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The Readiness of the World for the Mission

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The Total Ministry of the Church

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# The Readiness of the World for the Mission

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EDITORIAL NOTE: This paper was read by Professor R. Pierce Beaver of the Divinity School, University of Chicago, to the Study Conference on the Christian World Mission (Oct. 12 and 13, 1961), conducted under the auspices of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., and its department of Missions and made possible by a grant from the Lutheran Laymen's League. It is published for its penetrating analysis of the situation that confronts us today in carrying out the mission which Christ has entrusted to His church.

“THE Readiness of the World for the Mission” or “for the Gospel” has been a favorite argument in the promotion of the mission in Protestant churches for at least a century and a half. Thus John M. Mason, preaching in 1797, exulted in the fact that by the providence of God the most formidable obstacles to the spread of the faith, such as travel, language, manners, had already been overcome by those persons who were primarily serving science, wealth, and fame. Francis Brown in a missionary sermon in 1814 declared that the navigation of the seas, which had been so great a barrier to the ancients, had become for moderns a highway for the spread of the Gospel. The art of printing had made the diffusion of Christian knowledge easy, and the colonization of many parts of the earth by emigrants from Christian nations was enlarging the base of missions. Quite typical is a sermon delivered before the Foreign Mission Society of Boston by Sereno Edwards Dwight in 1820. He sought to show that nearly all the world had now been explored and its inhabitants made known; all civilized and most barbarous countries now engaged in navigation; civilized men had settled on the coast

of every country and island; the influence of two great Christian nations, Great Britain and the United States of America, was predominant; heathen nations had largely been subjected to Christian powers; the slave trade had nearly been exterminated, and out of two million Negroes in this country would be selected the missionaries to Africa. Moreover, Dwight declared, the inventions of paper and printing are a modern substitute for the apostolic gift of tongues and the power of working miracles, while the building of roads, improvement in communications, and the fruits of the industrial revolution speed the diffusion of the faith. The Lancastrian system of education was spreading everywhere. The right of mankind to self-government was being recognized and the United States would be the teacher of the peoples. European emigration was further diffusing Christianity. The Turks and Persians had fallen into disharmony, while Turkey was now at the mercy of her Christian neighbors. The fall of the Ottoman Empire would crush Islam. The power and resources of Rome, that foe of Protestant missions, had been exhausted by the French Revolution, and that church had lost its ascendancy in the Orient. The Protestant churches should now meet the opportunity which the times provided.

Half a century later men were again reading the signs of the times in similar fashion, but with some difference in details. N. G. Clark, in his book, *The Historical Position of Modern Missions*, is a good example. He found in the con-

temporary scene a "fullness of time" much like that at the advent of our Lord. Commercial enterprise brings men of every race and language into the great centers of trade and scatters the products of a common industry to the ends of the earth. The physical world had become one, and our neighbors are the whole human race. Intellectual forces had awakened men to eager expectation of bettering their condition. The old faiths were dying in Asia, and men like Keshub Chunder Sen were paying high tribute to Jesus Christ. Heathenism is everywhere disintegrating, and it is no longer a few nations around the Mediterranean but the unevangelized nations of the whole world that now wait for the coming of our Lord. The wide dispersion of the English race in all parts of the earth and the general use of English as the international language parallel the first century dispersion of the Jews and the use of Greek at that time. India has been brought under English law and the influence of English civilization and of the religion that inspired it. "The advanced position of Protestant nations thus compels the respect and excites the admiration and the emulation of the most diverse nations of heathendom, loosens the bonds of ignorance and superstition, and prepares the way for the reception of a religion which bears such fruits." The first-century expectation of great moral changes is matched by a contemporary expectation and hope for relief from burdens. Moreover, through the previous twenty-five years the Divine Hand had been shaping the destinies of nations and controlling events to further the spread of the Gospel. These include the breakdown of the temporal power of the papacy, the rise of Germany as a great

Protestant power, the emancipation of the serfs in Russia, the fatal blow to slavery through the American Civil War, India brought under British rule, China and Japan opened, the political power of Islam broken by Russia, and Central Africa explored by Livingstone and Stanley. The world is open as never before to missionary effort. All of this proves to the heathen the developing power of the Gospel. It was now no longer a question of ten great religions in the world, each suited to a certain stage of culture, but a question of one religion suited to the spiritual necessities and best development of the whole race. Everywhere Christianity had been naturalized and had demonstrated its character as this one religion for the human race.

At the turn of the century, when the slogan was "The evangelization of the world in this generation," the surveys, such as those by James S. Dennis, emphasized the success of missions in a world ready and waiting for the Gospel. Even as late as 1931 Dr. John R. Mott in his *Present Day Summons to the World Mission of Christianity* could still be optimistically certain about the readiness of the world, despite some obstacles such as the financial depression and some influences emanating from the West. Nationalism was stimulating the young churches to responsibility, and the outlook for internationalism was good. "The great internationalism is the world mission of Christianity." The awakening and uprising of women, the tremendous increase in schools and universities reflecting the hunger for education, the gradual disintegration of the old religions were all assets to the mission. He confidently asserted: "The Christward movement is gathering momentum from decade

to decade. Quite as significant as Christ's conquest of individual lives is His ever-widening sway over whole areas of life and of human relationships. . . . It is highly significant that more and more in the lands of the non-Christian religions Christ is being recognized as the last court of appeals in morals."

Such optimism was easy when in the nineteenth century European civilization, commerce, political power, and military might were conquering the world, and when Christianity was riding with the rising tide of European-American prestige and encountering the crumbling cultures and social structures of Asia and Africa. Hazards to missionaries and some difficulties were acknowledged, but the major obstacles to the evangelization of the world were usually found in the lethargy, lack of commitment, and disobedience within the church, rather than in the resistance of the world. The world was considered to be "ready." This was a powerful factor in the promotion of missions. The prevailing optimism was often shallow, and it misread the meaning and nature of some events and movements. It is astonishing from the vantage point of our day to read that at the Berlin Conference of 1884 "the dark continent was solemnly dedicated by the western powers to the best arts and culture and faith of the Western world"; and that "the Congo Free State marks the dawn of a new era in human history, a new age in the political and moral order of the world." All of this was expected to assure the rapid spread of the Gospel through Africa.

Moreover, this facile optimism appeared to be justified by statistics. Communicants in the young churches increased from one

million and a quarter in 1903 to six million in 1938, and the total Protestant community related to those churches reached the figure of 27,000,000 in 1949. However, the difficulties which had been multiplying steadily since World War I reached their apparent climax after World War II and ended the era of the mission as a unilateral sending operation of the Western churches. Furthermore, after the mid-1940s little comfort could be taken in statistics. The realization of the magnitude of the population explosion destroyed the sentimental hope of the total conversion of all mankind. The Christian community, despite its continued growth in many areas, is lagging far behind the natural increase in the total population, and in relation to that general population it is becoming proportionately an ever smaller minority. A variety of factors make it impossible in the decade of the 1960s to talk in the same old manner about the "readiness of the world for the Gospel," and even the statistics compel us to more sober and profound thought about the aim and means of evangelization.

Two world wars have destroyed the prestige and moral leadership of the Western nations in the eyes of Asians and Africans, and Christianity is no longer being accepted as part of a superior culture. The nineteenth and twentieth century involvement of missions in colonialism is now a grievous handicap. Colonialism is the whipping boy of the politicians in the newly independent nations and the arch foe of the nationalists in the lands which are still colonies. The missions are said to have been agencies of the colonial powers, and in many quarters it is charged that they are still primarily vehicles of foreign

influence. Nationalism is rampant, and many of its devotees claim that Christianity denationalizes its converts. They say that colonial governments favored Christianity at the expense of the indigenous religion and that there should now be redress of just grievances at cost to the churches and missions. Nationalism puts obstacles in the way of evangelism, such as the refusal of visas or residence permits to missionaries. The new nations are welfare states, and they assume responsibility for all the services in which the missions once had monopoly, particularly education and health. Restrictions are frequently imposed upon Christian institutions, or they may be expropriated, as was the case with the schools in Ceylon earlier this year. The critics and antagonists frequently and conveniently forget that the missions pioneered in all the social services and many of the technical services which the governments now seek to provide. There is a revival of the indigenous cultures, which makes westernized Christianity appear in contrast to be all the more foreign and unsuitable. Yet at the same time there is spreading rapidly in and from the great urban centers a secular cosmopolitanism whose gods are science and technology. It is hostile both to the ethnic religions and to Christianity, for it regards all religion as superstition. Communism, atheist by nature, is a formidable foe, and even where it may not at the moment be actively attacking Christianity it constantly reminds people of the imperialistic and colonial alliance of missions. Racism merges with nationalism and anticolonialism and often brands our faith as the religion of the oppressing white man, which even within the household of faith segregates and subordinates the per-

son of color. These hostile factors have played havoc with the old ways and means of the Protestant missions, but that is not too important. The end of an era had come, because young churches had everywhere come into existence, and the internal factors demanding change and adjustment in a new common mission of young and old churches are far more important than these external ones which I have named. But from the point of view of the perspective of my topic these external factors are of tremendous importance, because in many places they have transformed the former "readiness" to hear the Gospel into suspicion and even hostility. They are barriers to communication.

The most important external factor is the one that touches our subject most intimately. It is the revival of the Asian religions. Up to the mid-1930s the missionaries had for a century and a quarter regularly and repeatedly reported the progressive disintegration of the Eastern religions and the crumbling of the animistic religions in primitive cultures. There was a spiritual vacuum ready to be filled by Christianity. Today there is even a revival of primitive religion and culture in parts of Africa, and in Asia there has been a resurrection of the old religions with power. They have modernized, are speaking to man where he lives today, are providing the ground of unity in national life, and are reaching out through the world through new missionary agencies with a message believed to be for all men. The spiritual vacuum in Japan has been filled not by Christianity, but by the new religions which have appeared there. The chief argument of missionaries for the readiness of the Asian peoples, at least, for hearing

the Gospel, now no longer can be sustained. They must now say that the resurgence of the Asian faiths and of primitive religion has the opposite effect. Moreover, the Asian religions have regained confidence, they are no longer on the defensive, but aggressively attack Christianity.

The very appreciation of Jesus Christ as a matchless spiritual Figure and acceptance of Him as an authoritative Teacher of ethics, in which the missionaries exulted seventy-five years ago, have had opposite effects from those they expected. There has been a very different response to Jesus personally as a spiritual and ethical teacher from that of empirical, organized, institutional Christianity with its teaching about Jesus Christ as the unique Revelation of God and the sovereign Lord. The response to the man Jesus has on the whole been positive and appreciative, but Asia has balked at accepting Him as the one and only historical manifestation of God among men, as the sole Mediator and Savior. Many Hindus and Buddhists believe that they as Asians have better understood the Asian Jesus than have His Western disciples. They stand with Dr. Radhakrishnan in the assertion that the history of Christianity is the capture of an Asian religion and its transformation by the alien and radically contrary spirit of Europe. From Ram Mohun Roy to Gandhi there is a long and unbroken succession of admirers of Jesus who gained enlightenment, inspiration, and strength from Jesus and who made Him the standard for the reformation and restatement of Hinduism. This preoccupation with Jesus and His teaching is the most important factor in the development of Neo-Hinduism, and Christian

content has been read into ancient Vedanta terms. Religion under this impact has become the most powerful force for social transformation in India. Hinduism is quite ready to accept Jesus Christ as one of the Avatars, or manifestations of God, one of the Divine Saviors, but not the sole historical one. One sometimes sees in India offered for sale a poster picture with Krishna somewhat dimly in the far background, the Buddha next and more distinct, then Jesus more to the foreground, and finally Gandhi in the immediate foreground, the savior for this age. There has not been a similarly modernizing effect of the influence of Jesus on Buddhism and Islam, however. Many a Buddhist regards Him as an outstanding expression of the Buddha ideal and a moral prototype worthy of emulation, but non-theistic Buddhism can allow Him no greater place than that. Buddhism is more interested in copying the practices and methods of Christian ministry and institutional life than in accepting any of its teaching. But far and wide through Asia there is a readiness to accept Jesus Christ and His moral teachings as the Asians themselves see them, not as we present them, for they reject the teaching of the church about our Lord. The stumbling block is not the cross as it was with the first century Greeks, but rather the uniqueness of the incarnation and the absoluteness of Christ's sovereignty.

A case can be made out that most of the modern reform and revival movements in the Asian religions other than Islam are really Asia's way of appropriating and acculturating Jesus and Christianity. This can be done better with Hinduism than with the others, however, because the impact lasted longer and was more theological

and philosophical in that case. The impact on Mahayana Buddhism in China and Japan was far more superficial, involving the copying of methods. Now more lately it is beginning to happen in Theravada Buddhism. At this moment in Asia it is more the Christian example of human concern, social service, and missionary activity that is having effect than Christian theology and philosophy. There is not now enough real encounter and dialogue between the devotees of the religions to get down to that profound level. Quite generally it appears that the Asian appropriation of Jesus, some aspects of His teaching, and some Christian methods—all on their own terms—have made the religious people of the Orient less ready to hear the Gospel in the old way than the missionaries used to say was the case.

Furthermore, the clerical and lay leaders of the Asian religions have a new confidence in the universality and timeliness of their message and a new confidence in facing Christianity. They are seeking to demonstrate the relevance of their faith to man in his predicament at this moment in history in all of his social relationships. They each claim to have the world view which best accords with the knowledge of modern science. They each claim to offer the spiritual basis for a new world order of righteousness, justice, and peace. And they all follow Dr. Radhakrishnan in asserting that the spiritual control and direction of science and technology is the most urgent need of the moment. On all these grounds and others they now vigorously attack Christianity both in their homelands and in the West. Dozens of interviews with religious leaders in Asia in the last five years have given me oppor-

tunity to learn their views about our faith. They have told me that Christianity is intolerant, showing a spirit of intolerance even where it is too weak to coerce others. They say that Christians are exclusive, that feeling superior to others they live apart from their neighbors. Ours, they charge also, is a killjoy religion of petty prohibitions which makes little moralisms more important than essential matters of true religion. It is superficially activist and has little place for spiritual cultivation and meditation. It is offensively nonaesthetic in most cultic manifestations and robs worship of beauty and social life of color. Above all, one meets the angry assertion in many parts of the world that Christianity is utterly foreign. On the one hand, it is regarded as a form of Western infiltration of local cultures and religions and, on the other, as a politically subversive force serving imperialism. It may be hard for us to believe it, but I found frequently the opinion that missions, including the local congregations, are financially supported by Western governments!

Moreover, Christianity is regarded as the ethnic religion of the West, and at its door is laid responsibility for all that the Western powers do. Therefore, it is confidently asserted by many that Christianity leads to war, aggression, and colonial exploitation. It is responsible for the misuse of science and technology, and for the present threat of atomic annihilation hanging over mankind. It is responsible for the whole mess in which the world now finds itself, and it is incapable of leading mankind to a just, stable, peaceful world order. It preaches brotherhood and unity, but does not practice it. It is not only divided into innumerable sects which prey

upon one another, but introduces divisive-ness into the new nations which so sorely need unity. Its churches are segregated racially, and some churches justify this by the Scriptures and theology. There is just enough truth mingled with gross misunderstanding in these accusations to make an answer difficult. But these sentiments alone refute the old idea of the readiness of people to listen to us.

No, there is today no "readiness of the non-Christian world for the Gospel" in the old sense that it was described in promotional addresses and literature. I have been explicit in refuting this notion, because we cannot see the real readiness of the world for Christ unless we are utterly realistic. We cannot proclaim the Good News in a manner in which it can effectively be communicated unless we understand the state of the world. Genuine communication is now no more difficult than it ever was. And in the very state of affairs which I have described, I am firmly convinced, we find the actual readiness of the world for Christ. This is a day in which He comes truly "in the fullness of time" to meet the most urgent needs of men and to save them in all the fullness of God's salvation. God is Lord of history and He is working in these dreadful times. The mission is just as much His as in the nineteenth century when the spread of European power and cultural influence seemed to make the way easy. He has put the church in the world to proclaim that He has in Christ reconciled that world unto Himself. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is never absent from any of God's children, no matter how stubbornly they may resist His illumination. God never leaves His children orphans, and His steadfast, pur-

suing love is greater than their disobedience. He may chasten, but He never abandons us. The Holy Spirit is everywhere and at all times preparing men for meeting God in Christ. The missionary or evangelist never proclaims the Gospel, and it is never heard, where the Holy Spirit has not prepared the way. No man can call Christ Lord but by the Holy Spirit, and true conversion is not any man's doing in the life of another.

Therefore, the world is always ready for the mission and the Gospel. The messengers will find a response if they are obedient to the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit, if they can find the paths opened by that Spirit, if they use all their talents in God's service, if they are without spiritual pride, if they can humbly identify themselves with their hearers and in a two-way conversation communicate with them, learning from them as well as instructing, and bringing a Power into their lives rather than just speaking words. Not since the advent of our Lord has the world been more ready for Him in its terrible need and estrangement than today. There are formidable obstacles, but the very obstacles are opportunities. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." Adversaries cannot close a door which the Holy Spirit has opened. Witness can be made in encounter with adversaries. It can seldom be made to those who are indifferent.

Take the resurgence of the Asian religions, for instance, as a case of opportunity in guise of an adversary. Sometimes there has been a breakdown of traditional

religion and a resulting spiritual vacuum. This occurred in Japan after the War. There we Christians lost the opportunity, and the vacuum was filled by the new religions. It occurred also in Korea under Japanese occupation and suppression. There we see a movement of landslide proportions into the church. Many of the clergy are doing everything possible to destroy it by their quarrels and their obscurantist, irrelevant preaching, but laymen are zealous in evangelistic witness and churches are multiplying. Primitive religions were shattered when the Western impact destroyed the cultures of which they were so integral a part. But aside from such instances, I doubt that there was ever the general disintegration of religion which the missionaries reported or that there was any larger a proportion of the indifferent than was simultaneously found among the nominal Christians and unchurched people in Western lands. Conversions came about among people whose interest was kindled and to whom effective communication was made. Today the forces of religion are rising throughout much of the world, even against the opposition of powerful, agnostic secularism. Religion is concerned with the things that most worry people today as well as with death and future life. The leaders of the revised Oriental religions are aggressive toward Christianity and ready to bring bitter charges against us, but they are far, far from indifferent. In fact, the most interesting discovery that I have made in East Asia, all the way from Korea to Indonesia, is the remarkable interest in Christianity which is shown both by the clergy and educated laity. It is fully equal to the interest in the Eastern religions now current among Western students and in-

tellectuals. There are a number of reasons for this. There is a real interest in everything pertaining to religion. Some want to know Christianity in order to refute it. Others want to emulate some of its methods and practices. Some who are concerned with relevance to human need know that Christianity has always claimed to have such relevance, and they want to see just what this claim is and how it is made concrete. And there are many who think that they must understand Christianity in order to understand the West. Others are seeking a common stand of all spiritual forces against secularism. Whatever the reason, the interest is there. And there is a truly remarkable readiness to meet Christians in conversation, in discussion of spiritual matters, and in the study of human problems, if the Christian is not arrogant and proud, if he will listen and learn, and if he will join in genuine dialogue. Can there be any better opportunity for genuine Christian witness? Here is a chance for an earnest Christian scholar—and even for the devoted pastor—to put his trust in the Holy Spirit and to be used of Him. Not only can effective witness be made, but so much can be learned about the real concerns and questions of the Asian peoples and about the key factors in the indigenization of Christianity in those lands.

Peace and a just and stable world order are the burning concern of the adherents of the Asian religions—the articulate ones at least. They may be less of an issue, but still an important one in Africa. All of the Oriental religions give a high place to the preaching and promoting of peace and the outlawing of war. At the other end of the spectrum of concern is the need of

the individual in his daily life. Gradually the whole range of social concern between these two extremes is being filled in. The founder of one of the new religions in Japan said that at first his counselors attempted to deal directly with personal problems, but that they later discovered that better results were achieved if social problems were first discussed and the personal problems were seen in that context. Here also is a point at which the religionists and the agnostic secularists can be brought together. The Jesuit apostle to the Japanese intellectuals, Father Roggenhoff, told me that these people, who ordinarily scoff at religion, are always ready to listen attentively to any social program offered in the name of religion. This interest provides a rare point of contact. Personal salvation is no longer of much interest to thousands who fear the imminent destruction of the entire race or to others who are too burdened with getting through each successive day to have time and energy left to think about the future. Personal salvation will interest them in the context of world salvation or when they have found a little sense of security for themselves and their families. Add to the overpowering fear for the fate of mankind the woes, the pressures, the antagonisms, the bitterness which the population explosion is bringing to countries which cannot produce food and jobs sufficient for the new multitudes. Add to this also the industrial revolution and consequent urbanization which are so radically changing the old agrarian order in Asia, Africa, and Latin America — with the rootlessness, lostness, and depersonalization that they bring with them. If in a nominally Christian West similar developments brought evils, injustices, inse-

curity, and estrangement, in the overcoming of which Christian idealism and service have taken a leading part, how much more fearful is the prospect in these new areas of cataclysmic social change. Any sense of security on a world, national, family, or personal level is rarely possessed today. Antagonisms between men and hostility between groups multiply and sharpen in a world that has been shrunk into a physical, but not a spiritual, neighborhood by modern science. Is society then not ready for the reconciliation which God offers men in our Lord Jesus Christ?

There is much talk about an Asian-African revolution. It is a movement of anti-imperialism, anticolonialism, nationalism, and racism, but not as much essentially as it is the uprising of the hungry, landless, diseased, and debt-ridden proletariat of the great cities and tenant farmers of the countryside, demanding a better livelihood. The new welfare nations make one five-year plan after another, but their gains are nullified by the population explosion. Expectations rise, but life grows harder. Tensions increase in proportion to the frustration of the expanding populations. Many a Buddhist abbot told me that worshipers come to the temples now not so much with concern about death and future life as in the desperate hope of finding some illumination and power by which to live through each day's difficulties and hardship. There is ground for believing that even among the dispossessed masses, usually inarticulate, but now ready to join in rioting mobs, as well as among the educated, there is a hunger for the recognition of personal worth, dignity, human stature, human rights which exceeds that for bread, land, and health. One reason for the strength

of nationalism is the feeling that as the nation gains stature, dignity, and a place of international leadership among the peoples of the world its citizens individually share in that increased stature, dignity, and worth.

The world is waiting for a messiah to come and save it here and now. Communism and scientism make their claims to being that messiah. The revived religions each assert that they know the way and have the power. The Christians' first task is not to deny and refute the claims of the other faiths, but to proclaim in the midst of the world's corporate fears, agonies, and the death which are the wages of its corporate sin, that we know the Messiah who has come for the healing of the nations as well as for the salvation of each individual soul. The entire range of mankind's need and estrangement is smaller than the dimensions of the Gospel of reconciliation. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us." The good news that "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" is timeless, but it must be preached in timely terms which ears will hear. A panic-stricken world is hungry for reconciliation throughout the total body of mankind in every aspect of its corporate existence. Every human effort toward peace among the nations and among groups and individuals

is to be commended, all efforts at co-operation and unity are to be praised, but ultimately peace at every level is the gift of God to men. Finally, the horizontal reconciliation between individuals, groups, classes, races, and nations can only be the reflection and the visible demonstration of the vertical reconciliation of men with God. God has made that reconciliation in Christ. Peace and unity are possible in Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And to us, who by God's grace comprise the church on earth, He has committed the ministry of reconciliation.

However, the world says that we do not demonstrate what we preach. Ears are ready to hear the Gospel of reconciliation with understanding only if eyes can see life and deeds which authenticate the words which we speak. The church is the firstfruits of the kingdom of God, of the new age, as well as its herald. A revolution in mission and evangelism is needed which will stress, not statistics, but the creation and fostering of congregations, institutions, and ministering fellowships which demonstrate in their corporate lives and in selfless service to those outside their company that God has indeed reconciled men unto Himself in Jesus Christ. God has raised up through the mission for this time Christian congregations and institutions throughout the whole world, and the world is more ready to hear than ever before because of the multitude of tongues and cultures in which the proclamation and demonstration can be made. But they must validate in their corporate fellowship and their active peacemaking the message which they speak. The proclamation that God has in Christ wrought reconciliation is spoken against, if Chris-

tians are not in visible unity of spirit and life, if they do not in the body of Christ and in the bonds of His love bridge all chasms of difference, and do not bear one another's burdens in mutual love and concern. It is in such a company that the man who has been by his faith and God's grace savingly incorporated into Christ mystically finds the reality of the abiding presence which gives him peace and strength in the midst of the terrors of the time and the hardships of the day. Moreover, since God has committed to us in the church the ministry of reconciliation, we in every congregation and institution must be spending ourselves with Christ in His ministry of peacemaking. We have the promise that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He will be in our midst, and that He will be with us to the end of the world if we are faithful in witness. . . .

This is the most exciting time in the Christian mission since our Lord's advent, and the world was never more ready for His coming. We must find new forms, methods, means of mission and evangelism both for proclamation and for demonstration and reconciling ministry. It is extremely baffling. But God gives us the illumination and the power of His Holy Spirit. If we dedicate ourselves in complete faithfulness to the ministry of reconciliation the ways and means will be found, and the world will hear with a readiness to respond, since: "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant. . . ."

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