

"CLUES" IN THE THEOLOGY OF MISSION

1. God made and loves the WORLD, of which the Church is a PART. This is the truth the G-world-Church formula tries to symbolize, as does such a phrase as "holy worldliness." In the consequent "open ecclesiology," the Church, "taking the form of Christ as Suffering Servant, i.e. taking redemptive form in the world, is that part of the world where God's concern for the world is "recognized and celebrated."

2. Within the world as HISTORY, God calls man to true secularity. This involves self-understanding in the full context of history, not just in the sacred context of the Church. Too, it means metaphysical modesty for the Church: we cannot any longer easily name its existent "marks", but we can prayerfully discern actional "clues" to its mission, through performing which the Church gets its shape, style, image, and self-definition. Inherited sacred structures are in constant danger of attacking God -- the death of the holy in the name of the sacred at the hands of the pious.

3. PARTICIPATION in history is man's "affair" with God because history itself is G's "affair" with man. Because "history"-- the human world-- is forever changing, conscious intellectual participation in this change requires a pilgrim theology of involvement: theology is the Christian's intellectual participation in history's permanences and changes; it is the Christian mind "on the road."

4. HUMANIZATION, K of G, is the goal of MISSION seen as God working his purpose out "in creation for creation." The Church holds that Christ is "the true man," but "humanization" is a secular term which carries the freight of the messianic goal.

5. The LAITY are "the reference group for mission," "the bearer of mission in all the contexts of their secular competence"--"a corporate ministry...under a corporate mandate from Christ," "the servant Church, " available for God's use in man's need.

6. PLURIFORMITY of structures in the world and church is normal in the emerging world civilization: contemporary life is increasingly pluriform. The Church must learn to take shape in all the "forms" or "worlds"-- residence, work, leisure, and the public sector (education, politics, culture).

--This summary of the second volume of The Missionary Structure of the Congregation" World Council of Churches study was made by Willis E. Elliott from the manuscript, later published as THE CHURCH FOR OTHERS(WCC).