missions have drawn on the human sciences, it is difficult to demonstrate that the availability of growing and unparalleled opportunities for cultural studies has meant appreciably better relations between missionaries and the people among whom they minister. At the same time we cannot escape the fact that the way we go about our work makes a great difference as to outcome.

CONCLUSION

This study of three conceptions of mission has emphasized how these constructs are historically and culturally conditioned. None of the three discussed here has drawn directly on a particular theological vision. Nevertheless, it is necessary that missionary efforts be subjected to theological critique. Indeed, it is dangerous to act as though we are dealing with a matter that consists only in finding the correct method, technique, or approach. To reiterate Taber's implied warning: the availability of greater knowledge—in this case knowledge of culture—does not guarantee greater effectiveness or faithfulness in mission. The goal of mission is to bear witness to God's love as revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Prior to everything else there must be a transformation of a missionary's own mentality into Christlikeness. The missionary's task is to be an instrument of ongoing transformation in the world. If the missionary's being and work are to be an instrument, this suggests that someone else is in control.

The example of the Word becoming flesh, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, is the baseline against which we must evaluate all our missionary efforts. Can replication or indigenization or contextualization be equated with incarnation? The incarnation is foundational to mission (Jn 1:14). The example of God's action in Jesus Christ has crucial things to say about the nature of the power that is to be used (i.e., agape), who controls the process (i.e., messianic servanthood), and the view of culture that underlies it (i.e., God comes to all people within their own cultural context). This offers a new horizon of missionary obedience, but it also calls for a deeper penetration into the meaning of both gospel and culture than has been achieved thus far. In this, God's sending of Jesus Christ points the way forward for all who aspire to be his disciples.

5

New Religious Movements and Mission Initiative: Two Case Studies

The modern mission model has been challenged repeatedly. The earliest and most enduring of these challenges has been that posed by what has been described variously as *independency, independent churches, spiritualist churches,* and *indigenous churches,* among other terms. All of these designations are problematic in one way or another. In this chapter we shall refer to this phenomenon as New Religious Movements (NRMs). These movements have arisen in direct relation to the Christian missionary enterprise and can be found throughout the world. Four preliminary observations may be made:

1. NRMs are a fruit of the modern mission movement. They would not have happened apart from the coming of the cross-cultural missionary. These movements, as Harold W. Turner (1981) has pointed out, combine in a new form elements of the religion the missionary brought and traditional indigenous religious forms and ideas. It is thus genuinely new. It is recognizable as combining Christian elements and traditional religio-cultural elements. These NRMs range across a spectrum from those that disavow any intent to identify themselves as a part of the Christian faith family, notwithstanding the elements that may have been borrowed from Christianity, to groups that see themselves as moving fully within the Christian orbit, albeit with indigenous forms and thrust.

2. Although these movements were long ignored or misunderstood by missionaries and mission-founded churches, they have become a permanent presence worldwide. In the nineteenth century NRMs cropped up in widely scattered places. Some did not last long, and most did not grow to any appreciable size. No one in the nineteenth century observed that these groups were appearing throughout the world, always in direct relation to Christian missionary activity. Toward the end of the nineteenth century the movement gathered momentum, and by the beginning of the twentieth century a few missionary statesmen and scholars began to take the phenomenon seriously. But generally these groups

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continued to be viewed by missionaries and churches as threats to be overcome. This attitude prevailed until well into the 1970s in many areas. Even today NRMs are not well understood, although they are treated with much greater respect.[1]

3. Much of the earlier prejudice was the result of ignorance. Through the pioneering studies of scholars like Bengt Sundkler, Efraim Andersson, Harold Turner, F. B. Welbourn, and David Barrett, public perception has changed. Scholarly study has led to numerous personal contacts, and contacts have resulted in relationships that have ripened into friendships and deepening spiritual fellowship. Accurate information has enabled the outsider to understand a group in the light of its self-understanding. Those that do not wish to be classed as "Christian" must be respected, while those that desire to be accorded full membership in the Christian family are increasingly so recognized.

4. As has been emphasized, these NRMs are the fruit of cross-cultural mission, but they are an unintended fruit. Often they have emerged as a result of deep conflicts and misunderstandings that have left scarred memories. It is incumbent on us to ask: What does this experience of NRMs tell us about mission assumptions, methods, and approaches? What can we learn that will enhance the missionary's effectiveness in the future?

We will seek answers to these questions through two case studies: the United Evangelical Church of the indigenous peoples in the Argentine Chaco, and the Dida Harrists of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast).

THE UNITED EVANGELICAL CHURCH

The Tobas are one of the largest of a number of indigenous ethnic groups located in the Gran Chaco of Argentina and Paraguay. From the sixteenth century onward the Tobas began encountering non-Indian peoples and their cultures. The first encounter was in the form of military expeditions into the Chaco, followed with visits by explorers, Roman Catholic missionary priests, various kinds of entrepreneurs, and, finally, politicians. Virtually all of these outsiders were Europeans representing European culture and interests.

By the twentieth century the situation of the Tobas was deteriorating seriously. They were experiencing deprivation in the form of loss of possessions, status, and worth. As a people whose traditional way of life was based on hunting and gathering, they depended on access to wide expanses of territory, guided by the availability of fruit, honey, fish, roots, berries, and game. Each facet of the encounter with Europeans had introduced a further encroachment on that traditional way of life. The Tobas were indeed being deprived of their traditional territory, and with this loss went their very way of life.

The Tobas had not responded positively to the earlier Catholic missionary work. The church was perceived to be one element in the growing foreign encroachment. The first Protestants arrived in the region late in the nineteenth

[1] The extent of this global phenomenon can be most readily grasped by turning to the continent-by-continent six-volume bibliography of these movements prepared by Harold W. Turner (1977).

century. Others came during the following decades. They relied on conventional missionary methods that attempted to replicate among the Indians the particular denominational tradition from which the mission came. Although the missions increasingly paid lip service to the notion of indigenization, they did not truly understand or respect Indian culture. A great chasm stood between the two cultures—missionary and Indian. Existing theories of mission did little to help build bridges between the two worlds.

In spite of this history of hurtful relationship with outsiders, the Tobas correctly perceived that this foreign presence had become permanent; it was something they had to adjust to. In return, the Indians increasingly desired acceptance as persons by the dominant society.

In 1924 the Toba community sustained a severe crisis. The people's confidence in their shamans was shattered when the attempt by the shamans to curb further incursions by outsiders resulted, instead, in the massacre of Toba men, women, and children by the Argentine police. The Tobas began to look elsewhere for a source of authority. They were to find this alternative source of authority in the church. In the wake of this crisis, several Tobas traveled to Buenos Aires, where they came into contact with certain Pentecostals. Subsequently, Pentecostal representatives visited them in the Chaco and Formosa provinces and made efforts to establish a Pentecostal church. This did not prove entirely successful, but it did provide new ingredients for what was about to happen under indigenous leadership.

Around 1940 a religious movement began to percolate among the Tobas. It drew inspiration from the Pentecostals but tapped deeply into indigenous Toba spirituality. In the words of Elmer Miller (1967, 31), "The religious movement referred to represents a syncretism of traditional views on health, disease, spirits, witchcraft, and general cosmology with modern Pentecostal emphases upon healing, speaking in tongues, and other forms of spirit possession." This NRM arose in the wake of the collapse of the traditional way of life. It represented a new religio-cultural synthesis that could provide authority and coherence to the Tobas as they sought to cope with the demands of their drastically changed and changing environment. To a remarkable degree this was to prove effective. By the 1980s Toba population had grown to twenty-five thousand people—at a rate more rapid than for the general population—and the majority of the Tobas were related to the United Evangelical Church. Outside observers have been impressed by the progress the Tobas have made in the intervening years in stabilizing their community in spite of the fact they have continued to suffer discrimination at the hands of the larger society. It is generally asserted today that the church has been a primary source of cultural cohesion for these people.[2]

[2] Several investigative reports have been written on the situation of the indigenous people of the Gran Chaco over the years. The most recent was done by a German development agency in the mid-eighties: Volker von Bremmen, "Moderne Jagd-und Sammelgruende: Entwicklungshilfeprojekte unter Indianern des Gran Chaco" (Argentinean, Paraguay, Bolivian), epd-Entwicklungspolitik: Materialien, vol. 3. It is available in German and Spanish.

We now turn our attention to the way missions have related to the Tobas since the 1940s. For our purposes we outline the main features of the strategy adopted by one mission working in the Chaco and Formosa provinces of Argentina, namely, the Mennonite Mission. Other missions have pursued other strategies.

The Mennonite Mission, which began working in Central Argentina in 1917, sent workers to the Chaco in 1942, shortly after the start of the religious awakening among the Tobas. Thus these missionaries arrived at a time of considerable ferment among the people. As the Mennonite missionaries surveyed the situation, they concluded that what was required was a program that would help to stabilize and fortify the Indian community—economically, socially, and spiritually. The Mennonites were not sympathetic to the indigenous religious expression because of the way it combined traditional cultural features with what appeared to be Pentecostalism—something incompatible with what the missionaries were accustomed to.

The Mennonite Mission proceeded to develop a conventional mission program consisting of store, school, clinic, and chapel, each symbolized by a building that housed an area of program concentration designed to contribute to the transformation of Indian life. For example, the missionaries correctly perceived that the Tobas did not function within the money economy in an acceptable manner. They decided that it was important that the Tobas learn how to participate in this kind of economy. The Mission helped families establish bank accounts to be operated, in part, as savings accounts. After a time this was abandoned, as it produced misunderstanding on both sides. The Indians suspected the missionaries of taking advantage of them through the accounts system, and the missionaries were frustrated at the inability of the Indians to understand and appreciate the values this system held for them. This points to the larger clash between Toba and missionary value systems. Two worlds were colliding without either group understanding the other.

The Mennonite Mission found its efforts frustrated repeatedly. By the early 1950s, ten years after starting, serious questions began to be raised as to the efficacy of the whole approach. In 1954 the Mission engaged Dr. William D. Reyburn, linguistic consultant with the United Bible Societies in Latin America, and Marie Reyburn, anthropologist, to study the situation and recommend a course of action to the Mission. Out of the Reyburns' consultancy came a drastically changed approach and the strategy that was to guide the Mission's work over the next decades. In effect, the Reyburns counseled the Mission to abandon predetermined and traditional program blueprints, to get in touch with the Indians and their culture, and to respond at those points where Indian-defined needs appeared.

First, the Mission recognized that the indigenous church was an authentic part of the body of Christ in which the Holy Spirit was manifestly at work. Indeed, this indigenous church was culturally attuned while also reaching out for help in deepening its faith and nurturing its membership as the body of Christ in that place. If the indigenous church is the goal of mission, then why not start, as in this instance, with the fact that an indigenous church already exists—even though under straitened circumstances—and contribute to its strengthening?

Second, the Mission disposed of store, clinic, school, and chapel buildings. None of the Mission's efforts to make these serve the Indian community had proved effective. On the contrary, the institutions had been a source of misunderstanding and conflict. It seemed wise to abandon these well-intentioned but ineffective programs. The missionaries moved to nearby towns where they were readily accessible to the Indians.

Third, the Mission committed itself to the translation of portions of the Christian scriptures into the Toba language, something that had not yet been done. This meant working in close collaboration with a Toba counterpart.

Fourth, the Mission became an advocate for the Indians in their struggle to gain legal recognition for their indigenous church. According to Argentine law, a religious group could be considered legitimate only when it has been granted legal registration. Previous attempts by the Indians to register their church had been rebuffed by the authorities. The Mennonite Mission became involved in this process in the late 1950s by initiating contacts with the government, through the appropriate departments, and pursuing this initiative until the government of Argentina in 1961 recognized the United Evangelical Church as a legal religious body. In 1962 a copy of this registration was delivered to each congregation.

A fifth feature of this strategy was that the Mennonite Mission declined to establish "development" programs for the Tobas. The Mission concentrated its efforts on Bible translation and making available the fruits of Bible knowledge and on the training of church leaders. Missionaries had no formal or official position in the United Evangelical Church. They attempted to maintain relationships with all the leaders. The mission staff followed the practice of visiting local congregations, but gradually, as the church grew, it became impossible to stay in touch with all.

Throughout the years since the mission underwent this "conversion," there have been numerous occasions for soul-searching as to the correctness of the strategy. Always present was this considerable cultural distance that separated missionary from Toba; also present was the abiding conviction that collaboration was possible, that indeed it was God's will that the UEC and Mission should work together. The Tobas have at times criticized the Mission's strategy because it has not delivered to them certain material benefits that have come to be associated with missions. But standing behind this resolve was the observation, arrived at with the help of William and Marie Reyburn, and summarized by Elmer Miller:

> The singular failure of Protestant Missions to function among the Tobas as originally designed is of interest, particularly when seen against the background of Catholic Mission failure. More significantly, however, in spite of the disintegration and final abandonment of institutional ties between the Toba and the Missions—Emmanuel, Mennonite, Go Ye, Beams of

Light, Grace and Glory . . . and finally, Church of God Pentecostal—the congregations in Toba communities continue to grow and prosper under aboriginal leadership (Miller 1967, 107).

Not only has the UEC grown among the Tobas, it has also attracted into its membership the Mocovi and Pilaga as well as many Argentines who could claim some European ancestry. Beginning in the early eighties many people from the Wichi (Mataco) tribe have also affiliated with the UEC. These erstwhile Anglicans are from another linguistic family. More recently, Gypsies have been converted—through the witness of the UEC.

In summary, we can identify three principles of action that have emerged out of this experience. First, many of the intercultural conflicts that have arisen in the past have centered on sources of power, such as institutions and programs, and the way these have altered patterns and relationship in the local community. Therefore, the mission must seek to avoid contributing to conflict within the indigenous community over sources of power by not introducing institutions or programs; rather, the mission should work to enhance indigenous forms and institutions.

Second, the mission should seek to contribute to the advancement of the indigenous community those things which (1) are being sought by them, but (2) they have been denied because of their weak position in society. Legal registration of the church has proved to be of enormous consequence in terms of self-confidence and identity, but the indigenous peoples were virtually impotent in the face of official bureaucracy and discrimination to get their church registered. The church desired the Christian scriptures but had no educated people who could undertake the translation task on their own. In the case above, the Mennonite Mission was in a position to assist in both areas of need.

A third principle is that the mission must avoid competing with indigenous leadership or being drawn into a position where it is responsible for the welfare of the church. This does not mean that the mission must feign disinterest in the church. On the contrary, the most fundamental proof of the mission's commitment to the church is its willingness to continue being available long term to serve without taking control.

THE DIDA HARRISTS

The Dida are an ethnic group located in southcentral Côte d'Ivoire. Historically, they have been exploited in a variety of ways by more powerful neighboring peoples. And they bore more than their share of the heavy burden imposed by the French colonials during their long occupation of the country.

In 1913-15 the Liberian prophet William Wadé Harris made his way across southern Côte d'Ivoire preaching a simple but powerful message. It is estimated that more than 100,000 people were baptized by Harris in Côte d'Ivoire before the frightened colonial authorities banned him permanently from the colony. In this instance a NRM was instituted through an African, himself a first-genera-

tion Christian, who earlier in his life had been involved in the political struggle in his country. While serving a prison sentence for fomenting political rebellion, Harris saw a vision in which God directed him to quit politics and begin to preach the gospel.

The Dida were among the first Ivoirians to hear and respond to Prophet Harris, a point of pride to them to this day. As an ethnic group they have been oppressed and generally denied access to modernization. If their youth went away to school, they seldom returned to live in Dida country. Only now are the Christian scriptures being translated into Dida. Because few of their church leaders were sufficiently fluent in French to be able to draw freely on the Bible, even in French, they could not depend on the scriptures for nurturing faith to any significant degree. So how has this people sustained their faith as an indigenous Christian group?

In the early 1980s the Didas invited a Mennonite missionary couple to live in their area to provide training for their church leaders who had had no opportunity for any formal Bible training. James and Jeanette Krabill arrived in Dida country in 1982 feeling they were rather on trial since their going to the Dida was frowned on by the national Harrist leadership. At the same time the Krabills were attracted by the obvious sincerity of the Didas and the opportunity to relate to a group of Harrists among whom was still to be found a handful of people baptized by Prophet Harris himself. It seemed to be an unusual opportunity to make contact with individuals who had living memories of the prophet's ministry and message. But this was an opportunity that would not last much longer. Along with launching a full-scale Bible study program, the Krabills set out to collect and preserve these fragments of memories. No written documents survived. All depended on oral tradition. Oral tradition must, of course, be handled with great care. Memories are fallible, and what one hears must be checked against the perceptions and memories of other contemporaries. Only after much patient sorting, checking, and corroborating can one begin to have confidence in what has been distilled.

Out of this process eventually could be formed some impression of how it was possible for a people to have kept alive a faith ignited by a brief but intense contact with this man from Liberia some seventy years earlier. What has been the content of the preaching and singing over the years (Krabill 1990)?

The Krabills noticed early how important singing was to the Dida churches, who hold daily worship services. The music at each service is led by a choir drawn from a particular age group. Three choirs regularly participate on a rotating basis: the older women and men, the middle aged, and the youth. Furthermore, it was discerned that the music used by each of the groups was distinct. The senior-age group sang songs in a language rapidly becoming archaic and increasingly unintelligible to the youth. The middle-aged choir used songs composed during its members' own youth, while the current youth were composing and singing contemporary songs.

James Krabill concentrated particular attention on the music of the senior-age group, because it was recognized that with their passing an important part

of Dida cultural and religious history would be lost. The Dida tradition held music in high esteem, and certain women had long been recognized for their gifts, both as composers and performers. Prophet Harris himself had counseled the people to preserve their indigenous tunes but to find words that bring glory to God. The music sung by the senior choir in the 1980s was the fruit of this initial period of sifting and reworking.

This is of special interest missiologically because of the way Harris sought to "redeem" traditional pre-Christian music, turning it into an important resource for the nurture of faith in Jesus Christ. It is noteworthy that Harris was critically aware of the need to respect the culture of the people while bringing it under the reign of Jesus Christ. In this he was acting consistently with his vision of the coming of the kingdom of God, the key note in his message.

As these songs were translated into contemporary language, the themes from the early years of the Harris movement among the Didas became evident: although the people were suffering political and spiritual oppression, God would deliver them. Thus, these songs provide commentary on the sociopolitical situation of the people and how they viewed their circumstance in the light of Harris's message to them. Each generation of songs, it was observed, reflects this combination of the sociocultural context in dialogue with the claims of faith.

Some one hundred of the more than five hundred extant songs were eventually recorded and transcribed in both Dida and French. Several cassettes of these songs have been sold back to the Didas at affordable prices. This step has stimulated in the people a new appreciation for their heritage and the way their faith has enabled them to cope with the vicissitudes of history. The composing of new music continues unabated among the Dida.

This case suggests several points. First, it is possible for a Christian group that has been deprived of access to the Christian scriptures and other means of nurture drawn from the experience of the wider church to keep faith alive by a dynamic worship that includes music composed in context. In this case only a few theological themes were recalled from the prophet's preaching, but they were essential and helped guide the people in worship.

Second, it is important not simply to record and preserve these songs as historical and cultural artifacts but to return them to the people in forms (translated and on cassette) that will enable them to continue to draw on their faith heritage. This action affirmed the value of their cultural as well as their spiritual heritage.

Third, this suggests that an important mark of an indigenous church is that it is creating its own hymnody. To do this a people must remain vitally rooted in its soil while also possessing a clear vision of what the gospel means in that context. A people who cannot sing its faith is a people in exile spiritually, emotionally, culturally, historically. In contrast to an NRM like the Dida Harrists, mission-founded churches typically must struggle to find their indigeneity. This case suggests that an important means of achieving this sense of "at homeness" culturally may be found in indigenous art forms.

In contrast to mission-founded churches, NRMs have been spared the risk of appearing as something alien to their culture. The criticism that has been directed against them from the beginning, often by those who themselves were not indigenous to that particular culture, has been that they were *too* culturally adapted or syncretistic. What is at issue is the basis for judgment. Do the cultural forms accredited by "Jerusalem" furnish the criteria, or is what the Holy Spirit is doing at "Caesarea" definitive? Is a group guided by a sense of following the reign of God, or is it preoccupied with its cultural identity?

The role of the missionary outsider is, in part, to act as a representative of the wider Christian movement, mediating insights from scripture and history that will serve to enrich the faith of an indigenous community. But the missionary can also validate the efforts of the indigenous community to be culturally authentic as well as authentically Christian. For the Didas this was an especially important juncture. Over the previous seven decades they had had many encounters with outsiders, both Ivoirian and European. Virtually none had been affirming of the Didas as a people. They had been deceived, exploited, physically abused—especially when forced to work on road-building crews—and generally treated with indignity. Among the many encounters was a series of attempts by Christian missions of many stripes to bring the Dida Harrists under their sway. Usually this was done by depicting the Dida church as inferior and not fully Christian. While this had the effect of steeling the resolve of the fiercely independent Didas to maintain their freedom, it also left them with feelings of inferiority. Thus, to find their culture, especially as represented in their music, valued and affirmed was an important step in creating a positive climate for the Didas to see their own church as an authentic part of the whole body of Christ while beginning to draw more fully on the Christian scriptures.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning we observed that NRMs have produced a new and alternative paradigm. This new paradigm may be seen as an extended comment on traditional mission assumptions, methods, approaches, and the role played by missionaries.

Outsiders regarded Dida and the Toba cultures as inferior. In spite of this attitude of contempt both groups clung tenaciously to their indigenous traditions. Although they suffered various losses due to the encroachments of the larger society, they refused to surrender their cultural values. Missionaries who sought to relate to them for the purpose of introducing Christian faith and the benefits of modernization found themselves unable to penetrate Dida and Toba defense mechanisms. It would be quite wrong to interpret this to mean that both groups were simply trying to avoid contact with the outside world. On the contrary, they were seeking to establish relationships but on terms that would not be injurious to their cultural values and way of life. They wanted to be respected and to be allowed to make the critical choices concerning their future.

For both the Tobas and the Didas the Christian faith furnished the matrix within which to make sense of their rapidly changing worlds—from a highly traditional culture to one increasingly accommodated to modernity, from a closed

society to one inexorably becoming interdependent with the political economy of the nation. But the Christian faith became functional only when it was in the cultural idiom of the Tobas and the Didas. It had to be allowed to engage them at the points of greatest contingency: being able to respond to spiritual forces that dominate their lives, finding answers to health and healing, and listening to God speak through dreams and visions. In particular, this called for worship that helped these communities create a new sense of order and coherence amid a situation where the old center no longer held things together.

In both cases, over the years numerous attempts were made by missionary groups to relate in what was perceived to be proper ways of doing missionary work. In the end, at least in the examples studied here, the mission itself had to undergo fundamental reorientation.[3]

[3] One set of reports that describe recent initiatives to relate to NRMs by mission agencies, combining description of program and missiological analysis, is contained in *Ministry of Missions to African Independent Churches*, ed. David A. Shank (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1987). This brings together a valuable collection of papers presented at a conference of people from various parts of Africa presently engaged in Bible teaching and other programs in relation to NRMs.

6

The Contribution to Missiology of the Study of New Religious Movements

INTRODUCTION

According to John G. Gager,

> A curious irony emerges from the titles of two important works in the field of social anthropology. Peter Worsley entitles his study of cargo cults in Melanesia, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, and Kenelm Burridge's work on millenarian activities bears the title, *New Heaven, New Earth*. Both titles are direct quotations from the New Testament, yet neither author mentions early Christianity except in passing. Indeed, one searches the abundant literature on millenarian movements almost in vain in an effort to ascertain whether anthropologists regard early Christianity as fully, substantially, or tangentially related to millenarian activities in more exotic parts of the world (Gager 1975, 20).

A parallel curious irony is found when one sets out to establish a connection between the study of new religious movements and missiology. There is but scant recognition by one field of the other. Here we wish to examine this relationship and suggest ways missiological studies might be enriched through closer attention to the study of new religious movements.

Religious studies have flourished during the past two decades. Just as the final triumph of secularization and secularism seemed assured, scholars began noticing religious stirrings that suggested surprising vitality. To be sure, certain varieties of Christian faith—or of Judaism, or Islam, for that matter—seemed to be losing out, but these losses were usually more than offset by movements of renewal and innovation that were releasing new energies within the community. Furthermore, new religious movements of immense variety were emerging. Such

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