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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

MONTREAT, NORTH CAROLINA • OCTOBER 13-19, 1962



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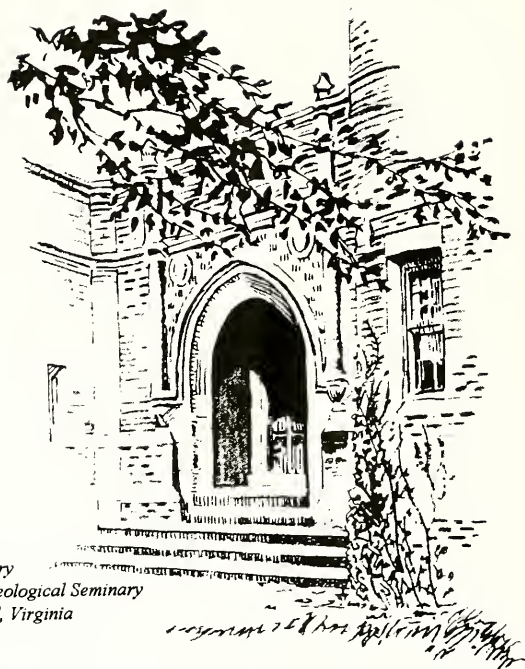


Special Report
to the General Assembly

Consultation
on World Missions

RESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

ONTREAT, NORTH CAROLINA • OCTOBER 13-19, 1962



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Special Report

to the General Assembly

The Board of World Missions submits to the General Assembly of 1963 its report on the Consultation held in Montreat, North Carolina, October 13-19, 1962. It should be noted that the report is in two parts: Part 1 contains the Recommendations made by the Consultation to the Board; Part 2 is this Special Report concerning certain basic and broad matters meriting the particular attention of the General Assembly.

Origin of the Consultation

In 1960 the General Assembly recommended:

That our Board of World Missions consider and report to the General Assembly on the advisability of the Board itself appointing a committee, including personnel from overseas and from other bodies than our own, which shall study and report on the philosophy and promotion of world missions in the light of rapidly changing missionary situations around the world.

The Board reported to the General Assembly of 1961 that it was . . . in the process of arranging, within the next year if possible, a conference which would embrace, among other matters . . . the evaluation and planning of the basic philosophy, strategy, and tactics of our Church in the proclamation of Christ as the Saviour of the world and Lord of life . . . reports from the conference would afford the Board guidance in its constant duty to make the Church's witness effective . . . and would assist the Church toward new levels of service in the performance of its mission.

The General Assembly was advised that the Board had designed such a conference so as to include ministerial and lay leadership from this country and overseas, representatives of our own missions and of national churches with which we are identified abroad, and others engaged in the world mission of the church, such as sister denominations, interdenominational agencies, etc.

Preparation and Procedure

From the beginning the Board recognized that the effectiveness of the Consultation would be determined in large measure by the preparation

which preceded it. To that end, the Board and its staff secured from its own missions, from national churches in areas where it is directly engaged, from sister mission boards and societies, from interdenominational agencies and from other churches their judgment on what matters seemed to be of primary concern in the tasks of the missionary enterprise and on what seemed to be the most promising means for their performance. The specific matters which emerged from this intensive study indicated that the Board could carefully review its world mission responsibility by considering the roles of the missionary, of the mission, of the Board of World Missions, of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and of the national church.

The Consultation was divided into study committees deliberating on each of the five subjects indicated above. Each of the 194 participants served on one of these committees. Officially designated voting delegates numbered 121; the remainder served as consultants or observers. These committees pursued their inquiries with all liberty. They made recommendations to the entire body of the Consultation. Those recommendations as amended and adopted constitute Part I of this report on the Consultation.

It should be noted in this connection that as a result of the Consultation, some 200 specific recommendations have been made to the Board concerning the administration of its affairs. These recommendations have been received and assigned to constituent committees of the Board. They have been circulated to all of the Board's missions overseas. They have been distributed to every national church with which we are affiliated. Requests for their wider circulation have multiplied until it appears that the recommendations may have some genuinely helpful place in the body of contemporary missionary literature. The General Assembly is advised that each recommendation of the Consultation will receive the attention of the Board, but as is apparent it will not be possible for so many and varied matters to be attended to except over a long period of time.

Major Matters of Immediate Concern

The Board is convinced that as a result of the recommendations of the Consultation certain matters demand the prompt attention of the

General Assembly and of the Board itself. The Board attempts here to set forth these matters.

1. Purpose and perspective in the missionary task

Any enterprise belonging properly to the church must be established and executed on the basis of the church's theological conviction. In that context the attention of the General Assembly is directed to the "Theological Statement" adopted by the Consultation, as reported on pages 7 and 8 of the volume containing the Recommendations.

2. Methods in missionary endeavor

a. Church-mission relations.

Beyond any doubt the crucial issue with reference to missionary method was that of church-mission relations. The Consultation recommended:

That the structure of relationship of missionaries to a national church should be worked out by that national church in consultation with the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

This fundamental statement of policy has been confronted by the Board, and at its meeting in January, 1963, the following action was adopted and communicated by the Board to national churches, to its missions and to sister mission boards:

The Board of World Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States expresses gratitude to God for the fellowship experienced and the results achieved at the recent Consultation on World Missions held in Montreat, North Carolina, from October 13-19, 1962. The Board and its staff are now engaged in serious study of the recommendations of the Consultation.

A major emphasis and concern of the Consultation related to the role of the mission. Because of the crucial importance of this area of policy to our ongoing program in the field, the Board would at this time record certain convictions growing out of the recommendations:

1. The Board has sought and will continue to seek to be sensitive and responsive to circumstances and needs on any field which call for a change in methods or patterns of relationships between our church and a sister church. We feel, for example,

that on many fields we have come beyond the time when a mission should be the sole or primary channel of communication between our church and the national church.

2. In our evangelistic endeavors overseas we are committed to work in the closest cooperation and liaison with the national church. This partnership is not necessary primarily because it is strategically effective but because of the very nature of the church itself—because we are a part of the people of God with a national church in a land and that national church is a part of the people of God with us in that land.

3. The Board of World Missions unanimously approves the principle enunciated in a basic statement of the Consultation: "That the structure of relationship of missionaries to a national church should be worked out by that national church in consultation with the Presbyterian Church in the United States." The official agency of the Presbyterian Church in the United States for effecting such consultation and working out such relationship is the Board of World Missions.

4. In the establishment of these structures of relationship, the Board will test them by the following principles:

a. The structure shall not perpetuate or cultivate practices that tend to characterize Christianity as the religion of any national group, but rather it shall express the supranational character of the Gospel and of the church.

b. The structure shall be based upon the understanding that the contributions and endeavors of both churches are to be viewed in the larger Christian context of the whole people of God.

c. The structure shall express the comradeship of our church with the national church and the comradeship of our church with the missionaries of our church.

d. The structure shall be of such a nature that missionaries and local Christians strengthen and stimulate each other in proclaiming the Gospel.

e. The structure shall promote the consciousness on the part of missionaries that they are fully committed to the missionary responsibility of the church which commissioned them.

f. The structure shall make evident to all concerned the full identification of the missionaries of our church with the national church with which they work.

g. The structure shall promote and preserve freedom for the initiative of the individual, both foreigner and national.

h. The structure shall be such as to stimulate the development of stewardship and sacrificial giving in our church and in the national church, to be effective in maintaining a constant supply of personnel and resources, and to be an encouragement for accomplishing the mutual aims of our church and the national church in evangelism and growth.

The implication of this action is quite manifest—that the Board has approved a strategy of closest relationship to national churches as being an integral part of responsible missionary service.

b. *Institutionalism.*

Necessarily the missionary enterprise has established in lands where it has been engaged over a period of years a series of institutions, without which its own purposes could not have been accomplished in education, medical care, vocational training, etc. While conditions across the world are not uniform in these matters, the time has come when any missionary agency must evaluate the ratio of personnel and funds assigned to such institutions in the light of progress in education, health services and church autonomy within the lands where such institutions have been in existence. Moreover, the Board must face such questions as these: Can institutions be maintained at the level of excellence properly demanded of them except in cooperation with sister churches in this country and overseas? When and how shall mission institutions be given to national churches? Seeing that other education is available in many areas in which we work, shall the church limit its educational program to the training of its own leadership? These and kindred matters are of such far-reaching import that the Board is not prepared to suggest what course of action it intends to pursue at this juncture, but would advise the General Assembly that already it has initiated steps to review the whole matter, in conference with sister churches overseas and in this country.

c. *Deployment of personnel.*

While we continue to exalt the idea of missionary service as a life-time appointment, it is becoming apparent to us that the mission enterprise may need, in addition, to meet the urgent demand for more

missionaries by the use of individuals for limited terms of service and for the performance of special assignments not demanding protracted residence abroad. In the light of these factors, the General Assembly is advised by the Board that it has begun to evaluate promising procedures which may well lay before the young people of the church, particularly, the opportunities and demands of the missionary vocation, both as a lifetime work and as a fashion of service which can be rendered within an indeterminate period of time.

It is worthy of note in this connection, also, that the Consultation unanimously and enthusiastically affirmed the fact that the church should seek devices to find and deploy "evangelistic workers of all categories, especially in areas and enclaves of high potential for the spreading of the Gospel." Any survey of the popularity among young people of certain types of constructive service in the contemporary international scene underscores the fact that the youth of our day are willing to serve. It remains for the Board and for the church as a whole to define with urgency how the valor and fidelity of these youth may be channeled to sustain and enrich the church's missionary responsibility across the world.

To this particular matter, the General Assembly is advised, the Board has already begun to give attention, and it is hoped that plans will emerge whereby the Board can answer the importunate pleas of the churches in every land for more missionaries to assist them in their endeavors.

3. *The Presbyterian Church U.S. and world perspective*

One of the five study committees of the Consultation dealt with the Role of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in the world missionary endeavor. This committee, composed of representative leadership from within our own church and from sister churches in this country and abroad, had many cogent things to say to us as an Assembly about the life of our particular church. These observations are set forth on pages 31-41 of the volume of Recommendations.

There are several comments which the Board would make in the light of these specific recommendations and as a summary of the basic issues with which they deal:

a. While any church in any land has a mission to perform within its own culture, no church in any land can be insensitive to the fact that its manner of life bears witness to the whole world. The geographical area of a particular church is no private domain. A church cannot act, at home, as if that action had no relationship to its affirmed belief in Christ as the Lord of life and its intention to witness to him around the world. The decline in the ratio of funds given and personnel employed in the world mission engagement may well suggest that the Presbyterian Church U.S. as a "missionary society" needs to re-examine itself at every level. Such an observation does not minimize any undertaking to which the church conscientiously dedicates itself. It does not exalt the world mission enterprise as superior to the ministry of the church in its own homeland. But it does say—clearly and emphatically—that a church possessing such heritage and privilege as are ours under God should look to the due proportion of resources in manpower and finances which it offers for the Gospel's outreach to a world in desperate need.

b. Specifically, the Consultation suggested that since in "today's world all men are neighbors," the Presbyterian Church in the United States should look to its behavior and expressed attitudes lest they constitute a hindrance to Christian witness in other countries. The Consultation explicitly affirmed that inactivity or error in such matters may risk nullifying the effectiveness of the very world-wide witness we intend to make. Racial discrimination which excludes individuals from worship, service and membership in the Christian family is judged to be thoroughly incompatible with any concept of the universality of Christ as Saviour of all men. A society that makes an idol of success, that is profligate in waste, that is riven by class strife and that is insular in the face of world revolution should not escape the judgment of a church, if that church expects to bear the Gospel of peace and kindness and good will to our haunted world.

It is in such areas as these that the Consultation properly urged us all within the Presbyterian Church U.S. to examine our own lives and testimony to see if what we say and what we do adequately represent our insistence that Christ should be King in the affairs of men.

c. The Consultation insisted that the world mission enterprise of the Presbyterian Church U.S. cannot properly be carried on without the

revitalization of its organizational structure at the level of every church court, as each church court re-emphasizes its desire to perform its missionary responsibility. It was quite apparent to the Consultation that in this organizational revitalization the ministers of the church have a heavy responsibility.

d. The Presbyterian Church U.S. serves as a missionary society, also, by the manner in which it deals in fraternity and good will with the increasing volume of students from overseas who come to this country to pursue their education. Moreover, the church exercises its missionary function by the measure of its ministry to business men, travelers from abroad and representatives of government who for longer or shorter periods of time reside in our country and inevitably evaluate our religious zeal by the manner in which they are treated. Also, the Presbyterian Church U.S. says something to the church overseas and to non-Christians across the world by the behavior of its members who, in increasing numbers, are going abroad on vocational assignments, in the military and diplomatic services or as tourists. In the effort to enrich the ministry of the denomination in each of these areas, the Board of World Missions and every agency of the Assembly need to be united.

One of the unique and promising recommendations of the Consultation concerned the possibilities of genuine Christian witness by laymen who serve abroad:

We recommend: The Board of World Missions actively challenge spiritually and professionally qualified members of our Church to accept service in government and other secular projects as a positive expression of their Christian concern and their obedience to the Great Commission.

General Observations

Out of such a Consultation many specific things may be derived. However, the Board would report that probably the most basic impressions of the Consultation can be suggested by these simple, general observations:

1. There is variety within the family of God. Drawn from all over the earth, speaking many languages, belonging to many cultural and ecclesiastical heritages, those who gathered in the Consultation reflected

the fact that it is not given to anyone at any juncture of the church's life to know what is the final answer God waits to provide for the life and work of his people.

2. But in this variety there is no anarchy. There is that cohesiveness of purpose and enterprise which comes from a comradeship of concern. Here is the splendid fact that out of many nations people have assembled with one purpose—to make Christ the Lord of all. Whatever disagreements there may have been or will continue to be, as to tactical procedures in the performance of missionary responsibility, the Consultation dramatized again the fact that if we are united in the purpose to exalt Christ as Saviour we are not hindered by our differences.

3. It was discovered in the Consultation—as anyone familiar with Biblical history had the right to expect—that unity of purpose in serving the Kingdom of Christ received what appeared to be the leading of the Holy Spirit and the power to accomplish a holy task with new enthusiasm and effectiveness. Whatever else may happen as the result of the Consultation, in detail or in large enterprise, the chief benefit is just here—that we have found brethren in whose fraternity we are enriched, with whose devotion we are blessed, from whose wisdom we can borrow and by whose faith we are sustained, as together we proclaim the Gospel of grace that God Himself may be glorified in all the earth.





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