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A Symposium on Mission Work: Re-Thinking the Church's Mission

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This Scriptural volume, and in fact the whole series deserves a conspicuous place in the most modest of libraries. A careful reading of *Concilium* is a stimulating introduction to and survey of theology in the open-window era of Vatican II. Although the first numbers may have been unwittingly directed towards priests and others trained in theology, the present volume and those following are certainly within the grasp of educated laymen with interest and a moderate knowledge of Catholic teaching.

PHILIP J. CALDERONE, S.J.

A SYMPOSIUM ON MISSION WORK

RE-THINKING THE CHURCH'S MISSION. *Concilium*. Theology in the age of renewal, Volume 13. Edited by Karl Rahner, S.J. New York: Paulist Press, 1966. 152 pp.

The individual essays in this volume are for the most part of a very high quality and, taken together, they provide a stimulating study. As a symposium, however, the book lacks a certain unity in the selection of essay-topics and coordination in the discussion of the theme. An editorial preface would have been helpful to give some background for the discussion, to explain why these particular essay topics were chosen, and to point out the fundamental issues at stake.

For instance, the essays by W. Bühlmann, O.F.M.Cap., on the problems of the church in Africa, and by Mark Fang Cha-yong, S.J., on the situation and prospects for the Catholic Church in China, are rich in information about the contemporary situation and they ask the right questions, but why were these areas chosen for study and, not for instance, Japan, India, or Latin America?

The brief discussion by Hans Heimerl on "The Concept of Laity in the Constitution on the Church," with observations and responses by Karl Rahner, S.J., Lambertus Halk and Charles Davis, seems too preoccupied with establishing the position of the layman (*vis-a-vis* the clergy) within the People of God, instead of considering the mission proper of the laity. Perhaps this discussion is necessary and important in contemporary Catholic ecclesiology, but it is not directly and clearly to the point of the theme of this symposium.

The real heart of the "Re-Thinking" comes in the two essays by Eugene Hillman, C.S.Sp., on "The Main Task of the Mission," and by Maria-Joseph Le Guillou, O.P., on "Mission as an Ecclesiastical Theme." These men represent the two opposing views in contemporary Catholic missiology concerning the fundamental scope and aim of the mission(s).

Hillman represents the traditional view of mission as *plantatio Ecclesiae*, understood especially in an institutional sense. This position, which sees the mission among non-Christian peoples and pastoral care of Christian people (even though largely dechristianized) as two wholly different tasks of the church, is the position taken in the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* of Vatican II.

Le Guillou takes the position, which has been championed by the journal *Parole et Mission* (Paris) since 1958, that the Church today is in a missionary situation everywhere, that mission must be "the integrating principle of all ecclesial action," and that mission should be seen "as the common action of all the holy People of God." He says, "Missionary theory today must be solidly based on the fundamental hypothesis of achristianization; we find ourselves facing a new world, compared to the Christianity of yesterday, a world which has practically never been evangelized in its new aspects, namely, the whole social, cultural and socio-cultural system" (p. 128). According to this theory, mission can no longer be defined by geographical terms, but rather by social and human milieux. Protestant missiologists have largely adopted this view, which they commonly refer to as the "six continent concept" of mission. Thus far, however, the Sacred Congregation "de propaganda Fidei" has shown little inclination to extend its missionary jurisdiction to those dechristianized "espaces," which are left in the care of the apostolic activity, and not of the missionary action.

Certainly the traditional view of mission must be re-examined and updated in view of the new situation of the Church in the world. But the position of Le Guillou *et al*, also involves problems that are both practical and theological. First, there is a danger that when everything becomes mission and everybody is a missionary, then nothing is mission and nobody is a missionary. The terms lose their meaning when there is an over-identification of church with mission.

And just as a church-centered view of mission leads to an imbalance, so also a mission-centered view of the church is inadequate, especially if it is thought that mission exhausts the meaning of Christian discipleship. To participate in God's act in Christ, means not only to participate in mission, but also in worship and service. The act of participation is missionary in character, but it is not *only* missionary in character. Within the life of the Church there are two major aspects: the apostolic and doxological aspects.

This debate and concern is shared by Protestant missiologists. Therefore it is unfortunate that this volume, unlike some other volumes in the *Concilium* series, gives no attention to Protestant thinking on the subject.

GERALD H. ANDERSON