TOWARD MUTUALITY IN MISSION

the quest for new structure for participation in Christ's mission today

The quest for new missionary relationships has recently been raised more intensively in several parts of the world.

Twenty-five years ago the slogan 'Partners in Obedience' has been launched at Whitby. Since then there came several other concepts and programs as Joint Action for Mission (JAM), Mission in Six Continents, Ecumenical Sharing of Personnel. Within Roman-Catholic circles the role of the particular and local church was emphasized.

But new wine has to be put in fresh skins ...

Up to now the remaking of just these 'skins' seems to be nearly everywhere a very tiring matter.

Moreover this wine has to be drunk in a world in transition. A world moving towards one world or none. But in the actual phase of world history there is a growing call for self-reliance and an intensive search for identity from the side of the new nations of the Third World (or as some say the Two-Thirds World), that received or achieved political independence during the last decades. In this situation every foreigner or foreign institution is seen with at least some ambivalence. Today one is not surprised to come across headlines as 'Asian, African christian leaders hit western influence in Mission', in the news of the ecumenical press agencies, or to see - even in a missionary training centre - posters with slogans as 'Missionary go home'.

Sign of a greater consciousness of this aspect of the post-colonial crisis of mission(s) is also the research made by Institutes or individual researchers on request of or in relation with missionary or ecumenical agencies.

In view of the consideration of the future role of western missionary agencies in the Christian world mission the Conference of British Missionary Societies (CBMS) decided in 1968 that a study should be initiated forthwith on the question 'How should the universal character of the Church and its mission be expressed in a way that also expresses
the proper selfhood of the Church in a particular area? Recently the results of this study were made available in a voluminous report, that analyses the answers to questionnaires of 18 churches in different situations in Asia and Africa and 10 British mission boards related with these churches).

In preparation of the plenary meeting of the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples in 1971 Mgr. Pignedoli (general secretary of the Congregation) asked several theologians and missiologists in different countries to write a paper on the relations between the universal Church and the particular churches as well as on the relations between the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples and the Episcopal Conferences all over the world.

The Centre de Recherche Théologique Missionnaire (CRTM) at Paris is also paying attention to the relation of missionary institutions with the local churches. A report "Echanges entre Eglises. Les Prêtres Fidei Donum", being the result of a dialogue between Fidei Donum priest and a missionary, was issued recently.

The Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research in the Netherlands - cosponsored by the Dutch universities as well as Roman Catholic and Protestant missionary and ecumenical agencies - initiated a long term study-project "Mutual Assistance between Churches" in view of the necessity of a new relationship between the various churches in mission, stressing on the one hand the need for identity and

1) George Hood, In Whole and in Part. An Examination of the relation between the selfhood of the churches and their sharing in the universal Christian Mission. Mimeographed for limited circulation by the CBMS, London 1971, 101 pp. + Appendices (texts of questionnaires)

2) Cf. e.g. J.M. van Engelen, Rapports entre l'Eglise Universelle et les Eglises Particulières considérées du point de vue missionnaire, Nederlandse Missie Raad, Vught, déc. 1970, 12 pp. (mimeographed) H. de Lubac, Sur les rapports entre Eglise Universelle et Eglises Particulières, Documenta Omnis Terra X-77, jan. 1971, pp. 115-121