogether more suitable for the role of leadership among his fellow pastors, but he is seldom nominated and rarely dares to usurp the throne. Unless he is a godly man, characterised by genuine humility, he finds it hard to be cornered or controlled by a group which, while enjoying the glamour of the spotlight, escapes the pressures of the pastorate.

Thankfully, there are many pastors who are anything but resentful, just as there are well-motivated para-church leaders who are the obvious choice to initiate such gatherings. The latter are to be encouraged to act, yet they are well-advised to tread carefully in a potentially fragile area. For the broad extent of an organisation's influence can also be a cause of jealousy, resentment and wrong attitudes on the part of other organisations, especially those in the same district or in the same ministry.

B. Lack of Clearly Communicated Goals.

When love, trust and a sense of unity permeate the Christian groups in a city or town, communicating our aims and objectives may not be as crucial as when these qualities are lacking; for when we trust one another's motives, we do not need to have all the facts. However, the mushrooming of church, denominational and para-church structures (each functioning independently) calls for a greater effort to ensure we understand one another's intentions. Lack of reporting and lack of dialogue frequently breed misunderstanding, while misunderstanding, in turn, breeds suspicion and fear. This leads to disharmony, disunity, a fragmenting of our witness and a failure to convince the world of the reality of our message.

In 1981, the M.A.R.C. division of World Vision International estimated there were 5,200 registered Christian societies in the world—about half of them in North America. In contradistinction to local churches, whose aims and functions are reasonably well understood, almost all such agencies are unique. Their philosophies of ministry and objectives are not generally known by the churches and organisations among which they operate. It is, therefore, increasingly essential that such are more clearly defined and better communicated than may have been necessary several decades ago.

The Commission urges the leaders of Christian ministries planning to operate in a given locality, to put themselves in the shoes of one of the pastors of a local congregation. What would they then like to know about organisation A or B? What type of information would alleviate their fears, or defuse the time-bomb that may be ticking more loudly by the day? Discussion with a number of pastors seems to indicate that the following would be a typical list:

- (i) I would appreciate the leader's discussing his intentions before he moves in.
- (ii) I would like us to agree that the planned ministry will meet an existing need in the community I already serve.
- (iii) I want to know the objectives and goals of the organisation and the limits of their ministry.
- (iv) I want to know where their ministry will overlap or conflict with that of my church.
- (v) I would like to discuss various ways we can complement each other's work, striving to avoid duplication.
- (vi) I need to be assured that the organisation's staff will be under the moral and doctrinal authority of one or more churches in town.
- (vii) I would want to know whether they agree that the long-term discipling of new converts should be done in the context of a local church.
- (viii) I would like to know whether they are going to ask the church (or individuals in the church) for financial support.
- (ix) I would appreciate the opportunity of input into major problems their ministry may face, particularly if those problems could affect my congregation.

(x) I would appreciate an occasional get-together of pastors and para-church leaders as an opportunity for me to get more information and share my concerns.

C. The Growing Number of Independent Ministries

Despite the vast breadth of the Christian mission, it is obvious that considerable duplication of effort must exist among the estimated 5,200 societies referred to above. Duplication is usually wasteful and costly, and becomes a breeding ground for unhealthy competition and suspicion. As this seriously hampers co-operation in the work of evangelism, we must ask ourselves several questions. Why are so many organisations coming into existence? Are there some whose ministry is over, yet who fail to recognise it? Is it possible to avoid overlap and duplication or, at least, to rid ourselves of the spirit of competition?

(i) Why new organisations get started

We suggest several reasons including, what seem to us, both desirable and undesirable:

- (a) Because a single church or denomination *cannot* do a certain task alone.
- (b) Because the church just is *not doing* what it should be doing.
- (c) Because the founder for various reasons, does not want the church to control a certain ministry.
- (d) Because of a specialised ministry requiring specific expertise.
- (e) Because of a dream, vision or other supernatural communication. (Or, sometimes, "God told me!")
- (f) Because of designated funds from one source or another.
- (g) To establish a base in a previously closed or antagonistic area.
- (h) Because of a desire on the part of a donor not to be forgotten after death.
- (i) Because of a pendulum reaction to the work of a group in the opposite camp.
- (j) Because of failure to persuade an existing organisation to change its emphasis or its policies.
- (k) Because of a power struggle, personal ambition, or an empire-building mentality.
- (l) Because theological liberalism or apostasy is present in the original organisation.
- (m) Because of lack of funds (in an existing organisation) to do the ministry required.
- (n) Because of disagreement with an existing organisation concerning fund-raising.

Glubb Pasha has noted the tendency towards secession in the closing decades of many empires. An increasing number of smaller and smaller states emerge, "each with its own policy, passport, customs and currency." Secession movements spring up, which are dignified with the name of "liberation." Where successful, "these further narrow the free-trading areas of the world and the possibility of peace and prosperity. They render defence impossible. Innumerable splinter armies, with different languages, different training, weapons and equipment are impossible to command."

There seems to be a similar tendency in a "Christian" society when the church has passed through successive phases in its life-cycle. The pioneer spirit and the times of spiritual advance in a church are often followed by a settling down into an affluent institution. As with nations, there follows the Age of Intellect, when words are a thousand times more numerous than deeds. Discussions, debates and arguments lead to differing schools of thought. These tend to be perpetuated by the establishing of movements which often develop into para-church organisations. It would seem that the more the subjects discussed, the more numerous and diversified the agencies become.

Whereas the Commission would strongly endorse the multiplying of individuals and teams involved in spreading the gospel, the development of para-church groups has now reached the point where, in one pastor's view, "The Church in North America is on a collision course with para-church organisations." The lesson of Babel's tower would warn us that the more numerous and diverse they become, the more difficult it will be to work together.

The Commission, therefore, pleads with those contemplating special ministries to seek to work, wherever possible, within existing structures. We do not need another organisation to bring this about. All we need is a contagious determination to do it. We must remind ourselves that service is more important than office and that people are more important than institutions. To use our God-given gifts in the service of his Kingdom, it is not necessary to have a title and a business card. Perhaps we would do well to remember that the Church grew fastest in its first two hundred years—the very period of time when it was not allowed to own buildings or formalise structures. The same has been true of China recently, where, to our knowledge, no network of para-church structures existed to devise and coordinate national evangelism programmes.

(ii) Why older organisations keep going

- (a) They do not feel their work is completed.
- (b) Designated or other funds are still available.
- (c) They move into new ministries to regain their relevance.
- (d) Their directors cannot make a decision to close.
- (e) They see closing down as failure or loss of face.
- (f) Too many people are leaning (albeit unhealthily) upon their services.
- (g) They have too many assets, including property and machinery.
- (h) Their staffs would be without jobs.
- (i) They resist suggestions of merger or of being "swallowed" by others. "We've always done things this way."

It is a common human weakness to want to build kingdoms and empires for their own sake. We believe that this is now happening in Christian circles in alarming proportions. Some agencies, by their very nature, of course, have an ongoing usefulness and relevance and are therefore, much to be desired in the Christian enterprise (e.g. some of those involved in Scripture production and distribution). Other organisations, however, come into being to do a certain task or project but have difficulty recognising when their work is done. Many examples of this can be found in cross-cultural missions. Though the church founded may have long since been able to function independently, nobody wants to cut the umbilical cord.

It has been pointed out many times that the Christian organisational cycle has four phases—the man, the movement, the machine, the monument. One well-known international Christian corporation president said recently that he felt his function was primarily to slow down the inevitable transition from the movement to the machine. He knew he could not prevent it.

There are in Christian circles today men and women who work best without "a movement." There are also movements which would do well to remain as such

without legal incorporation or registration. There are, in addition, organisations which have been machines for many years without recognising it. Yet others, while still in existence because of legacies or endowments, are, in reality, nothing more than monuments to mark the place where God at one time did a mighty work.

Our plea, therefore, as a Commission, is for that kind of organisational self-examination which is characterised by realism and humility. Such self-examination would be willing if necessary to surrender thrones, sell buildings, disband organisations or do whatever is necessary once it appears that the Christian Church would be less encumbered without the institutionâ€”or better served by its functions or assets being taken over by another. Dare we ask our local ministerial groups whether they think our services are needed?

(iii) Duplication not necessarily wrong.

There is a legitimate sense in which duplication of ministry must take place. The wisdom of establishing similar congregations of believers, in adjacent towns, is common practice. We are urged to multiply, and because duplication is merely the first step, the concept is scriptural when applied in this way.

Most observers would classify as needless duplication the planting of two churches of the same denomination on the same block of a small town. Yet many of these same observers would accept as normal the existence of two churches of different denominations on opposite corners of the same street. Though both be biblically committed and only half full, the fact that they have different names seems, in the minds of some, to justify their drawing from the same community. Although the teachers in either church would likely disagree, it is probable that the writer of the letter to the Corinthians (1:10-13) would see the duplication as needless, and again ask his question, "Is Christ divided?"

Interestingly enough, the longer a denomination has been in existence, the more accepted are its habits of establishing a branch alongside that of another denomination. But should a newly emerging church do the same, it soon becomes the object of criticism for competition and divisiveness.

The puzzle here seems to be that pastors who never question the existence of different evangelical churches in one town, (all involved in worship, witness and service) have great difficulty accepting two para-church groups involved in similar ministries among, for instance, Jews or students or athletes. It seems there is one standard for congregations and another for voluntary societies. The Commission's object in pointing out this inconsistency is not to justify the needless duplication of similar para-church groups, but rather to express its concern for the similarly unnecessary duplication of local congregations, where such brings intense shame on the Name of Christ and the cause of the gospel of reconciliation.

We are not saying it is never necessary for two voluntary associations to be working with different emphases among students of the same university; or that the planting of two churches with different strengths in the same block should never take place. But we are saying that such scenarios can frequently be the product of carnality and go right against the ardent desire of the One who prayed "that they all may be one, that the world may believe."

The Commission feels, therefore, that duplication in itself need not be wrong. It is the motive behind such duplication and the attitudes which co-exist that more correctly determine the rightness or wrongness of it. If it is competitive rather than complementary, we see the duplication as destructive rather than edifying. John Stott has reminded us that neither the law of the jungle, "nature red in tooth and claw," nor the practise of the marketplace are to be models for the Christian Church. For our creature gifts from God "should not be used in such a way as to harm others, especially those who go under in the struggle to survive."

The Commission, therefore, further pleads with all Christian leadersâ€”whether pastoral or para-churchâ€”to strive together to avoid the needless and destructive multiplication of competitive congregations and organisations. This, we are told in Scripture, will require humility, meekness, patience, forbearance and love (Eph. 4:2). We need to fervently pray together that these graces will abound in us as we show eagerness "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

SELF-CHECK TEST NO. 4

The Rivalry between Ministries For Pastors

1. Am I guilty of encouraging the church to be either narrower or broader in matters of fellowship and service than Scripture demands? Am I willing to change?
2. Would I be willing to inconvenience myself in order to meet regularly with other pastors (and para-church leaders) for prayer and a sandwich? Can I initiate this type of thing?
3. Does the church in which I minister maintain an open communion table and an open pulpit, so that other denominations are welcome? If not, am I willing to try to change things?
4. Do I praise other churches and para-church agencies in front of my congregation? If not, why not?
5. Do I encourage geographical as much as denominational fellowship? For example, do our people know as many Christians in nearby churches as they know in a sister-church of our own denomination? Is this not scriptural?
6. Do I encourage the reading of the publications of other denominations or para-church groups? In which way could I best do this?
7. Have I done anything to persuade our church to commend, commission or sponsor our congregation's para-church workers? Will I really consider this?
8. Do I encourage para-church workers in our area to keep our church informed on their activities? If not, is there some way I could get this started?
9. How could I initiate joint sponsorship of newspaper or radio ads with other churches or para-church groups, so as to publicly express our unity?
10. Do I inwardly resent the glamour and high profile of a local parachurch ministry? How can I best resolve this issue?

For Para-church leaders

1. Did I consult other para-church leaders and pastors before "setting up shop" in this area? What about the future?
2. How can I ensure that pastors and other para-church groups are kept informed of my intentions in areas which will affect them?
3. Am I honestly seeking to avoid unnecessary overlap or duplication, either in ministry programmes or in the geographical areas where we work?
4. Am I willing to take the initiative to set aside monthly or quarterly times for prayer and interaction with other para-church ministries?
5. Am I transparent with other leaders in openly discussing differences, while avoiding negative talk in their absence?
6. Have I tried to sheep-steal from other Christian ministries? Would I be willing to loan staff or equipment when this appears desirable? Without remuneration?
7. Will I take the steps necessary to provide a forum for local pastors to interact with those of us in para-church ministries?
8. Am I a threat in the Christian community because of trying to move into so many areas of ministry? With whom should I discuss this?
9. When an out-of-town leader visits me, am I eager to introduce him to other Christian leaders and local pastors?
10. Do I mix socially and extend genuine hospitality to those in other para-church ministries? How can I better the situation? Is my home available for this purpose?

7. Hindrances to Co-operation: The Suspicion about Finances

Money makes headlines. Religious convictions, organisational rivalries or personal jealousies rarely hit the news like those matters which concern the financing of Christian ministries. Perhaps no other topic comes anywhere near this one in eliciting comments of derision from a watching world. Such adverse reports serve only to confirm their prejudices and reaffirm their "wisdom" of keeping away from organised religion. Reports of this nature also increase public suspicions of innocent religious groups, whose image becomes tarnished through the world's lumping together of "religious hypocrites."

Scandals are increasing by the year. Competition for the mighty dollar gets keener by the month. Because the questionable techniques of the minority bring scorn on the rest, the Commission recognises that this type of problem does more to hinder co-operation in evangelism than most, if not all, of the problems already discussed.

We feel this general deterioration should be seen in its setting and wish to present some facts for the consideration of Christian leaders, prior to discussing more specifically three clear categories of problems in this area.

A. The Current Situation in Christian Giving.

There appears to be a chain of trends and events which has created a stronger spirit of competition for the Christian dollar in both church and para-church organisations:

- (i) For centuries, Christians considered the local church as the only "storehouse" for their tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:10).
- (ii) Independent missions and interdenominational organisations have more recently staked their claim to a share of the pie.
- (iii) As materialism increases, luxury and selfishness usually reduce the individual's desire for sacrificial giving.
- (iv) The dramatic increase in the number of para-church ministries means that available funds must be divided into yet smaller portions.
- (v) The recent epidemic of inflation and economic recession, resulting in a lower discretionary income, has further reduced some people's ability to give. This is often caused by a strong desire to maintain living standards.
- (vi) Increasingly ambitious corporate goals, in church and parachurch alike, make the spirit of competition more determined than ever.

B. Consequences of This Chain of Events

- (i) Questionable fund-raising techniques and subtle exploitation begin to infiltrate so-called Christian organisations.
- (ii) Inter-organisational squabbling and public disgust bring shame and disgrace on the work of the gospel.
- (iii) Attempts to resolve these major hindrances to co-operation in evangelism seem powerless, in the face of determined human selfishness.
- (iv) Empire after empire has experienced a similar cycle of events prior to irreversible decadence and collapse.
- (v) Only God the Holy Spirit can produce the humility, meekness, patience, forbearance and love which will slow down the pace of deterioration and the rate of decay.

These statements are not intended to be the cry of a prophet of doom, but rather an attempt to face realistically the context in which we must tackle the problems which hinder co-operation in evangelism. This backdrop will, hopefully, give greater incentive for responsible action, as we seek to resolve the tensions relating to financial concerns.

In otherwise equally caring societies, citizens of lesser developed countries are more willing to sacrifice than their counterparts in wealthier countries. Wealth and materialism, rather than extending a helping hand, more frequently exhibit a clenched fist of determination to hold on to treasured possessions. History has witnessed this phenomenon time and again. It inevitably leads to those brief decades of decadence which immediately precede the departing of a nation's glory. Governments decrease the percentage of the Gross National Product available for helping poorer nations and individuals become increasingly inward-looking and self-serving.

World hunger telethons throughout North America in recent years provide ample evidence that up to ninety percent of those responding to the needs of a suffering humanity live in the poorer socio-economic areas of a city or region. Minority ethnic communities are particularly responsive, while refugees, uprooted from their homelands and deprived of their possessions are often the most sympathetic of all.

The last decade has seen the institutionalised church in the Western world seriously questioning the mushrooming of organisations as well as the fund-raising techniques employed. Some of the more serious allegations involve the apparent lack of ethical principles behind ceaseless cries for help from those who will otherwise go under in their struggle to survive. Particularly singled out by an increasingly unsympathetic public are alleged instances of wrongful exploitation they feel take place in certain mass media ministries. Those with a genuine involvement in these fields are then suspect because of the publicity given to the offenders.

C. Problems Which Can be Resolved by Pastors and Boards of Local Churches

Pastors and church boards have frequently shown insensitivity to the validity, usefulness and financial needs of para-church ministries. Sometimes through an inadequate ecclesiology, but often from a narrow parochial vision, certain local churches (like horses harnessed and blinkered) seem unable to see beyond the confines of their own work. Consequently not only is para-church support at the bottom of the missions priority list, but church members are positively discouraged from giving to anything outside.

The wealthier a nation becomes, the more the spirit of worldly thinking can grip its churches. As a result, the success of a pastor or a local church is frequently judged in quantitative and especially economic terms. Pressure is put on him to achieve, and prove himself by increasing the church's budget. Sometimes this takes priority even over the feeding of the flock. His job is at stake. His peers are competing. His denominational head office is pressing. He will ultimately be judged a success or a failure on his ability in this activity, whether he is a godly man or not. Consequently, the first signs of anyone competing for these funds spell danger. He urges his people to be loyal and uses every opportunity to remind them of their responsibility to bring all the tithes into the storehouse (by which he means the local church). This also affects his attitude and actions towards other Christian ministries. Having noted the interest shown by the congregation in the organisation whose director preached last Sunday evening's sermon, he fears lest such magnanimity on his part will open the door to a leak in the giving patterns of the congregation. He sometimes decides never again to open his pulpit to "the competition."

In spite of these efforts, he finds he has little control over the appeals for funds that pour day after day into the mailboxes of his congregation. While some members are influenced by his urgings, others are deeply moved by the newsletters from organisations. He appeals to them at least to channel their gifts through the church so that they are included in its missions disbursements. Later, however, a brief glance at the monies literally going through his fingers lets him know just how much the church is losing. He sometimes adopts new methods to stem the flow. He has even been known to pass on information which tends to put the recipient ministries in a bad light. Extremes in doctrine, personality conflicts, or excessive travel are but a few of the tidbits he hopes will stop the leaks and help fill the church coffers once more.

Such a scenario is not as rare as some would have us believe; but the blame for it cannot all be laid at the pastor's door. The pressures of a growing number of organisations, the excesses of some agencies, and the demands of his church board have heavily contributed to the problem, and he has succumbed. He has allowed his gaze to be distracted from the glory of God, the person of Christ and the oneness of the Body. He has become competitive and partisan. Though that church may appear to flourish financially, it cannot but be impoverished spiritually. Expediency has replaced biblical principles, and selfishness taken over from liberality. Malachi 3:8 asks, "Will a man rob God?" As a Commission, we wonder whether it could be that a pastor or elder who so vehemently opposes all extra-church organisational support does not rob God as much as the church member who spends God's portion on himself?

D. Problems Which Can be Resolved by the Leaders of Para-Church Organisations.

It would be naive to think that the resolution of those matters pertaining to financial practises would alone result in churches more eagerly supporting para-church bodies. Even those organisations with a spotless record in this area find they are by no means automatically put on to church budgets. Matters such as theology, validity, accountability and personality, already discussed contribute significantly to the malaise.

Nevertheless it would be true to say that the local church attitude toward para-church groups would be far more healthy with the resolving of concerns to do with finance, resources, fund-raising, publicity and overhead. The Commission grappled at length with some of these. And it is now our purpose to briefly discuss them, offering suggestions which could lead to better relationships in the work of world evangelization.

(i) *Obscure financial reporting*

Although we have already considered the allegation that some voluntary agencies have inadequate accountability structures, the specifically financial aspects of such accountability frequently present a major problem to churches. While many organisations do have good accounting procedures, audited financial statements are not always available to potential or existing donors. The Christian public, when they do receive them, often find them difficult to understand. This may be because organisations do not use a common format or because these statements often tend to allocate administrative or fund-raising expenses to "programme" or "ministry," presenting a more healthy picture. The rationalisations for these questionable procedures are almost as numerous as the organisations involved. And those responsible often fail to see why the churches question the figures.

(ii) *Alarming overhead*

Property upkeep and staff salaries often consume 50% or more of the income of a church. Yet a Christian organisation is strongly criticised when its total administrative overhead exceeds even half of that. It seems that while a church has freedom to police the organisations (even publicising its findings), the reverse is not considered ethical. While para-church leaders are frequently asked about "responsible stewardship," many church buildings lie deserted for 165 out of 168 hours of each week. Furthermore, requests by various ministry groups for rented space in these buildings is more often turned down than approved. At a time when the Christian public is becoming increasingly aware of the administrative overhead of para-church ministries, church boards could do much to further the cause of world evangelization by making facilities available at cost to groups doing the kind of work the church approves.

The Body of Christ is made up of people who vary greatly in the standards they demand of themselves and others. That diversity is evident, for instance, in their judgments regarding an organisation's promotional and informational literature. Some are utilitarian at heart and fail to understand why anyone would use two colours on a printed sheet where one is cheaper. Others are highly selective in what they read, choosing mainly items that have appeal; they have little respect for things done shabbily or amateurishly. Para-church personnel (as well as recipients of their publications) are representative of both categories. Each appeals only to a limited proportion of their constituents. We would urge Christian leaders to be sensitive to the standards and feelings of all God's people. Yet, while we would strongly discourage standards so low as to bring discredit on the gospel, we nevertheless deplore wasteful extravagances which contradict the very message we preach.

While the Commission understands the need for stressing the interrelationship of money, time and energy, it regrettably notices that the life-style of some para-church leaders leaves a lot to be desired if they wish to impress the Christian public with responsible stewardship. We need to be extra careful in differentiating between essentials and luxuries, perhaps especially in the area of travel. Christian people, including those who sit on church boards, are not blind to these things and can hardly be blamed when they express negative attitudes to those contemplating a donation to the organisation concerned.

(iii) *Unwise use of mailing lists.*

The Commission is largely sympathetic toward those who find themselves placed on mailing lists without request or permission. While we recognise the difficulty in controlling this practise, we would do well to recognise that the public outcry against it has reached alarming proportions. The indiscriminate purchase or rental of mailing lists for ongoing use is not only unbecoming of those claiming Christian love which "has good manners" (Phillips), but also sinfully wasteful when it comes to the use of the Lord's money. With such practises in vogue among us, we need no longer wonder why mail frequently remains unopened or is discarded without being read. (This subject requires a more lengthy treatment by those who are specialists in the field.)

Another cause for public frustration is the low degree of importance given to requests to be removed from mailing lists. Those who grew up when standards of courtesy and morality were high often carry a continuing sense of guilt when they receive repeated requests for support they simply cannot give. They sometimes go to a lot of trouble to request deletion from a list, only to be ignored or kept waiting. Pastors are often their only resort, and the general impression is left that a leader who cannot be a wise steward of postage stamps is not to be trusted with larger amounts for ministry. Church leaders (who cannot normally use this method of appeal) find it easier to discourage giving than to graciously admonish the leader concerned.

(iv) *Questionable fund-raising techniques*

Several items were of concern to the Commission:

(a) *Distorted publicity*

Whereas the integrity of most organisational leaders with regard to public information is unquestioned, the competition for the Christian dollar is so keen that distortions and exaggerations appear to be on the increase. Pictures can be deceiving and words are so flexible that wrong impressions can easily be conveyed even though every word of a newsletter may be justified.

Copy writers are sometimes guilty of playing the numbers game—as well as presenting an exaggerated picture of poverty, sickness and disease. Surely the evidence of suffering and need is abundant enough without making it out to be worse than it really is.

We believe that scrupulous self-monitoring is essential, not only to prevent crippling legislation by governments, but primarily because the name of Christ and the cause of the gospel are both being compromised.

(b) *Exploiting human need*

The Commission expressed its conviction that some para-church agencies should honestly examine their motivation in attempting to relieve the material needs of suffering peoples. While we unanimously laud all worthy efforts to bring compassionate aid to those in need, we equally deplore the questionable goals of those who often appear opportunistic and self-serving.

The world has never been more aware of all the warts on our globe. Modern technology enables us to receive crisis news within minutes and to dispatch relief-laden aircraft within hours. Whereas most human beings are born with a mechanism which sympathetically responds to human need, age produces a callousing of our emotions. We can watch the world's agonising suffering on our television screens and sleep like babies after we switch them off. We have become accustomed to suffering. It now takes a crisis of alarming proportions to make us respond. When such a crisis occurs there seem to be two types of agencies that respond. The one, organisations who have been primarily called into being for these very humanitarian purposes and who go on working, unseen and unheralded, even when the television viewers have long forgotten; the other, organisations which came into existence for different—perhaps originally evangelistic—purposes, but who jump at the opportunity to climb on the popular bandwagon. None of us should be guilty of judging the motives of others. Yet all of us should avoid that kind of tugging at heartstrings which brings in support not only for the crisis, but also to subsidise other undersupported programmes. Some organisations are quite ill-equipped to bring relief and have been known to so frustrate the authorities that *bona-fide* groups have suffered from the restrictions consequently imposed.

We, therefore, plead with leaders of agencies whose work is not primarily humanitarian to consider the consequences of their actions before they move. If there is any truth in the missionary slogan "God's work done in God's way will not lack God's supply," then let us redouble our efforts to do with excellence and vigour the work to which we have been called and for which we have been equipped. In this way, we shall win the respect of our supporting constituency.

(c) The spectacular and the dramatic

Akin to the foregoing is the peculiar bent of human nature to respond to that which is dramatic, secret or otherwise exciting. Whereas the need to minister to those in countries "closed to the gospel" is very great, para-church groups in particular can exploit the dramatic elements to such a degree that purses, wallets, and cheque-books spring to respond. Some of us wonder whether, because the popularity of some spectacular ministries is so high, it would be hard for the leaders to really pray that God would at last open the doors to a "closed" country; for if he did, the dramatic would be replaced by the routine, and giving would drop.

Yet again, although such groups are in the minority, they bring disrepute on the majority who are called by God to a difficult, dangerous and needy work. Once more we would plead with those so engaged to do nothing which is not completely open to the scrutiny of supporting Christians. We need to ceaselessly pray that whatever will most quickly extend God's Kingdom will come about, whatever the effects on our current ministry. Nothing is more likely to win the respect and support of the churches, and thus further the cause of world evangelization.

(d) Inculcating unscriptural expectations

The Commission expressed concern over the policy (in a large number of para-church groups) of offering some type of material reward to those who send a donation. We feel the motive for giving to God must be "because of the mercies of God" (Rom. 12: 1) and not because of the book or record we will get out of it. We would discourage the "bubble gum mentality" of some donors who put the penny in the slot and wait for the goodies to come out. Our giving to God is not a "please" offering but a "thank" offering, and those who solicit funds should be careful, when offering something to the public, that they do not inculcate unscriptural expectations. Our failure to be corrected in this habit could result in our producing a generation of Christian children who will never give anything to God unless they get something out of it. Pastors who faithfully expound Scripture would be more supportive if organisations would teach by example the principles enunciated from the pulpit.

(e) Unrealistic goals

While long-term planning has now become an accepted part of institutional life, para-church agencies sometimes ask for church criticism by setting unrealistic goals. A dream, a vision, or merely an over-optimistic nature can easily result in commitments which are unlikely to be met. When an over-ambitious leader finds that income is not enough to reach these goals, he may announce a crisis which puts unfair demands upon the Christian public. Sometimes pledges made to their churches have to be broken, in order for donors to refloat a sinking ship. Even then, it is not afloat very long before more trouble arises. It is not surprising that pastors begin to wonder about the judgment (rather than the faith) of the para-church leader. There is little doubt that people are attracted to men and women of vision. They enjoy reading of those who will take risks or work hard to accomplish great things for God. The mere announcing of unheard of goals will usually elicit a generous response from a large segment of the Christian Church. Some of our leaders are men and women of prayer, of faith and of sound judgment, who reach these goals and inspire confidence in the public. But the Commission expressed deep concern about those who, knowing the generosity of Christians towards exciting projects, announce that they are starting "to build a tower" (in "faith"), but who do not sit down first and properly "count the cost, whether they have sufficient to finish it" (Luke 14:28). In many cases, after they have "laid the foundation and are not able to finish it," they issue a crisis appeal to escape the judgment in the scriptural example that "all that beheld it, begin to mock" them with the words, "this man began to build, and was not able to finish."

Whereas it has already been stated that a church strangle-hold on a para-church agency can easily result in the destroying of initiative, it nevertheless appears to us that forging ahead in this manner without prior consultation is nothing short of irresponsible action, particularly when those not consulted are then called upon to bail out the project. Because of action based less on faith than presumption, the leader responsible now finds that he is not merely motivating but manipulating. This type of activity can hardly be expected to inspire confidence and build bridges of co-operation in the task of world evangelization.

Russ Reid, in an article entitled "What Ruins Christian Leaders?" "A plan for leashing top dogs," quotes U.S. Senator Mark Hatfield as saying: "When I leave my office to go to the Senate floor, an elevator comes immediately . . . reversing direction if necessary and bypassing the floors of the other bewildered passengers aboard, in order to get me to the basement. As I walk down the corridor, a policeman notices me coming and rings for a subway car to wait for my arrival and take me to the Capitol building . . . At the Capitol, another elevator marked 'For Senators Only' takes me to the Senate floor."

Reid continues, "These are words about power, about the rights and privileges bestowed on one who has placed himself into the rarified air of Washington politics" "where raw power is enshrined and seniority amply rewarded. Senator Hatfield has come to terms with his power, but he himself admits that the struggle not to abuse it never ends . . ."

"We don't need to be doing the nation's business to know what power is all about. Pastors of both large and small congregations have power. Deacons, elders, Sunday school teachers and evangelists all have power . . ."

"Some of the most visible holders of power today are within the large, independent, religious organisations. Through their television ministries and direct mail systems, they wield tremendous influence. Unfortunately, this arena is also filled with the stories of Christian leaders who have built tremendous ministries, but who don't know how to exercise the power their Creator has given them. Their early vision" "with its absolute dependence on God" "often has shifted to a nightmarish one-man show. Unilateral seat-of-the-pants decisions upstage good counsel. 'The Lord told me to do it,' often becomes a pious platitude to justify leapfrogging over the wisdom of boards and committees."

Reid concludes, "These leaders aren't dishonest. They sincerely believe they're doing God's will. But what drives such leaders into mounting enormous debts for buildings, programmes, and campaigns for which the need is very questionable?"

(f) Unfair solicitation

It is common knowledge that after having been placed on the missions budget of a supporting church, some Christian organisations then approach individual members of that church for further support. The Commission wonders whether this is not unfair, particularly if the pastor or budget committee is unaware of the personal approaches. While some churches are happy to go along with both methods, it would normally seem more ethical to go in either the front door (of corporate giving) or the back door (of individual donors), rather than both. Because churches sometimes budget support knowing of the congregational interest in a mission, they are left stranded when that support appears not to be forthcoming. Unaware of the private donations, they are sometimes forced to transfer funds from the general account in order to meet their obligations. When all the facts become known, a rift is created in the church/para-church relationship, doing damage to future co-operation in the task of world evangelization. Further, in this same connection, some Commission members are aware of businessmen who have turned completely against certain para-church agencies because of ceaseless pressure" "often by telephone" "to give large amounts of money. Sometimes, professional fund-raisers raise more ire than funds, especially when common Christian courtesy and consideration are lacking in their approaches. When organisations get to learn that one man on a church board or budget committee was a fly in the ointment, they rarely realise the degree to which they may have brought it on themselves through previous high-pressure solicitation.

Some large Christian organisations confuse the Christian public' (and especially church leaders) by allowing different levels of their network to function independently of one another. The Commission was told of one church that was approached for funds during the same year by local, national and international entities of the same organisation. The situation was further complicated because one of its members was also raising his own support as a local staff member of that same agency. We, therefore, urge organisations so constituted to ensure that the left hand *does* know what the right hand is doing; to recognise what is reasonable in appealing for funds; and to adopt a policy which will relieve the confusion in the minds of the supporting public.

E. Problems Which Can be Resolved by Those Giving and Receiving Overseas Aid*(i) Concerns of the sending agencies about their home churches*

(a) Imbalance between evangelism and social responsibility

A whole generation has now gone by since evangelical leaders started seriously educating the Christian public on the need for the Church to meet the needs of the *whole* man. Giant advances have been made. Many believe that the combined humanitarian activities of evangelicals around the world have already surpassed those of their liberal counterparts. So much has this been the case that a few evangelical leaders have expressed concern at what they see as a growing imbalance at the expense of evangelism. The Lausanne Covenant sought to emphasise the priorities with the words "In the Church's mission of sacrificial service, evangelism is primary."

Several denominations still appear to be suspicious of relief and development projects. These are reluctant to help, and often see their mission in the world as "witnessing" alone. Such groups do not encourage Christian relief agencies and, as far as possible, protect their people from being indoctrinated.

The Commission pleads with denominational educators who fall into this category to consider the possibility of initiating serious interaction with Christian social agencies which are sound in the faith and evangelistically active. This may well result in a healthier, more balanced Christian outlook. (Readers interested in this subject should obtain a copy of [Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 21 The Grand Rapids Report: Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment.](#))

(b) Uncritical acceptance of secular media reports.

Christians sometimes appear to be more influenced by mass media reports and gossip than they are by the Scriptures and the actual facts of a situation. Staffs of respected relief agencies may be under attack by Christians whose suspicions about finances, once aroused, refuse to be put to rest. A segment of secular—and sometimes religious—journalism seems to take every opportunity to call into question the honesty, judgment and integrity of relief agencies, especially in the sphere of administrative costs and how much of each dollar given actually reaches the hungry and the dispossessed. Doubtless, some agencies do exist where such criticism is justified. But many more are to be found with sound judgment, transparent honesty and, what seems to us, reasonable administrative overhead.

Whereas the frequency and exaggerations of some of these reports do serve as a self-monitoring check on all Christian relief organisations, the Commission urges the Christian public—and especially pastors and leaders—to contact the agency in question and ask for the facts (such as a financial statement). An alternative route would be to contact monitoring agencies such as the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (in the U.S.A.), umbrella groups like the Canadian Council of Christian Charities (in Canada), or similar bodies in other countries. Once satisfactory answers are obtained, we would urge pastors to inform their flocks, encouraging their people to ignore incorrect media reports and to support the agency with prayer and loving help.

(c) Giving only the left-overs

Western materialistic living and the indulging in increased levels of luxury has sometimes resulted in those from the wealthier countries giving only from what is left over after necessities and luxuries have been bought. Staff of relief agencies are not alone in feeling we would all do well to heed the attitude of King David who rebuked the misguided generosity of Araunah, the Jebusite, with the penetrating words, "Neither will I offer to the Lord my God of that which costs me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:24).

The press occasionally reports a case of costly sacrifice in order to help others. The consequent amazement of the public serves to confirm our thinking that we must normally hardly notice the loss of monthly, or occasional, cheques we write to relieve the needs of the world.

The Commission supports the embracing of a simpler life-style by those whose needs are more than met. History would teach us that wealthy nations which do not voluntarily change their ways to help the poor are often brought to their knees by times of economic chaos.

(d) Too much emphasis on buildings

A leader of one international relief agency believes that some churches' pre-occupation with buildings is a major reason for a low level of concern for the hurting world. He sees this as particularly true in North America. Whereas few would underestimate the immense value of a suitable structure in which a church can meet, there is a very real sense in which four walls can be the greatest hindrance to fulfilling the real mission of the Church. This is not only because much of our evangelism is consequently aimed at "saints and seats," but because funds, otherwise available, are eaten away by expensive structures and crippling maintenance costs. The prototype of church life is unquestionably the Acts of the Apostles. Here we see the prime example of missions par excellence. The gospel was spread, the widows were looked after and the needs of the saints in distant parts relieved. But those early Christians—as Christians—were not allowed to own buildings. Yet the Church never grew faster than it did in its first two hundred years, before the relaxing of the laws saw it eventually distracted from its primary purpose.

Recent information coming out of China would attest the wisdom of this pattern. In the first 30 years of Communist domination, little was heard about the Church. Some voiced the thoughts of thousands when they said, "We must assume the Church in China is all but dead." The facts have now come to light and the opposite appears to be the case. While no official count is possible, it would seem that much that was dependent on Western help, denominational structures and beautiful buildings, disappeared, while the indigenous Church, reduced by social and political pressures to its basic cell structure, grew to an estimated 25-50 million people. Jonathan Chao reports that in one county in Honan province, which had previously resisted Western missionary efforts, believers grew from four thousand in 1948 to 160,000 thirty four years later. Writing in *Christianity Today* June 18, 1982, David Adeney points out that the Church was not only deprived of its buildings but is still "not allowed to support full-time workers—pastoral ministry has been carried on by church members, who work during the day and give their time in the evenings to the work of the Lord. Leadership usually emerges from the church prayer meetings. Appointed by members of the church, the leaders are not responsible to any outside organisation. They are self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating."

Whereas it would be naive to think that the restricting circumstances in which the Chinese Church thrived could be artificially imposed upon, or simulated in, the free and wealthy nations of the West, history provides ample evidence that a simpler organisational structure in the church not only facilitates multiplication, but also frees millions of dollars for feeding the hungry and relieving the distress of the world's poorer peoples.

The Commission can well understand why a church, virtually crippled under a heavy load of building debt, would bar its doors to independent and even denominational relief agencies. The guilt would be increased, by sensing what could have been accomplished if the congregation had not yielded to the desire for "the biggest church in town."

Eastminster Presbyterian Church in suburban Wichita, U.S.A., provides an example of a congregation which found a better way. The congregation had planned a \$525,000 church building programme for 1976. Then when an earthquake struck Guatemala in February of that year, the Wichita church learned that many evangelical congregations in the Central American nation had lost their buildings. An elder posed this question: "How can we set out to buy an ecclesiastical Cadillac when our brothers and sisters in Guatemala have lost their little Volkswagens?" The church slashed its building plans by two-thirds and borrowed \$120,000 from the bank to rebuild 26 Guatemalan churches and 28 Guatemalan pastors' homes. The Wichita pastor reported that the congregation's action had "meant more to Eastminster Presbyterian than to Guatemala."

We all would do well to re-read the Acts of the Apostles and reassess our priorities. While we do recognise the value of suitable buildings, we feel strongly that any church can easily be gripped by, an "edifice complex" and, in the process, lose a vital concern for evangelism and missions.

(ii) Concerns of the churches of receiving countries about sending agencies.

(a) Is the aid really needed?

Church leaders in countries receiving Western aid sometimes question the factors which determine the selection of projects from the large number of applications received by an agency. They feel they are frequently not the most needy. Some nationals are all too aware of the situations in the

donor country which affect such decisions. "Which type of project will merit government matching grants?" may well determine whether the agency will eventually dig a well, start a reforestation programme or open a clinic in a needy rural area. Major crises, which make international headlines often attract dozens of relief agency personnel to the scene, eager to rebuild anything which was destroyed by earthquake or carried away by the tidal wave. In most cases these are responses to urgent cries for help received by the agencies, and the Commission expressed its thankfulness to God that there are those called by him to this great work. Yet church leaders in the hurting countries are frequently disturbed when they see other personnel searching for projects which have even the most remote connection with the crisis. They wonder why an equal amount of money could not be designated for needs which, in national eyes, are more urgently deserving. One reason, of course, is that the public tends to give more generously to those crises publicised on television. Each donor wants his money used for that, and that alone. As more and more agencies arrive at the site, instead of thanking God that the needs have been largely met, they find themselves bordering on panic for fear that a project will not be found to meet the designated criteria of funds flowing into the home office.

Such a scenario not only upsets the churches of the receiving country but also increases the competition between the uninvited agencies, who become more determined to be first on the scene at the next emergency. Is it, therefore, any wonder that the evangelistic activity, often so effective in a time of crisis and upheaval, is done in a piecemeal and disorganised way because of the strained relationships between the churches and some of the agencies involved? The communicating of the facts to sister churches in the donor country drives in the wedge of suspicion still further.

The Commission recognises the complexity of this problem, but urges those parties involved in such international crises to sit down together to find a solution which will not destroy the observed unity of the Body of Christ in that country. We would also ask the Christian public to be less demanding in the use of surplus funds, which may well be more effectively used by being re-designated to a lower-profile project.

(b) The danger of destroying self-identity

Some highly respected Third World church leaders have, for years now, been distressed over the destructive potential of foreign aid. Caution needs to be shown to ensure that the self-reliance, self-esteem or self-identity of the recipients is not destroyed. The churches of India have a saying, "You cannot walk with Western crutches," and together with leaders from African and other nations, have expressed their concerns to well-meaning but sometimes short-sighted Western relief groups. The concern has reached the point in many countries where it is actually becoming difficult to help at all. It is not that the needs have been met—they are as serious as ever. It is rather a case of national pride over-ruling the receiving of needed aid when it so destroys the selfhood of a people.

Most of the established agencies are, we believe, fully aware of this danger. With the increase in the number of groups involved in relief and development projects, the Commission recommends that associations which bring relief agencies together frequently discuss—and if possible, monitor—these tendencies. We must strive together for partnership without paternalism.

(c) Recruitment of nationals

Organisations with designated funds but limited time sometimes find themselves having to disburse or distribute monies without opportunity to adequately check the credentials of intermediaries. National leaders, not consulted in a project, are occasionally horrified to hear of grants being used for undesigned purposes. Not infrequently, a project office is opened where members of the staff are all relatives of the trustee of the funds. While this may be acceptable in some cultures, leaders of most receiving countries and individual donors in the West see it as an unwise and opportunistic practise.

For many years, Third World church leaders have voiced their concern over the relatively high salaries paid to national workers by multi-national Christian corporations. Such policies have a way of spoiling the workers and spawning an atmosphere of jealousy, greed and dissatisfaction. This often results in inflationary budgeting with which smaller churches or organisations cannot cope. Furthermore, the thought of reward, rather than of the privilege of serving God, takes over as the motivating factor for the one seeking Christian employment. The displeasure of national church leaders with this practice is unlikely to further cooperative evangelism. While we would not convey the suggestion that relief agency staff be paid less than church leaders, we do feel strongly that Western agencies have a moral obligation to consult both secular and church leaders to ensure their offers are not totally out of line.

(d) Life-style of Western personnel

The traveling life-style of some of today's para-church leaders is hardly reflected in the well-known Christmas hymn:

*Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown
When Thou camest to earth for me,
But in Bethlehem's home there was found no room
For Thy holy nativity.
The foxes found rest and the birds their nest
In the shade of the forest tree,
But Thy couch was the sod, O Thou Son of God
In the deserts of Galilee.*

Such was the living standard of the Mission Leader par excellence. It becomes embarrassing to sing such words when our life-styles are in stark contrast to the community living in poverty around us. The Incarnation itself was the outstanding example of self-emptying in order to identify with men in their need. The birth, baptism, and death of the Lord Jesus on the cross were expressly for this purpose. The most elementary of mission principles teaches us that it is difficult to identify with a people we wish to reach, unless we are willing to adopt at least some of their customs and standards. This is not to suggest we must dress in national costume, but it is to urge us to avoid that which offends the national conscience. Church leaders in developing countries are increasingly concerned about unnecessary, even luxurious, living standards of Western agency personnel, who often leave the impression of corporate wealth and material indulgence. While we recognise the wisdom of taking all necessary precautions in health and hygiene, there are, frequently, areas of our lives open to the public, where it is not essential to live the way we sometimes do.

The Commission urges umbrella organisations (such as the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations—AERDO) to establish some self-monitoring checks to bring moral pressure on those whose overseas life-styles bring discredit on the gospel. A simpler living standard would not only reduce overhead but also make the church in the receiving country more open to cooperative evangelism.

We also recommend that church leaders in developing countries, genuinely wanting to show the best side of their hospitality to visiting personnel, find ways other than reserving rooms for them in the most luxurious hotels. We should remember that experienced Westerners are very cognisant of the Eastern custom of accepting what is offered. They are, therefore, unlikely to ask for a last-minute change, lest they offend the host. Onlookers, seeing the class of their accommodation, have no way of knowing who is responsible.

(e) The ignoring of protocol

Time and again, Western missionaries or lone nationals (connected with a missionary agency or a national church) will request aid from interdenominational agencies in the West. Sometimes the projects are most worthwhile, and unsuspecting agencies may well agree to the funding. Later, the church or mission agency under which the applicant operates, gets to hear of the project through a third party or by observing the development of the scheme *in situ*. Questions are asked and the funding agency becomes the scapegoat. The national church is indeed justified in wondering (a) why the individual did not go through the right denominational channels and (b) why the funding agency supplied the aid without consulting them. It is not unknown for the denomination to have turned down a previous application for the same project, not for lack of funds, but because the timing was wrong; or because it would affect other programmes which were planned. Bad feeling results. The agency concerned is blacklisted. Co-operation in evangelism—or in anything else—is seriously jeopardised.

Larger, well-established organisations are well aware of the problems such actions can cause, and they do everything in their power to avoid them. Smaller, less-experienced agencies may, however, swallow the bait unsuspectingly, only to find themselves on the hot-seat.

The Commission pleads with individual missionaries or national workers to observe protocol wherever possible and encourages funding agencies to avoid unpleasant situations by double-checking before granting aid to this type of project.

(iii) Concerns of sending agencies about churches in the receiving countries.

Most Christian relief agencies prefer to channel funds for a requested project through Christian churches in recipient countries. Where this is not possible (or, sometimes, not desirable), other Christian groups or individuals are sought out to act as intermediaries. Sheer logistics or a need for urgency may occasionally call for secular or government structures to be used.

Experienced agencies are, nevertheless, sometimes reluctant to entrust their funds or goods to Christian churches because of having had their fingers previously burned. The concerns most often mentioned are (a) the need for trustworthiness, (b) the need for efficiency, and (c) the need for financial accountability.

(a) The need for trustworthiness

Not a few funding agencies feel that the sub-Christian moral standards of some receiving countries are often tolerated in national churches and practised by some of those handling relief funds. Churches previously acting as channels for aid have sometimes left much to be desired, by way of openness and honesty in their arrangements. Conscious of their role as stewards of the gifts of others, the funding agencies want to ensure that aid is received only by the people and projects for which it is designated. This does not always happen. Conflict of interest on the part of intermediaries sometimes results in diverted aid, or, at least favouritism towards certain people or districts. Past favours are even reciprocated at such opportune times. Furthermore, in addition to the "family only" policy of employment discussed above, some national churches, on seeing how much money is being poured into a project, begin to put pressure on the funding group for their cut of the funds, the requested percentage increasing each year. National churches who wonder why they have been dropped would do well to consider these facts.

(b) The need for efficiency

Christians are not always the most efficient intermediaries for relief funds. While national churches often feel slighted at being by-passed, many have still not learned to pay enough attention to preparing themselves for speedy and efficient handling of funds, food or medical supplies. If church leaders of receiving countries would only be willing to discuss and resolve the concerns of the donor organisations, the latter may soon regain their eagerness to work with them. (A number of these concerns are included in the Self-check Test at the end of the section.)

(c) The need for financial accountability

The pressure is mounting—particularly in North America—for Christian humanitarian agencies to be more precisely accountable (a) to their donors, (b) to the press, and (c) to the public in general. The mushrooming of relief agencies not properly equipped to raise and distribute funds brings increased accountability demands on other, well-established organisations. It is, therefore, to be expected that those on the receiving side of the aid will be required to give increasingly detailed accounting of the funds received. If churches in a Third World country wish to be channels, they must, now more than ever, (a) demonstrate their ability to understand Christian principles of accounting, (b) show a proven track record of having properly accounted for any aid which may have been previously channelled through them, and (c) give reasonable evidence that they will keep good records and supply the necessary documents to the donor agency.

The Commission feels that the standards implicit in the above are not at all unreasonable, and that donor agencies are justified in expecting them to be met. We would, therefore, urge church leaders in developing countries to cooperate with these requirements so that aid can be speedily brought to the needy and a climate established in which cooperative evangelism can take place.

SELF-CHECK TEST No. 5

The Suspicion about Finances

For the consideration of pastors and church leaders

1. When did I last read a brief history of the Christian church?
2. Am I willing to acknowledge the significant contribution of voluntary agencies (a) where the Church could *not* work and (b) where the Church *was not* working?
3. Am I willing to take just five minutes right now to consider how a strangle-hold by the institutionalised Church must ultimately destroy the initiative and effectiveness of important outreach groups?
4. Do I acknowledge that the church does have a responsibility to support valid and useful ministries outside its walls?
5. Do I realise that support for most para-church groups must come almost in its entirety from church budgets, or individual members of these churches?
6. Do I teach that our giving to God is never a "please offering" but a "thank offering" for all he has done? Am I finding that this emphasis, apart from being a healthy one, is causing our people to give more in gratitude to God?
7. Do I suggest to the congregation that whereas their first responsibility is to the local church, they should allocate part of their tithe or some of their offerings for other Christian ministries?
8. Am I content to allow our people to send their gifts *directly* to those ministries the church approves? (While the church budget will not reflect such giving, the time-saving for the treasurer will be significant) If I don't like this idea, what am I trying to prove?
9. Quite apart from individual giving to para-church agencies, am I willing to suggest the church sets a further example by giving a percentage of its corporate disbursements also?
10. Do I really believe "it is more blessed to give than to receive"? Am I then confidently expecting that God's blessing will accompany our recognising the unity of the Body of Christ in this way?
11. Am I willing to show the audited statement of our church finances to the local para-church leader in the same way as I expect to see his?

For the consideration of para-church leaders

1. Am I in agreement with the principle of a potential or existing donor giving priority to his local church in the matter of tithes and offerings? Why?
2. Are audited financial statements readily available for donors, church leaders, the press, or the leaders of other Christian agencies? If not, why not?
3. Do my staff tug unwisely at the purse-strings of a congregation they have been invited to address? Do I instruct them to discuss first with the pastor what would be in order?
4. Which items in my programme or ministry budgets may be looked upon by other Christian leaders as more appropriately slotted under administration, publicity or fund-raising? With whom should I openly discuss this?
5. Are all the travel, hotel and restaurant expenses of my staff really essential? Are there instances where public transportation would be adequate and almost as convenient as more expensive means?

6. If Jesus were incarnated in my body, doing my ministry, would he have basically the same life-style? What may be different? Am I willing to re-evaluate and to consider changing?
7. Do we ever take unfair advantage of one-time givers to special projects, particularly where sponsorship of a child or young person is concerned? Do I feel it is right in every case to add the names to a general mailing list? Would most of these givers express surprise on receiving an ongoing mailing? Is my conscience easy about this? Do I get irritated when it is done to me?
8. When we organise a project where young people or children need to be "sponsored" (e.g., by the mile, or by the hour) what determines the selection of the project? Is it what will attract the most young people? Or what will be the most fun? Or do we consider genuine help to the community and significant benefit to the young person? Do we have any scruples about children soliciting from their own church families, who feel forced to give rather than appear unspiritual?
9. Do we respect requests for deletion from our mailing list? Do we act as speedily as we can?
10. Do I have others check the impression that is conveyed by a newsletter I have written? Before sending it out? Am I eager to alter any statements which are distorted, exaggerated, or which sound more dramatic or alarming than really is the case?
11. Do we inculcate unscriptural expectations in our donors by offering some reward for their sending a donation? Is not the satisfaction of giving to God a sufficient incentive? If I keep up this policy, what will the next generation be taught to expect when they give to God?
12. Are my organisational goals such that there is a strong likelihood we will financially overcommit ourselves, and look to our constituents to bail us out of the crisis? Is this fair?
13. Do we give our supporters an opportunity to give input before we initiate major programmes or projects? What would it take to stop us proceeding after announcing a programme?
14. Do we seek to raise funds by way of both corporate and individual solicitations from the same church? Does the pastor know about it? From us? Or, from others?
15. Do we sometimes exert pressure to give, to the point where people are concerned, or too embarrassed to say no?
16. Do the different levels or departments of our organisation solicit funds from the same people? Knowingly, or unknowingly? Is this confusing for the donor? What can I do to relieve the situation?
17. Would I give to another organisation if I knew about it what I know about our own, regarding the receiving and spending of funds?
18. If my expense account had to be paid from my personal income, would I make any changes? Where could I make changes if there were no funds available?
19. Have I sensed an attitude of defensiveness within me as I have read the foregoing questions? If so, why? Am I inwardly critical of them because they are unscriptural, or because I am not willing to change my life-style?

For home churches

1. Is our church balanced in its mission giving? Are we concerned about both witness and service, home and abroad? Would I consider doing a personal study in the New Testament on what mission really is? Could the missions chairman do it with me?
2. Do I take the trouble to check on the facts when media reports criticise a Christian organisation, discouraging the giving of our people? How do I handle my findings if they conflict with the media report?
3. Do I, by precept and practise, encourage simpler life-styles among the congregation, so that we, as a church, can better help the needy of the world?
4. Are mortgage and maintenance costs crippling our church in its ability to give to missions? Did the church grow just as fast before we had this building? What future decisions would best help the church to become more mission-oriented?

For sending agencies

1. What was the original incentive for creating this ministry to the world's underprivileged, undernourished peoples? Was it transparent beyond question? Were there ulterior motives?
2. Do we sometimes unfairly exploit crises which make international headlines, knowing that the public giving potential to such projects is excellent?
3. Do we allow government matching grant policies to determine the type of project we support, rather than considering the views of the receiving country churches and using more biblical means of guidance?
4. Ten years from now, is it likely that most of our projects will be shown to have moved a needy people forward in the ability to look after themselves? In which way will this be seen? Do we have projects which are exceptions? Why?
5. Have we acted in any country in a way which has the potential to destroy the self-esteem of a needy people? Can I correct the situation? Am I planning to learn from the mistake?
6. Have we been the means whereby one or more nationals have been undesirably influenced through having been linked as staff, intermediaries or recipients of overseas aid? How can I avoid this in the future?
7. Does my life-style or the life-style of our staff contradict the principles for living exemplified by the lowly "Master Aid-Giver" himself? Am I planning to make changes?
8. Does my way of life offend the very people who are on the receiving end of our aid? How will this affect the reception of the Good News should the opportunity present itself?
9. Have we observed protocol in the considering and the giving of overseas aid? Did we purposely avoid certain channels? Why? Is the intermediary the most desirable person? For what reason? Could better representation have been secured with a mixed committee?
10. Are we handling too many projects to provide satisfactory supervision or monitoring? Are the problems which are caused, by being spread too thin, outweighing the benefits of the aid?

For receiving country churches

1. Is there only a spirit of selfless service in our desire to be the vehicle for aid to the people of our country or community? Have we been honest with the donor agency?
2. Will the community be better off because we handled the goods or funds? Why?
3. Have we ever shown partiality in our stewardship of aid? Do we favour certain districts, ethnic groups, churches or individuals? Are we willing to confess our need for transparent honesty in future arrangements?

4. Are we demanding an unfair-or even an increasing-share of the funds "for administrative purposes"? Are we "using" the donor agency to serve our own ends?
5. Are our people well trained and efficient in the distribution of goods or monies? Am I willing to eat humble pie by calling in another church leader or a secular specialist to give us help or advice? Have I done all I could have done to ensure wise stewardship?
6. Have I been diligent in reporting back to the donor agency? Have I properly accounted for my trusteeship of funds? Have I met *their* standards? Do I appreciate that they also are accountable to *their* donors?
7. Am I withholding my own views or advice from the donor agency on their way of doing things? If certain activities cast them in a bad light, or are not beneficial to our people, will I tell them, even though it may hurt temporarilyâ€”or even cost me my job?

8. Where Can I Start?

There is nothing like starting from where you are right now! It is so much better to be faithful in the place God has put us than to indulge in grandiose dreams or bigger visions.

- Some will find themselves alone in a difficult mountain village as they try to sow the seed and serve their fellowmen. They will be more concernedâ€”and rightly soâ€”with building bridges of friendship with the unreached people around them, opening the door for the message of hope.
- A few may cross continents, preaching the Word or bringing lifesaving help and needed ministries to countless thousands. The principles outlined in these pages will prove most worthwhile as we move from one group to another and work with leaders in other fields. Nothing creates goodwill like a brief courtesy call to responsible leaders. It shows Christian respect and indicates a willingness to take the initiative in establishing a working relationship. The indirect returns on such graceful gestures will be most valuable in extending the Kingdom of God.
- Others are the acknowledged pioneers or trailblazers in evangelism in their country. They are men and women of vision, who plan national strategies and lead the army into battle for God. They can do much to plan seminars so that these paths of peace may be widely taught. Even better, they could invite younger potential leaders to intern with them for a period of time, to learn their ways on how to establish right relationships for the next generation. A businessman with a heart bleeding for unity in his country may also be able to make copies of this handbook available for selective distribution. This could be done through national fellowships or local ministerial groups.
- But undoubtedly, most of us are involved at the local level. Perhaps we are unaware of what God is doing through his servants in other ministries or churches in our community. While we may well be open to *others* coming to see us, apprehension, fear of failure, or simply the pressures of the pastorate may make such an event unlikely. *We* must take the initiative. We could extend an invitation to lunch, just to listen to and pray with another worker. We could invite five or six local pastors and their wives to a meal in our home to meet the new leader of a ministry in town. We must *make* time, even in a busy schedule, to forge these links and lay the foundation for cooperative evangelism. Such actions on our part will not only answer the prayer of the Lord in John 17, but will also cause the watching world to know and believe that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world (vv 20 - 23). In spite of the initial sacrifice of time, we will surely witness God's hand of blessing in our own ministries.

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization encourages national leaders to plan regional or national seminars to help put into practice the suggestions in this handbook. LCWE is also prepared to consider supplying a resource person wherever possible. It is, as stated, our prayer that God will make us neither wall-builders nor empire-builders, but bridge-builders in his great Kingdom. One brief paragraph sums it all up. It was written ten years before this document. The author is one who is respected for his experience, his ability, and his balance. He says:

"That organisation is most ideal which genders the deepest level of fellowship among the brethren, facilitates the freest flow of spiritual dynamics, enhances the speediest and most effective course of evangelism, advances the Church in her attainment of maturity, selfhood and identification in the purpose and programme of God, expresses most fully the unity and equality of all believers under the same Lord, in the same Church, and in the same family of God." (George W. Peters)

APPENDIX A

Para-Church Agencies: An Examination of Validity

The place and role of so-called "para-church organisations" is still under debate. A few churches feel they must reject the validity of all groupings other than traditional congregational structures. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who advocate acceptance of these other Christian ministries not merely as biblically valid, but as equally "church" in the congregational sense. Most, however, including many widely respected leaders, have presented convincing arguments in favour of a *via media*. These would encourage special ministry structures as necessary tools in the Kingdom of God, while clearly differentiating between them and churchly congregations of believers. An examination of the two more widely held viewpoints would be helpful at this point:

1. The Plea by Special Ministry Structures for Equal Status in the Kingdom of God

At least ten years have elapsed since Ralph Winter presented his "warp and woof" argument in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. His case is largely historical and pragmatic. He attempts to show that both the human community and the Christian movement are "held together by two different kinds of structures, which together express both the unity and the diversity of the whole." In his preface he uses his now familiar warp and woof analogy. "The *very fabric* of the Christian movement will be torn apart if either the warp or the *woof* does not play its essential purpose. The warp of a fabric is the longitudinal threading and the woof is the lateral threading, and (depending on the weaving technique employed) one may be more visible than the other, carry the design, etc., but both are utterly essential. In a word, they are 'interdependent.'

"Similarly," he continues, "two kinds of structures hold society together. The structures of civil *government* are territorially defined, are erected vertically over a given territory and have a general mission affecting every citizen. On the other hand, the structures of *private enterprise* involve only part of the people and usually conduct a very specific mission. Their functions cut horizontally across the civil structures even though they are evaluated and monitored by the civil structures.

"Two similar kinds of structures hold the Christian movement together. There are the church structures, and there are organisations like women's associations, youth societies, etc., which cut horizontally across the vertical church structures. The horizontal organisations involve only part of the people, but perform invaluable functions and nourish the whole. Such organisations may be local, denomination-wide, or interdenominational; and they are essentially different from the ecclesiastical structures already mentioned."

Winter traces the analogy's source to the realm of industry and trade union. Proposing a vocabulary of vertical structures and horizontal structures (which, he warns us, should not be interpreted as "Godward" and "manward") he adds that the two words "come from current discussion of the labour movement. The strife between the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (in the U.S.A.) was, in great part, due to the fact that the A.F.L. consisted primarily of craft unions which, for example, took in all carpenters across the United States, no matter what company employed them, whereas the C.I.O. felt it was better to organise all the workers of a single industry, whatever their craft. The craft unions, running horizontally across the whole country and specialising in a single purpose, were thus *horizontal* unions. The industrywide unions, like the United Auto Workers, which took in all the workers in a given automobile company ... were in turn called *vertical* unions. With such very different approaches to organisation, it is easy to see why the A.F.L. and C.I.O. broke apart and stayed apart for so long. The carpenter working for an automobile company was being wooed by both the carpenters' union of the A.F.L. and the auto workers' union of the C.I.O. Both unions were after the same dues." It takes no great knowledge of church and para-church organisations to see the parallel.

Later in the argument, Winter replaces the word "vertical" (describing the church) with *modality*. He also replaces "horizontal" (describing other Christian ministries) with *sodality*.

Charles Mellis in *Committed Communities* comments on Winter's choice of terms. "Many people apparently find this matched pair of unfamiliar terms confusing," somewhat akin to "stalactite and stalagmite." Although choosing to call modalities "churchly structures," Mellis makes frequent use of the other term "sodalities" to describe Christian organisations. He writes, "Sodality, (Winter's chosen term for the *other* structure) is frequently used in Catholic circles and occasionally by Baptist historian Kenneth Latourette to describe a church-related (some would say 'para-ecclesiastical') society. Dictionary and anthropological definitions support this usage: a fellowship, a fraternity, a brotherhood. Winter pours additional meaning into his use of the term, centring around the theme of commitment. Thus a Christian sodality, the second structure of the Church ... is made up of committed Christians who have made an 'adult second decision' beyond deciding for Christ

and joining a local fellowship of believers. That decision involves an above-average expression of their Christian faith: a commitment to a life-style and/or a ministry beyond the norms of the local gathered fellowship."

Even a quick tour of the history of Christian missions cannot fail to note with Winter that the Roman Catholic tradition has for the most part harmoniously combined both vertical (i.e., churchly) and horizontal structures (its orders) in a "dynamic balance." But this was not always so. It has also been pointed out, for the encouragement of impatient Protestants, that it took the Roman Catholics a thousand years to find this balance. "At the Reformation," Winter continues, "Luther rejected not only the Roman church, but specifically the Augustinian order, and with it the very concept of an order." He entirely abolished the horizontal structures (e.g., the celibate orders) of the Roman tradition when he rejected Roman control over the German diocesan structure. This is suggested as a major reason for the near-total absence of Christian missions in the Protestant tradition throughout the first three hundred years following the Reformation. The structural vehicle of missions had been abolished. Commenting further on the Reformers' rejection of these horizontal structures, or sodalities, Winter writes: "Even the Catholic tradition has had its problems with them, dissolving the Jesuits, as it did at one crucial point. Perhaps Protestantism has been chary of the order-structure precisely because Protestantism has lacked the central authority to hold it in harness. Perhaps we need greater powers of review and evaluation on the part of the vertical structures. If the horizontal structures would more widely submit to the review of the vertical, perhaps greater confidence and collaboration could be built up. In secular society, private enterprise must submit to the review of the civil government. The Food and Drug Administration watchdogs (in the U.S.A.) follow carefully the food processors and the pharmaceutical houses, but they do not otherwise control them." This is a balance which the Commission sees as desirable in church/para-church relationships. Winter then adds: "The socialist would let the civil structure control everything. The opposite extreme would be the chaos of unmonitored private firms."

Winter sees Luther's move in separating the German and Scandinavian churches from Rome as less serious, structurally speaking, than "the more drastic and seemingly permanent rift between the horizontal and vertical structures" brought about by the Reformers' rejection of the sodalities. He sees the re-affiliation of merely the Protestant vertical structures (in Councils of Churches and in Associations of Evangelicals) as a relatively simple accomplishment when compared with the remarrying of both modality and sodality. "It may be a more profound and unnoticed problem," he says, "that the emergence of horizontal structures in Protestantism has not yet by any means resulted in the desired unity or harmony between the separate worlds of these two disparate structures."

In what must surely be understood as a plea for equal status in the Kingdom of God, Winter recognises that the generalist modality structure and the specialist sodality structure "will always have to make a special effort to understand each other."

"The vertical structure has greater internal diversity and may thus tend to have greater objectivity and overall perspective but less mobility. It may tend to bureaucracy due to the distance between the donor and the final function. It may tend to be a caretaker structure that, again due to great internal diversity, finds it difficult to gain broad support for anything, especially enterprises beyond its immediate internal needs. The Church as church finds it difficult to become excited about the spiritual fate of the urban masses in Calcutta.

"The horizontal structure tends to have a more specific objective, and the direct support of those behind it. It has greater potential mobility and efficiency. But it typically sees only its own goals and therefore needs overall perspective. Citizens of the Kingdom may even need protection against its capacity to oversell its cause. Yet it offers a healthy escape valve for the differing visions of the diverse elements of a heterogeneous Church."

Finally, in a section entitled "The Warp and Woof of the Christian Movement," Winter says there is "a strong feeling on the part of many that the *church is* the central structure whereas the *mission* is somehow secondary, or perhaps merely a temporary aid in establishing churches; the scaffolding must come down when the building is done." Then he asks his key question: "Is this an adequate analogy?"

He cites a classic case. "When in 596 AD, Gregory the Great, as Bishop of Rome, sent Augustine to England, it was the case of a diocesan *modality* calling upon a Benedictine *sodality* to do a certain job. On their journey north through France, Augustine and his companions crossed the path of another distinguished missionary named Columban, who had already gone from Ireland to work in Southeastern France. Both men were part of monastic fellowships. However, Augustine's ultimate mission was not merely to extend his own sodality, but to erect territorial organisation under diocesan bishops, that is, modalities. Columban, on the other hand, was extending merely the typical sodality of the Celtic form of Christianity. The most prominent structural feature of the Celtic Christian mode over the many centuries of its existence was not its rare, or perhaps mainly absent, diocesan structure, but its selective, highly ascetic monastic fellowships, that is, its sodalities. The ability of the Celtic mode to survive as a vital faith without the help of modal structure is no doubt the main reason why the Celtic sodalities, planted all over Europe, typically clashed with the diocesan bishops on the continent; back home, the Celtic sodalities did not have to contend with Church structures."

"This is an early example," concludes Winter, "of the prominence of sodalities in the extension of the faith. Latourette confidently affirms that England was won mainly by the Celts, despite the almost entire absence of the modalities which today seem so essential to the Christian movement."

2. The Plea to Accept Special Ministry Structures as Churches.

Mellis writes further, in *Committed Communities*: "It is my thesis that the two structures (modality and sodality) together constitute the Church." Note that he is referring to *the structures themselves, not merely the individuals in those structures*. Such a thesis moves a step beyond those who plead for the acceptance of para-church organisations as having equal status with the church within the Kingdom. Mellis, like an evidently increasing number of missiologists and mission leaders, outrightly rejects the term "para-church" apparently because, to him, such terminology appears to place them in a role secondary to traditional congregations.

Whereas those seeking to show the biblical basis for such sodalities have frequently appealed to Acts 13, Mellis goes further. Looking for models in Scripture, he lists several groups, especially in the Old Testament, where he feels "the Church is seen in sodality expression."

He cites among others, Noah's family and the Joshua-Caleb team, seeing also the solidarity of the patriarchal family as a possible early group expression of commitment. From there, he moves on to Gideon's select band, and David's mighty men. Under "prophetic brotherhoods," he cites Samuel's band (or company) of prophets, and "the sons of the prophets" under Elisha's leadership. The Jerusalem Bible is quoted as translating the words of Amos as "neither did I belong to any brotherhoods of the prophets." "This suggests," he says, "that one or more such sodality structures might have existed for more than 300 years, from the establishment of the Kingdom until the exile." He adds that other possible sodality groups (which were really "the Church expressing itself in committed companies") include Daniel and his three friends, the 7,000 who had not followed Baal, and the group who returned from exile to rebuild Jerusalem.

Whereas there appear to be some who could echo Mellis' premise that "the two structures together constitute the Church," few would go into print with the opinion that sodalities are actually "churches." Unless defined differently in context, it is normal to understand the Church to mean the Body of Christ, "catholic or universal." As such a term includes all true believers, including those belonging to sodalities, it is indisputable that sodality members irrespective of their affiliation, are part of "the Church." But it demands yet another step to claim congregational status (traditionally understood) for a group constituted as a sodality.

Alan Cole writes (in a submission to the Commission): "We all believe in a universal Body of Christ, of which every true Christian is a member, a limb, a living stone. In this sense there is no difference between church and para-church. Any outreach of a Christian parachurch organisation is just as much an outreach of the Church as any centrally or officially organised activity. Indeed, we should not, to follow this line further, put para-church over against Church, for, in this sense, para-church is part of Church."

"But the problem is not there. It lies not so much in the *nature* of the Church as in the *organisation* of the Church. As visible to our eyes, the Church appears as a multiplicity of groups, some being ancient Christian churches, some being more modern denominations, and some being entirely independent local groups. It is frequently in connection with these organisational structures that the problems appear. In reference to *them*, we may certainly speak of para-church organisations. For while the personnel involved may be drawn from these larger groupings, they are normally neither directed by, nor responsible to them."

"The chief part of relationship, however, is not at the level of the universal Church (where there is belonging-ness) nor at that of the confessional church/denomination (where it is usually only informational) but at the level of the local church, the strictly local expression of the universal Body of Christ. It is clear that every member of a para-church organisation should be not only a member of a local church (though not necessarily the *same* local church) but also an active member of that church. This will ensure the corrective discipline and wise pastoring that all Christians need. And ultimately, it is either the members of local churches to whom para-church organisations will minister, or it is into such churches that they will introduce new members. If these links are fairly forged,

then there will be no danger of para-church organisations either becoming, or seeming to be, rivals of the churches themselves."

"The issue," says Dr. Paul Rees in an unpublished document, "is not whether *the people* (of these organisations) are part of the Church, but whether the organisations are integrally, and therefore theologically, of as well as *for* the Church. It should be clear that those who serve such organisations, are, or are presumed to be, members of some churchâ€"in and through which their living roots of faith and commitment have been witnessed to by baptism, and are regularly nourished through the ministry of the Word, through their participating in the Holy Communion, and through the discipline under which they have covenanted to live in a fellowship of their peers, shepherded by pastors, elders and/or deacons. If their case be otherwise than this, they are deprived indeed, for such organisations offer them none of these essentially churchly services.

"Theology," continues Rees, "seen in historical perspective, has spoken about the nature and marks (anciently called 'notae') of the Church of Christ"... Rees quotes Calvin: "Wherever we see the Word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence..."

"The Scots Confession' of 1560, in the section called, 'Notes by which the true Church shall be determined from the false,' says: 'The notes of the true Church, therefore, we believe, confess, and avow to be: first, the true preaching of the Word of God, in which God has revealed himself to us, as the writings of the apostles and prophets declare; secondly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, with which must be associated the Word and promise of God to seal and confirm them in our hearts; and lastly, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered, as God's Word describes, whereby vice is suppressed and virtue nourished.'

"Article XIX of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England says: 'The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments duly administered.' "

Rees asks: "Do organisations created for special Christian ministries think of themselves as existing within the meaning of such terms as these, or as intending to offer such services as these? It is a just criticism of these definitions of the Church," he adds, "that they content themselves with that which gives the Church its basic form and continuity, while omitting that which gives it its movement and mission and growth. The same Lord who authorised the preaching of the Gospel and the observance of the Sacraments, authorised also 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations

"It is the taking seriously of these notae," Rees adds, "that makes it impossible for me to agree with the view of some that the status of para-church organisations is no more open to criticism than that of denominations, however lacking in biblical justification some of their ecclesiastical patterns and sectarian claims may be. Denominations at least owe their existence, and are answerable, to assemblies of believers amongst whom may be found the notae of church reality."

3. The Missionary Band of cts 13a€Two Viewpoints:

At the Consultation in Thailand, members of the Commission discussed the biblical basis for sodalities with a number of pastors, leaders, theologians and missiologists. Some saw the people of God, in both Old and New Testaments, "not as a circle with a centre, but as an ellipse with twin foci." It was pointed out that in the Old Testament, priests and prophets were each subjected to the scrutiny of the other as well as functioning in complementary roles. This view sees the priests as the modality and the prophets as the sodality.

Those questioned agreed that Acts 13 was the outstanding (some said "the only true") New Testament example of these twin foci. "The narrative speaks of two groups," was the consensus. "The Church at Antioch was the modality, and the missionary team of Barnabas and Saul the sodality." However, further discussion on the exact nature of the relationship between the church and the team brought to light significant differences; in spite of which, most were willing to build a superstructure on a foundation determined by their chosen interpretation of the passage. The two main camps were (a) those who wished to show that an autonomous missionary team was being portrayed by Luke, and (b) those who wished to point out those portions which implied that the church was really in control all the time.

a. An Autonomous Missionary Team

More than one missiologist felt this passage to be not only a strong biblical basis for the organising of mission sodalities, but the very "hinge of mission history." It is pointed out that the Holy Spirit guided the apostolic band (Acts 13:4; 16:7). The leaders of the band mapped out their own course (18:23), and the missionaries themselves chose the methods and planned the strategy as the Holy Spirit led them (19:21). Approval was not sought from Jerusalem or Antioch (cp., Acts 15). The missionaries recruited en route (16:3) and even in Antioch (15:36-41). Personal problems (again, 15:36-41) were hammered out by the band members; and there was no evidence of financial help from Antioch (see also 1 Cor. 9:18).

Canadian missiologist Arnold Cook, in an unpublished paper, dated 1975, says: "Mission sodalities are friends of the Church, who have been misunderstood as foes. Donald McGavran, speaking of the relationship of churches to missions says, 'Churches eat missions for breakfast!' This," continues Cook, "has been the fate of church-related mission societiesâ€"they become devoured by churchly concerns. In contrast, mission sodalities are able to remain missionary because although their members naturally are related very closely to sending churches, they remain free from their control within their sodality structure. Herein lies the secret of their success."

b. The Antiochian Church Really in Control

George W. Peters (writing in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*) says: "Paul never thought of himself as separate from the churches he founded. Spiritual, theological, cultural, ecclesiastical or organisational dichotomy would have seemed strange to Paul and totally unacceptable to him. He was too closely related and too intimately bound up in the life of the churches."

Dr. Paul Rees agrees that "the Book of Acts is not a blueprint for anybody's formal ecclesiastical structure, whether Episcopal, Presbyterian or Congregational." "In Acts," he says, "the Church is molten-too hot for ecclesiastical engineers to handle. On the other hand, it is not all arduous devoid of order. Both local organisation and extended supervision of sorts marked the Jerusalem church."

He goes on to say that in Acts "everywhere and at all times it is the Church and the churches in action. Functioning at high levels of koinonia, and that beautiful interdependence that is generated thereby, they engage, congregationally, or by special deputations sent out from time to time under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in reaching unreached people with the gospel. In all of this, the manifest intention is to form new churches, equip them with elders, and charge them with responsibility for outreach evangelism."

Commenting specifically on Acts 13, Rees says: "From A to Z this was the church in action. They (Barnabas and Saul) were sent jointly by the church and the Holy Spirit (the last clause of vs. 3 says the *church* sent them; the first clause of vs. 4 says the *Holy Spirit* sent them). After their journey they went right back to the church that had sent them and gave a responsible account of what had happened. Church consciousness, church connectedness, church accountability were hallmarks of their ministry."

George Peters agrees. At the Green Lake, Wisconsin, Foreign Missions Study Conference in 1971 he said, "The local church and not a mission society is central in the New Testament. The independent mission societies as we know them are, in the main, accidents of history rather than biblical ideals. No doubt, they have become necessities and as such have served a noble purpose. God has richly blessed them. However, had the churches lived up to the ideals of the New Testament, most probably no autonomous mission societies would have come into existence. Whatever the situation, our Lord is building the Church."

But with the balance of a mature observer, he then adds: "In keeping with the principles of divine authority, biblical brotherhood, corporateness, equality and mutuality, and according to the practise of Paul, the churches ought not to frustrate and dominate missionary endeavours in communities not under the immediate influence of the church, and in geographical areas which the church has not evangelised and in ministries which the church is not rendering. As long as there are communities and groupings of people or tribes outside the immediate influence and reach of the church, and ministries not rendered by it, there should be room for the mission and the missionary."

The Heart of the Matter

John Stott says in the Theological Preamble: "The tendency of the 'establishment' to control individual initiatives runs the risk of *quenching the Spirit*. The tendency of voluntary organisations to insist on their independence runs the risk of *ignoring the Body*. It is the age-old tension between authority and freedom. To quench the Spirit and to ignore the Body are both serious sins; they grieve the Christ whose Body and Spirit they are. It is, therefore, basic to our evangelical responsibility that in all of our labours and relationships we should magnify Christ by seeking simultaneously to give honour to his Body and liberty to his Spirit."

APPENDIX B

The Church: A Community or an Institution?

(Excerpts from *The Church as God's Agent in Evangelism* by Howard A. Snyder)

It was recommended that members of the commission on Evangelical Co-operation read several specific publications in preparation for, and during, the deliberations in Thailand. Among these was a pre-congress paper, as well as the congress address, delivered by Howard A. Snyder at the 1974 International Congress of World Evangelization, held in Lausanne, Switzerland. The address, "The Church as God's Agent in Evangelism," was included in the official publication of the congress, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (edited by J. D. Douglas, published by World Wide Publications). Some relevant excerpts are included in this appendix for the consideration of readers. They are printed with permission of the publisher. It is recommended that, if possible, the whole article be read.

Excerpt 1: Church structure and para-church structures.

Under a section entitled "Structures of an evangelistic church" in the pre-congress paper, Snyder says,

"There can be no question of finding a biblical pattern for denominational structures, or even for the detailed organisation of the local church, for the Bible is silent here. What we must do, therefore, is to look for general principles or insights which seem to be implied by the biblical description of the Church..."

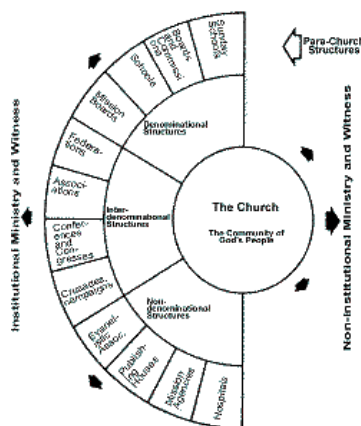
He then continues:

"We see that biblically, the Church is the community of God's people, not an organisational institution. But when we look at the contemporary church, we see not only the community of God's people: we find also a proliferation of denominations, institutions, agencies, associations, and so forth. Such structures obviously have no explicit biblical basis. How should we view them?"

"The two most common tendencies have been to say these structures are actually a part of the essence of the Church, and thus 'sacralize' them, or else to take an anti-institutional stance and say all such structures are invalid and must be abandoned. A more helpful option, however, is to view all such structures as *para-church structures* which exist alongside of and parallel to the community of God's people, but are not themselves the Church. They are useful to the extent they aid the Church in its mission, but are man-made and culturally determined. Whereas the Church itself is part of the new wine of the Gospel, all para-church structures are wineskins—useful, at times indispensable, but also subject to wear and decay.

"In dealing with the whole question of church structure, then, we should make a very clear distinction between *the Church* as the community of God's people and all *para-church structures*, whether denominations, mission agencies, evangelistic organisations, educational institutions, or other ecclesiastical forms. It is critically important—especially when we are dealing with a worldwide, multicultural situation—to emphasise that the Church is a *people*, not an organisation: it is a *community*, not an institution.

THE CHURCH AND PARA-CHURCH STRUCTURES



Distinguishing Between the Wine and Wineskins.

"Several benefits come from this distinction between the Church and para-church structures. (i) That which is always cross-culturally relevant (the biblically-understood Church) is separated from that which is culturally bound and determined (para-church structures). Thus one is free to see the Church as *culturally relevant and involved* and yet not as *culturally bound*. (ii) One is free also to modify para-church structures as culture changes, for these are not themselves the Church and therefore are largely culturally rather than biblically determined. (iii) Finally, this distinction makes it possible to see a *wide range of legitimacy* in denominational confessions and structures. If such structures are not themselves the Church and are culturally determined, then whole volumes of controversy and polemics lose their urgency and become merely secondary. Widely varying confessions are freed (at least potentially) to concentrate on that which unites them—being the people of God and carrying out the evangelistic task—while relegating structural differences to the plane of cultural and historical relativity. Thus the crucial consideration for structure becomes not *biblical legitimacy* but *functional relevancy*.

"The accompanying charts suggest further implications of this distinction between the biblical Church and para-church structures."

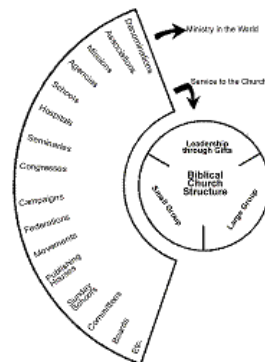
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND PARA-CHURCH STRUCTURES

The Church

1. God's creation
2. Spiritual fact
3. Cross-culturally valid
4. Biblically understood and evaluated
5. Validity determined by spiritual qualities and fidelity to Scriptures
6. God's agent of evangelism and reconciliation
7. Essential
8. Eternal
9. Divine revelation
10. Purpose to glorify God

Para-Church Structures

1. Man's creation
2. Sociological fact
3. Culturally bound
4. Sociologically understood and evaluated
5. Validity determined by function in relation to mission of the Church
6. Man's agents for evangelism and service
7. Expendable
8. Temporal and temporary
9. Human tradition
10. Purpose to serve the Church



Excerpt 2: A Model for church structure (from the pre-Congress paper)

Implications for Cross-cultural Evangelism

Several conclusions for cross-cultural evangelism follow from the foregoing discussion.

- a. **The Church as biblically presented is always cross-culturally relevant.** This is true because the Church is a cosmic-historical, charismatic organism that proceeds from divine action and transcends any particular cultural form.
- b. Similarly, **the basic structures of charismatic leadership and small-group large-group gatherings are always cross-culturally viable.** This follows from the foregoing analysis; it has also been abundantly demonstrated throughout church history and in the modern missionary age.
- c. On the other hand, **para-church structures are not necessarily cross-culturally valid.** Since these are culturally determined, particular para-church structures will be transferable from one culture to another only to the extent that the two cultures are compatible. Basic adaptations will often have to be made.
- d. **The exercise of spiritual gifts will result in cross-cultural evangelism.** Since the book of Acts and through the ages, God has been calling and sending out his charismatically equipped missionaries. The Antiochian pattern (Acts 13:1ff) has been repeated countless times, and will continue to be repeated until Christ returns (Matt. 24:14). It is God who calls and who gives gifts, and the gift and the call go together.
- e. **The Church is itself a missionary structure, and any group of missionaries may be a legitimate embodiment of the Church.** This means there can be no question of the Church versus "missionary structures." Where missionaries are, there is the Church, and there missionaries are responsible to demonstrate the reality of Christian community. The real point of tension therefore is between the Church as the community of God's people and institutional expressions of the Church. Missionaries can never go to another culture and leave the Church behind! But they can, and often should, leave behind or modify the para-church forms peculiar to their own culture.
- f. On the other hand, **para-church missionary/evangelistic structures should be created whenever necessary to get the job done.** While the Church is God's agent of evangelism, dynamic para-church structures can be man's agents of evangelism, useful in God's hands for the more rapid and effective propagation of the gospel. Denominational groups should freely collaborate with other para-church organisations which are doing work they themselves cannot do, or which will help them carry on their own evangelistic work. Such organisations, however, should always be directed ultimately toward the formation of the Church (though in widely different ways), while not allowing themselves to be confused with the Church or become ends in themselves.
- g. Since they are man-made and culturally determined, **all para-church structures should be subjected to continuous rigorous sociological and theological analysis** to determine their effectiveness as instruments of the Church. We should not hesitate to make the most exacting sociological studies of mission agencies, evangelistic movements, denominational structures, and so forth. History teaches us that many such structures will eventually succumb to institutionalism and become hindrances rather than helps to the Church. The fact that God has raised up a movement is no warranty against eventual infidelity or self-centredness. Having clearly distinguished such structures from the essence of the Church, we can freely ask to what extent these forms are actually functional.

Excerpt 3: Denominational Structures—Church or para-church?

In his actual Congress address, at the end of a section entitled "The visible reality of the church," Snyder says:

"It is precisely here that the distinction between the Church and para-church structures is useful. This distinction is definitely not merely a restatement of the visible-invisible view of the Church. The Church is both visible and invisible, and so are para-church structures; even a secular organisation has its invisible dimensions, as Jacques Ellul reminds us. I am distinguishing, rather, between the Church as biblically understood, and auxiliary ecclesiastical structures which did not exist in New Testament days but which have grown up through church history.

"In my invitation to present a paper at this Congress, I was specifically asked to deal with the question of para-church structures in relation to evangelism. I was aware that 'para-church structures' was understood to mean non-denominational and interdenominational organisations such as InterVarsity, Campus Crusade for Christ, and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. But in attempting to make a biblical (rather than merely pragmatic) analysis, I encountered a basic difficulty. I could find no biblical basis for a fundamental distinction between denominational structures and para-denominational structures. The more basic distinction seems to be between *the Church* as the body of Christ and the community of God's people, and all *institutional structures*, including denominations. Thus I would make a basic distinction between the Church and all para-church structures, and then sub-divide such institutional structures into *denominational* and *non-denominational* structures.

"There is a fundamental difference here between Protestant and Roman Catholic views of the Church, although the implications of the Reformation in this area have never been carried through to their logical conclusion. Protestants who distinguish between biblical revelation and church tradition should have no difficulty making a distinction between the biblical Church and institutional church structures. The categories are parallel. The biblical Church is grounded in biblical revelation; all para-church structures are based in post-biblical church tradition.

"In regard to evangelism, I would particularly stress the following two points:

- "a. Biblically speaking, it is irrelevant whether evangelism is carried out by a denomination or some non-denominational structure, for in both cases the

sponsoring structure is in reality a para-church institution. It is not fundamentally important whether foreign missions, for example, are carried out by denominational mission boards or by independent missionary agencies. Both forms of evangelism may be equally *valid or invalid*, depending on their relationship to the biblical Church.

"b. All evangelism, regardless of the agency which sponsors it, is legitimate only as it plants and edifies the Church or extends its witness. Evangelistic and missionary efforts which form new Christian communities or add to those already formed are legitimate if they are really building the Church as biblically understood. If they are not, they are a waste of effort, regardless of how they are structured or of the biblical legitimacy they may claim. Of course, it is fundamentally important that all evangelistic and church-planting efforts take care to contribute to the visible and spiritual unity, rather than disunity, of the Body of Christ.

"This means that the important thing for evangelism is that *the biblical Church be built*—that is, that local Christian communities or fellowships be multiplied, that such communities truly demonstrate the quality of life seen in Jesus Christ, and that the Church live in the world as the redeemed people of God. From a biblical point of view, questions of denominational or nondenominational affiliation or structure are strictly secondary."

APPENDIX C

The Participants and Other Resources

The Participants

Pedro Arana-Quirez

Pastor, Staff of International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, Peru, South America.

David Isan-Chan (Deputy Chairman)

Regional Secretary, Scripture Union. Based in Singapore, with responsibility for seventeen countries.

Sundar Clarke

Bishop of Madras, India, with broad experience in the pastorate and the administration of a national church (Church of South India).

John E. Kyle

Missions Director for Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship, U. S. A. and organising director of the 1978 Urbana Convention. Based in Madison, Wisconsin.

Gordon Landreth

General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance in Great Britain. Broad experience in inter-church activities and organisations. Member of L.C.W.E.

Johanne Madinda

Bishop of Diocese of Central Tanganyika, Tanzania, East Africa, with considerable pastoral and administrative experience in the Anglican tradition.

Keith A. Price (Chairman)

Executive Director of Christian Direction Inc., Montreal, Canada. Vice-President, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Broad background in pastoral, preaching and interdenominational ministries.

Henrik Smedjebacka

Director, overseas work, Finnish Missionary Society. A Lutheran theologian, based in Helsinki, Finland.

Brian C. Stiller

President, Canadian Youth for Christ, with considerable involvement in inter-denominational activities in Canada and other countries.

John Tooke (Secretary)

Director, Church Growth and Missions, Africa Enterprise, Natal, South Africa (Associate of Michael Cassidy, who prepared one of the major papers referred to in this document). Participants seconded from the Church-Missions sub-commission.

Michael Griffiths General Director, Overseas Missionary Fellowship; later appointed Principal, London Bible College, England.

Theodore Williams General Secretary, India Missions Assoc.; General Secretary, India Evangelical Mission; Executive Secretary, Missions Commission, World Evangelical Fellowship; Chairman of the Thailand Church-Missions sub-commission.

Other Resource Persons and Papers

Considerable help was also given by several others (including Leighton Ford, Tom Zimmerman, Jack Dain, Chua Wee Hian, Alan Cole, Ed Dayton, Florence Yeboah, Don Richardson, David Bosch, and Paul Pierson). Valuable help and needed insights were also provided in two major submissions, and a 1974 Lausanne Congress paper which were used as background for the discussion. These were:

John Stott "A Theological Preamble for the Commission on Co-operation"

Michael Cassidy "A Preliminary Study for the Sub-Commission on Church/Para-church Relationships" (quoted in section two)

Howard A. Snyder "The Church as God's Agent in Evangelism" (Congress paper)

The group was greatly stimulated by these fine papers, and regretted Michael Cassidy's unavoidable absence from the chair (because of fatigue).