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De Christianismo et Indigenis Veritate?

CHAPTER TEN

*Decisive Factors in the Cross-Cultural
Communication Process*

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IT was a most thrilling experience to read and listen to the lectures of my colleagues in this Carter Symposium on Church Growth! We have been and still are discussing the central problem of missiology. The most important lesson I have learned from my Swedish teacher Bengt Sundkler is his definition of mission. He calls it the "constant tendency of the church to cross frontiers." He also can say: "Mission is translation." Christian mission, indeed, is the process by which the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ is communicated across the borders of his visible church. And it is the specific task of missiology scientifically to study the laws of this communication process and from Scripture and historical experience give guidance to Christians who are involved in this vital function.

At Milligan I listened to three distinguished experts presenting their theological views and personal experiences of apostolic communication across the borders of different religious cultures. And while I was listening, it struck me again: this process of communication is really a breath-taking event; in mission the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ on which the salvation of the world depends, passes through the critical phase of disembodiment and re-embodiment. For we cannot communicate the gospel to people of different languages and cultures in that incorporated form in which we ourselves have

received it and are familiar with it. Christ, the eternal Word, became flesh once and for all. But the event of inverbation, i.e. the kerygmatic analogy to incarnation, must take place again and again whenever the gospel is introduced to people of different cultures.

Although we all agree on this in principle, each one of us has seen it from a specific angle and has given his particular contribution. Let me share my observations and reflections with you by answering three basic questions with regard to the different treatments of our symposium theme:

- (1) How do we view the situation in which we discuss the communication problem?
- (2) How do we view the target and the pitfalls in the communication process?
- (3) Whom do we regard as responsible agents in the communication process?

THE PRESENT SITUATION: HOW DO WE VIEW THE SITUATION IN WHICH WE DISCUSS THE COMMUNICATION PROBLEM?

All contributors to this symposium have emphasized the perennial and universal significance of the problem of translating the biblical faith cross-culturally. It has been there since the biblical God revealed himself within the movement of history, and it is encountered wherever the gospel is transmitted to a new realm. Our examples were drawn from the time when Israel conquered Canaan until the appearance of Bishop Robinson's *Honest To God*, and they stretched geographically across the oceans from the Fiji Islands via Mexico to Asia Minor and India.

I was especially intrigued by the magnificent historic sweep in Dr. McGavran's first chapter, where he analyzed three famous adjustments of Christianity to the dominating non-Christian religio-philosophical movements of its time. Here a McGavran presented himself who revealed dimensions of thought far beyond his usual concentrations on the laws and strategy of church growth. I wonder, however, whether in the light of the illustrations he selected he still can maintain that missiology is only concerned about those adjustments in the communication

process which are made in the pioneering period, where the foreign missionary plays a decisive part. This is also the position of Dr. Hoekendijk, who even apologizes for intruding on other men's ground. We can, if we want, limit the sphere of missiology to such particular fields. But this would deprive our discipline of much of its theological dimension, and moreover of its vocation to be the integrating force in the concert of all theological disciplines. Personally, I consider missiology to be the bridgehead of the communication of the gospel to people of non-Christian religions and ideologies. It studies all the theological, linguistic, psychological and sociological processes which take place during this communication in both directions. Therefore, the Arian controversy, the crisis of faith in the age of Enlightenment and the confrontation between Christianity and humanistic secularism are, indeed, proper concerns of the missiologist as well, although not only his. When in July 1974 the International Congress on World Evangelization took place in Lausanne, we dealt with the problem of évangélistic communication in the American hippie sub-culture no less than with breaking new ground among untouched tribes in the Amazon forests. I agree that no single person is able to become expert in the multitude of such diverse situations with their specific problems. This is a new reason why we need closer cooperation and coordination among missiologists.

Dr. McGavran stated that he chose those examples also in view of liberating the indigenization complex from being tackled emotionally in the context of the Third World anticolonialist reaction. This is a real danger indeed. There is, today, the tendency sweepingly to ostracize the historic Christian faith as "western", and from there to usurp the right to develop new types of indigenous theology or forms of Christianity which, together with the outward forms, also change the very substance and the spirit of the apostolic faith.

And here lies my first main question to the other participants in this symposium: are we fully aware of the peculiar situation within the history of the Church Universal in which we are dealing with the adaptation-syncretism axis? Adjusting the forms of empirical Christianity to new cultures where it wants to take root is a timeless concern. But today it poses itself in a very

particular and crucial way. This has been observed both by Dr. Tippet and by Dr. McGavran, who pointed out the remarkable analogy between gnosticism and theological modernism as perils to the biblical creed of the church. (Dr. Ulrich Wickert, church historian in Berlin, dramatically stated this parallelism with the following words:

The heresy of the early church denied the humanity of Jesus; the modern heresy which now becomes a world-wide action program denies the godhead of Christ. The Christian faith is threatened by nothing less than the loss of heaven, of eternity, and even of God himself. This is the greatest menace which the church has had to go through since the gnostic heresy of the second century. Even the state of emergency against which Luther voiced his protest, was of less significance in comparison with this.)

What are the determining factors of this present situation in which we discuss the trans-culturation syndrome? I would mention five:

(1) In the world in which we live, there are no stable and specific cultures any more. We might find some relics of them in certain native reserves. But even they are rapidly drawn into the whirlpool of world-wide rapid social change, heading for the coming world society. Dr. Hoekendijk pointed this out already 25 years ago in his scathing criticism of the romanticism in the German missiological concept of "Volkstum" as the foundation and building material of national churches. I do not agree with the guiding ideas of the "theology of secularization," but it has made important observations which we should not bypass here.

(2) This process of change has also affected the Christian church, its beliefs, moral values, ecclesiastical order and theology. The development started already in the epoch of Enlightenment, when together with the philosophical demolition of metaphysics, the authority of revelation and ecclesiastical dogma was also undermined. A new rational principle of hermeneutics was introduced, which gave birth to the historic-critical method of exegesis. It finally led to the dissolution of the unity of biblical teaching and the credibility of biblical accounts. Dr. M.M. Thomas approvingly quotes Harvard scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith's statement that

metaphysical, philosophical and biblical theology has suffered a complete breakdown: "This has led to so much disunity, conflict and chaos in the Christian church that the old ideal of a systematic and unified Christian truth has been lost. For this even the ecumenical movement came too late." Dr. Thomas goes on to quote Cantwell Smith: "Christianity as a coherent historic structure will break into pieces, and it will, thereby, destroy any orthodoxy and, therefore, any heresy. There will remain only communities with a personal Christian faith which offers an open plurality of alternatives to select between."

(3) This process of dissolution of historic Christianity suits a third trend in our present history, i.e. the trend of *emancipation*. We encounter it in a variety of forms. In the West its main features are the anti-authoritarian and the sexualist vogues. Among underprivileged classes in North and South America, it is the cry for liberation and black power. In Africa it is the search for the African personality and the rediscovery of one's true identity. Here the consequences are different forms of syncretistic nativism, as I have described them in my first lecture, or even an open return to the old tribal religion. In the African state of Chad, even governmental forces are used to revive the old tribal initiation ceremony, and Christians who refuse to surrender are cruelly persecuted. Missionaries are expelled. This shows that the problem of accommodation does not pose itself in the former context of meeting an untouched traditional culture, but rather in a situation of a belligerent reaction which is anti-western and anti-Christian at the same time. And we have also to be aware that there are influential voices in the ecumenical movement which are prepared to go to any extent in meeting this colored quest for religio-cultural renaissance and self-assertion. The extreme consequence of such attitude was drawn by the WCC-sponsored Barbados Consultation of January 1971. In the interest of liberating Latin-American Indians, the Barbados Declaration demanded "the suspension of all missionary activity." And the first reason given for this startling request was that evangelization is of "essentially discriminatory nature, implicit in the hostile relationship to Indian culture conceived as pagan and heretical."

(4) But emancipation is not the final word in the present process of world history. At the same time from many quarters, we hear the cry for a new universal integration. Philosophers, politicians and religious leaders are discussing plans for a coming world community. The reason is either the naked quest for human survival or the utopic vision of a future paradise on earth. Therefore, the main interest today is not so much to preserve the integrity of the different cultural traditions. Instead one wants these cultures to pull together and make their contribution to one common culture of mankind. Therefore, even the communication process is not evaluated so much any more by the question: how does it relate to the traditional conceptual world? Rather the ideal is that the missionary communication should be sensitive to those forces at work in all cultures that lead to a convergence in such an integrated world community.

(5) But what in fact is the common denominator by which all religious and secular movements are linked together? More and more leaders today are intrigued by a secular humanism which is strongly influenced by Marxism. It seems to lend itself readily as an integrating ideology that can inspire the action programs needed in the quest for a future world society. All traditional religions and primal cultures are reinterpreted in conformity with such socialist humanism. The religious terminology, which is employed then by way of adaptation or possession, condones the basically secularist and atheistic assumptions on which this Marxist humanism is constructed. But what is happening is that autonomous man is assuming control over the process of world history in which no divine intervention is expected any more.

Dr. McGavran has spoken of some theologians who demand a radically new type of Christianity. This is, indeed, what is going on within the ecumenical movement today. All confessional traditions are openly or secretly reinterpreted in the light of Marxist humanism. The independent Ecumenical Institute of Chicago serves as an avant-garde in this process. It has created a number of outposts in the Third World. They provide crash courses for national church leaders and theologians to re-educate them for so-called church renewal. What is done is that both Christian and indigenous concepts are brought

together, emptied and refilled by a syncretistic ideology of socio-political change in the Marxist sense.

I hope that these observations and reflections are not taken as a deviation from the proper theme of our symposium. I strongly believe that we cannot really deal with the task of missionary "possessio" and the problem of "syncretism" without being aware of that large-scale process of syncretistic possessio which right now is going on in all parts of the world. In due time it is bound to reach even the remotest local church on the mission fields which we may have in mind in our present deliberations.

AIM AND DANGER: HOW DO WE VIEW THE TARGET AND THE PITFALLS IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS?

(1) *The Target*

Any process of communication implies two basic elements: (a) There is something essential which is to be communicated, the content of the message; (b) this message must be transmitted in such a way that it conveys meaning to the mind of the receiver.

If we see (a) and (b) together, then the target of missionary communication is a new church which expresses the essentials of the Christian faith in forms which are familiar and meaningful to its members. This we call indigenous Christianity, and on this we all agree. But I doubt whether our concepts of indigenous Christianity are really identical.

But in Christian missions there are and always have been two different emphases and schools. Dr. Tippett speaks of the apostolic-man and the religion-man as representing these two traditions. One could add that these two different approaches are not peculiar to missions. They are to be found in systematic theology as well. Some of the fiercest dogmatic battles have been fought on account of these two opposite approaches. The Barth-Brunner controversy of 1932 is one example.

I do not think that there is a proper representative of the religion-man approach in our midst. If we had one, it would have enlivened our symposium. We might have invited a representative of the "Christian Presence School" or of the ecumenical "Program of Dialogue with the Living Faiths and

Ideologies." Dr. Tippett rightly points out that these are old traditions reaching back to the age of the post-apostolic church.

Still, I wonder whether the present situation has changed the approach to non-Christian religions as well. The culture and religion of the non-Christian partner in dialog are not viewed so much as a given system of thought and social organization. Rather they are seen as a living movement, meeting with the movement which we represent ourselves. And in this encounter something new is born. It neither represents the former belief of our partner nor the belief which we have been witnessing about. It is something else which changes both of us.

It is in view of these new concepts that I have some questions for Dr. Hoekendijk. He defines as the goal of Christian mission the "obedience of faith" among the hearers of the message. This is St. Paul's well-known description of his apostolic ministry in Romans 1:5-6, which was also the central missiological concept of my teacher Walter Freytag. And he used to relate it to the regeneration of the conscience of the converts. Christ has become their supreme authority instead of their former heathen deities. Therefore, without external force they spontaneously change their way of life.

But here the questions begin: who gives enlightenment to the conscience so that the new Christians really are obedient to the will of Christ as their new Lord? To Paul the answer was quite clear. He not only invited his heathen listeners personally to surrender their lives to the living Lord Jesus. In the subsequent catechetical instruction he also revealed to them the whole counsel of God. He instructed them in the basic elements of the apostolic *paradosis*; he taught them how to order their congregational life, and he gave them in the oral and written way a clear ethical admonition. Only on this basis does the Pauline term "obedience of faith" become meaningful. The genitive "of faith" is both a subjective and an objective genitive: "believing obedience" and "obedience to the authentic faith." This includes the unchangeability of the essence of the apostolic message. And here I wonder whether Dr. Hoekendijk is quite in agreement with his fellow contributors. He does not appear particularly concerned about how the purity of the apostolic gospel is preserved. The idea of somebody believing he can administer *The* truth is rather ridiculed by his capitalizing

the definite article *The*. For him no human being, no missionary, is a guarantor of truthful communication. Instead he appeals to the work of the Holy Spirit. He does so because he is considering the great variety of different cultural and historic situations in which the obedience of faith must find its concrete expression. If this first of all means that a variety of cultures contribute to a variety of indigenous churches, I could agree. But I wonder whether Dr. Hoekendijk does consider the indigenous church to be the immediate goal of missionary communication. From the nonchalance with which he speaks of counting Christian noses, I gather that to him the ideal of church planting and church growth takes second place to the concern for responding in a Christian way to the challenge of the historical situation, as it was practised, e.g. by the East Javanese churches during the anti-communist riots in 1965-66.

But here again we have to ask: by what standard can it be decided what proper Christian obedience in a certain situation looks like? Dr. Hoekendijk seems inclined to consider that if headhunting is not possible, then at least corporate suicide may be a proper Christian decision. The *judicium fidei* is left to God alone. But was the apostolic church of New Testament times not quite certain as to the nature of the divine offer and of the requirements placed upon man for salvation? And are we not responsible to spell this out to present-day inquirers and believers as well?

Unlike Dr. Hoekendijk, the participants from Fuller Theological Seminary very sternly and emphatically state that there is an unchangeable core of the gospel which under all circumstances must be preserved in the act of communication and indigenization. It is merely the outward form of the gospel which may and should be recast to make the message meaningful to people of the different cultural backgrounds. On these principles I wholeheartedly agree with them. Yet even here there is room for arguing. Is it already decided what belongs to the eternal core and what to the transitory form of Christianity? By whom is it decided, and on what ground is it decided?

Dr. McGavran has challenged each of us to give a clear statement of what we regard to be the core of the Christian religion. And he has drawn up such a statement himself in his

first chapter. He states three basic elements: (a) belief in the Triune God; (b) belief in the Bible as infallible rule of faith and practice; (c) the central facts, commands and ordinances which are so clearly set forth in the Bible.

Now there are two things which I fail to understand. One is the difference between points (b) and (c). If I believe in the infallibility of the Bible, I automatically believe in the infallibility of its instructions. If this is the case, I do not understand, secondly, how there can be a degree of elasticity in regard to part (c). If it simply means that these ethical commandments and instructions about order are put in a way that make them applicable in a different way in different situations, I understand. For the Bible does not always give binding instructions as to how to practise its rules and commandments. But Dr. McGavran stretches the alleged elasticity of the biblical ordinances to such a degree that he even tolerates the total omission of the two great sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are so solidly based on a clear command of Jesus Christ. Paying high respect to the spirit of Christian love shown by the Friends, I simply cannot agree that their community fulfills the biblical standards of a true Christian church. Personally I hold that where the Bible sets forth clear standards of Christian faith, behavior and ecclesiastical order, they have to be regarded as the unchanging core of the Christian religion. Where, however, the Bible leaves a degree of openness as to how to give expression to a certain principle of ecclesiastical order or social behavior, a synthesis has to be found between the basic principle and the situational condition. And this situational synthesis is what we call *indigenization*. It has to be sought by our reason motivated by the Holy Spirit, guarded by the clear descriptions and prohibitions of the word of God and guided by the experience of the Christian church in former times and in other parts of the world.

Which are the realms where such indigenization is to be performed, and what is the material which can be used in this process? Dr. Tippett gives the widest indication and the most detailed description. I agree with him that the *vernacular language* must become the vessel of the word of God; that the *worship* must be conducted in forms which are spontaneous expressions

of the new faith; that *church buildings* should be erected with the help of indigenous arts and crafts, and that the new belief should be expounded in a way which gives *meaningful answers* to the basic needs of the people. By his plastic illustrations from the work of the London Missionary Society on the Fiji Islands, he has rescued our discussion from tumbling in vague generalities as so often is the case when this adaptation complex is discussed. I would agree with a good many of his conclusions. The question whether indigenous rhythm, dance and music can be adopted for Christian use must be answered discriminatingly. There must be a selection between the suitable and the unsuitable.

(2) *The Pitfalls*

Still it is exactly at this point that we ought to go into greater detail and to dig deeper. Is it enough to state: "Where Scripture is iconoclastic, it is the faith formulation and not cultural form that is under attack?" Is the faith formulation always using the way of verbal communication, where rhythm, music and gesture are only accompanying elements? Or are there non-verbal message and impulses which can make use of subliminal influences? We know that shamanism in all parts of the world uses certain techniques of falling into trance. It is in this trance that spiritual possession takes place. Taking drugs, getting emotionally upset by hard beating rhythm or listening to enchanting melodies are some common forms of it. Modern beat music originates from the ecstatic rituals of the African tribal religion. It has an enrapturing effect also on the souls of western youth. Is it legitimate if beat music is made the vehicle of Christian evangelism and edification if the words being underlaid are Christian and the result is enthusiastic rapture? Is this a genuine way of experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit, or could this adaptation possibly lead to demon possession with a Christian service? How do we explain that there are cases of former narcomaniacs who have fallen back into their addiction after they were evangelized by Jesus People with the aid of beat and rock music? Is there still something in certain cultural forms which predestines them to become vehicles of the spirits rather than of the Spirit?

I want to ask the same question with regard to the techniques of eastern meditation, Zazen, Yoga and Transcendental Meditation. I am quite certain about the latter. It is an adapted form of ancient Hinduistic Mantra Yoga, in which short spells are used to invoke the deity and to draw from its metaphysical force. The Mantras of Transcendental Meditation are all names of Hindu gods, and the result of practising Transcendental Meditation is occult oppression and the syncretistic deformation of the Christian faith. I am inclined to voice the same reservation also with regard to practicing the Asanas of Hata Yoga and the sittings of Zen Meditation. Both are ancient religious roads which, if practised according to instructions, automatically lead to the desired encounter with the transcendent reality, and this reality will not be different if the practitioner happens to be a Christian.

I have pointed out a few possible pitfalls in the process of faith transformation. My colleagues have mentioned other risks. Dr. Tippett has described the possibility that whole clusters of animistic concepts and practices may survive side by side with the professed Christian creed, because it has not been related to the elementary needs of the primal culture. This harmonizes largely with my analysis of the reason for the emergence of nativistic movements in Africa.

I am especially grateful that both Dr. McGavran and Dr. Tippett have pointed out one pitfall which has become specially significant today again. It is that traditional Christian terms are used, but secretly filled with a completely different meaning. Dr. McGavran refers to it by the name of "morphological fundamentalism," and Dr. Tippett draws a most illuminating parallel to the anti-gnostic struggle of Irenaeus. What has happened here is the very reverse of missionary translation. Instead of conquering the concepts of the non-Christian culture and filling them with a new biblical significance, the biblical concepts are captured and filled with a non-biblical meaning. It is not so much due to an error in Christian communication as to a deliberate assault on Christianity by an anti-Christian force.

This leads me to my final reflection in response to my colleagues.

AGENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES: WHO ARE THE AGENTS AND WHAT PART DO THEY PLAY IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS?

The guiding question posed to the participants of this symposium was: "As Christianity spreads into the myriad cultures of the earth, it must correctly adjust to each culture, but what are the limits to such adjustment?"

The question states that *Christianity* spreads and that it adjusts. But now we have to ask further: who exactly is the agent in spreading, and who does the adjustment? As I have studied the papers of my colleagues, I found that they answered this question differently. Dr. McGavran, on the one hand, made his position clear from the outset that he wants to treat our topic as a missiological theme and that, for him, the primal interest lies with the foreign missionary and his role. He is the one commissioned to communicate the gospel to receptive populations across the borders of cultures. And he is responsible to see that this communication is done in such a way that the integrity of the essential core of the gospel is preserved. He has to adjust it to the recipients' cultural conditions as far as this is needed and permissible. McGavran also reckons with the fact that the indigenous church later makes further adjustments as far as historic challenges and changes demand them, but most of the adjustments have to be made in the second phase of mission history, where the great mass movements occur, a phase which is described by Dr. McGavran as the really formative period. Still, many of the adjustments which Dr. McGavran describes in his first chapter are those which were made by the established churches in much later times.

I'm afraid that to Dr. Hoekendijk this conception falls under the verdict of a missio-centric view, of which he accuses both Walter Holsten and Werner Gensichen in his first chapter. Dr. Hoekendijk emphatically states that there are no *prima donnas* in the *Opera Dei* of mission. And in his historic description of the spreading of Christianity in Indonesia, he has not many commendatory remarks about the role of the foreign missionaries. Insofar as they dominated in the earlier periods, they made almost every possible mistake of commission and

omission. And when Christianity started really to spread spontaneously in recent dramatic movements, there was no noticeable role for foreign missionaries. I believe that it is possible seriously to challenge Dr. Hoekendijk on this description. I am sure that it is not only the study of the historical facts, but also his preconceived theological understanding of the *Missio Dei* which has inspired his presentation. There have, indeed, been remarkable figures of foreign missionaries in the history of Christian mission in the Dutch East Indies. They exercised a determinative influence when adjustments in view of the emerging indigenous Christianity were made. I am thinking of the famous work of the Dutch missionaries Dr. N. Adriani and Dr. A.C. Kruyt among the Toradja people on the Minahassa peninsula on Sulawesi. There was also Ludwig Ingwer Nommensen, the "apostle of the Batak people" of the Rhenish Mission and his famous adjustment to the unwritten traditional code of *adat*. I would finally mention Dr. Hendrik Kraemer with his historic contribution to the indigenization of the churches on Java. I quite agree that the missionaries have neither made nor written the whole story of missions in Indonesia. Especially during the last nine years of the widely acclaimed revival and mass movement on East Java, Timor and North Sumatra, there is such a close interaction of different factors that it is impossible to disentangle them for an objective description of the real events.

Dr. Hoekendijk refers to this by the term *Missio Dei*, and he expressly states that the Holy Spirit is the *true factor in the story*. But this is not to be understood in such a way that we could observe clear evidences of the divine *ordo salutis*, i.e. vocation, illumination, regeneration and sanctification, or remarkable demonstrations of spiritual gifts — as they have been reported rather sensationally from the revival on Timor. According to Dr. Hoekendijk, the work of the Holy Spirit cannot really be identified. It can only be believed as the decisive factor within the rather bewildering interaction of psychological, political, social, religious and other forces playing their parts in world history. Therefore, he comes to the conclusion that the missiologist must be satisfied with "humble agnosticism" about what really is taking place.

Dr. McGavran and Dr. Hoekendijk represent opposite positions in their respective views of the communication and adaptation process. The former believes that the spreading of Christianity is based on a clear personal commission by the divine Lord, and that it is conditioned by laws and factors which can be studied and controlled scientifically. He has established the Institute of Church Growth where this is practised to a remarkable extent. Dr. Hoekendijk, on the other hand, has his sharp reservations about such a view. I guess he considers it as a pragmatic and antropocentric interference into the sovereign initiative of God. He stresses the divine factor to such a degree that very little is left to human responsibility and almost nothing to the control of the foreign missionary. His final advice is: "Let God happen."

Now this apparent opposition reminds us that we must, indeed, become aware that there is an interaction between human and divine factors in the process of Christian communication. This interaction is very clearly stated in the Great Commission: "Behold, I am with you," and it is described in the first history of missions in Luke's Book of Acts. The church called it the *Acts of the Apostles*, but according to Luke's true intention it should rather have been called "The Acts of the Lord through the Apostles." Roland Allen and Harry R. Boer have described how any decisive event in the history recounted in this work was initiated by the Holy Spirit which almost visibly guided the apostolic messengers and opened or closed the doors for them. But this means that to the New Testament authors the work of the Holy Spirit in mission is not done anonymously and beyond human perception. The Holy Spirit gives clear directions to the messengers; he works miracles which cause the Christians to praise the Lord, he sets the pattern of genuine missionary procedures, which later are followed faithfully by ecclesiastical missionaries who do not experience his interference in such an ostentatious way anymore.

I believe that the interaction between the efficient work of the Holy Spirit and the responsible obedience of the Christian witness — whether he is a foreign missionary or a national believer — is the true clue to the solution of the communication problem. It is false to believe that God pursues his redemptive

mission in history independently of the ministry of his church. But it is also wrong to believe that God has entrusted the whole cause into our hands so that it is solely dependent on our missiological skill whether there is true communication and indigenization in church growth or not. I do not say that my colleagues represent these extreme positions, but I see certain tendencies tempting them into these opposite directions.

Yet in order to get a proper theological perception of the communication process, it does not suffice to point to these two agents: The Holy Spirit and the missionary. We have to go further in our analysis of contributing factors, and the participants in this symposium are aware of this.

On the *human* side we have to study the distinct parts played by the cooperation between the foreign missionary and the local church moving towards better adjustment to its cultural background. Dr. Tippett has given a good example of a convincing adaptation which was made by a conscious policy of British missionaries in Fiji. He also reported on an indigenization which came about almost automatically by the development of a young church in Guatemala. I believe that the approach to the adjustment problem is different insofar as it normally comes about spontaneously on the side of the local church, whereas it is done deliberately from the side of the foreign mission. Becoming indigenous is simply a sign of the vitality of vigorous young Christians who express their faith in the form most natural to themselves. But the foreign missionary has to approach the problem by way of reflection and discernment. He acts as a professional messenger whose duty it is to translate the faith entrusted to him. He is responsible to see that it remains identical and still becomes intelligible to the people to whom he is sent. The office of the missionary is also to act as a representative of the church universal. Therefore, he sees to it that the indigenous church develops doctrinally in accordance with the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Still, he is not to decide alone whether the process of translation and adaptation has been successful. He is dependent on the testimony of the national converts to know whether a new indigenous expression of Christian faith and ethics is in

harmony with their exclusive loyalty to Jesus Christ and, at the same time, natural to their cultural feelings.

Still, the main agent of communication is neither the missionary nor the local church. That the Christian message is really understood and accepted cannot be secured by any perfection of missionary translation and accommodation. It is the work of God himself. It is he who by his mysterious grace opens the door both to entire social groups and to the individual heart. The central role of the Holy Spirit is strongly emphasized by Dr. Hoekendijk, and I agree with him in principle. In my travels around the world I have found that I could communicate instantly with Christians of most different cultural backgrounds and social standards. The reason was that there existed a divine bond of fellowship, of common relation and experience which transcended our conceptual frameworks as conditioned by our cultures.

But in our present ecumenical theology, the concept of the Holy Spirit working in cross-cultural communication has developed in an ambiguous way which gives cause for serious theological concern. There is the new strange notion that the Holy Spirit or Christ is at work saving, not only through the ministry of the church in the means of grace, but also in the systems of religious thought and in the ideological movements of our time. The work of the Holy Spirit within and through the church is even belittled in the name of his alleged work "*extra muros ecclesiae*." Dr. McGavran rightly has expressed concern about the idea of the indwelling Christ, who independently of his word acts as our "inner light", or through our experiences and encounters with other people. I would call this modern ecumenical pneumatology a kind of secularized and syncretized pentecostalism. For in pentecostalism, too, the emphasis is on the work of the Holy Spirit through immediate inner experience and direct revelation apart from the written word of God. Conservative pentecostalism, however, limits the work of the Spirit to the realm of the Christian fellowship and, at least, claims conformity of its experiences with the biblical standard. Ecumenical spiritualism has universalized the working of the Spirit. Here Christ or the Holy Spirit is held to be equally present

within the process of universal history, within our non-Christian partners in dialog and within us Christians. Therefore, Dr. Samartha challenges us in dialog to become sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit within the other religions and the secular ideologies. Another representative of modern ecumenism, Dr. W. Hollenweger, demands of the Christian missionary in dialog to venture his whole existence and even his faith in order to be open for the rediscovery of the nature of the gospel and the person of Christ. He seriously considers the possibility that such an experience might lead us to discard the doctrines of the Trinity of God and of the two natures of Christ. Accordingly, the Christological ideal of Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, is held to be a hopeful expression of indigenous theology in India, which unfortunately was quenched by the insensitivity of the conservative Anglican missionaries in the beginning of the last century. I wonder whether Dr. Hoekendijk has something similar in mind when he states: "It is safe to assume that what has been documented as curious deviation, syncretism, Christopaganism or even heresy might very well have been the undetected beginnings of an indigenous theology." How, in any case, does Dr. Hoekendijk make out whether it is God who is at work in a specific current movement within or towards Christianity?

To me this question becomes all the more disquieting as I have come to the impression that the whole ecumenical concept of history is a monistic one. No distinguishing line is drawn between world history and church history any more, because the same divine force is seen at work in both. All particular processes in the world are regarded as convergent. By the divine movement efficient in all religions, ideologies and political groups, they are bound to meet at the point Omega (Teilhard de Chardin), or the coming universal brotherhood of all men, or the classless society.

In sharp opposition to such a view, I want to draw the attention of this symposium to the fact that besides God there is still another metaphysical force at work in the processes of history. It is the Prince of this World, who also wants to play his part in the communication process in order to change it into his own game. In my second chapter, I showed that St. John

attributed the syncretistic teachings of the gnostic heretics to the work of the devil, which made them forerunners of Antichrist. I was greatly encouraged to find in Dr. Tippett's second chapter that this notion was preserved in the post-apostolic church, and that it was expressed again in the anti-gnostic struggle of Irenaeus. In fact, it could be shown that all later heresies occurring in the history of the church were explained in the same way by the defenders of the faith.

This shows, that while we definitely have to stress the work of the Holy Spirit as the decisive factor in missionary communication, we cannot be satisfied with leaving everything to him and relaxing confidently in an attitude of "humble agnosticism." The initiating part played by the Holy Spirit calls for a close interaction between the divine and the human factor. And it is the specific responsibility of the missiologist to use his theological and anthropological discrimination to assist so that this interaction is not disturbed but is carried out in obedience to the revealed will of God.