

MISSION AND BUSINESS – A PARAGUAYAN MENNONITE PERSPECTIVE

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My reflections on the experience of Mennonites in business and mission presented in this paper have grown out of many years of experience in Paraguay, and more recently out of my theological-ethical reflections on the church – business connection in the context of my doctoral studies. In the first part of this paper, I present a brief and general overview of Paraguay and the Mennonite mission and business activities in that country. I conclude this part with a fuller presentation of CODIPSA, one of the MEDA-related business projects. In the second part, I offer theological reflections on the relationship of business and mission, or on business and the church. The starting point of these reflections is John H. Yoder's ecclesiology and ethics as outlined in his book *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*.

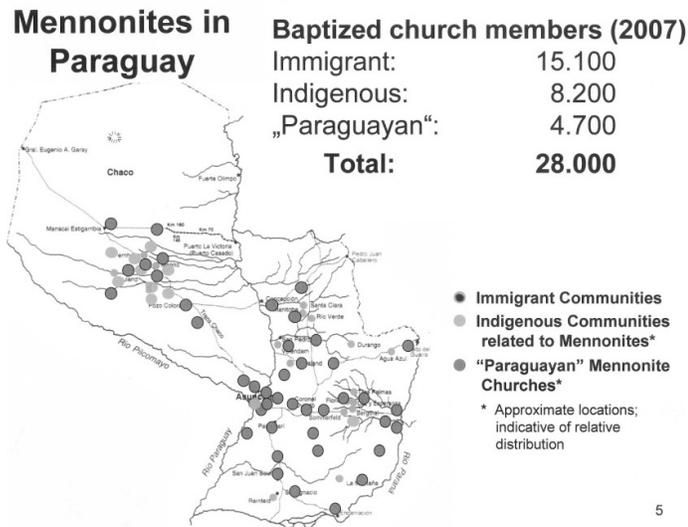
Two observations on definition of terms are in order: First, I use the term *business* as referring to an organizational entity designed to produce and/or sell goods and/or services, usually with the intent to generate profit. Secondly, the term *mission* or *Christian mission* refers to activities or programs designed to form viable churches or congregations, composed of women and men who have committed themselves to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. These activities are motivated by and based on the biblical imperative to make God known in this world and to make disciples of Christ of all nations. These mission activities are often closely related to or even closely intertwined with the promotion of economic development, literacy, education, health care and orphanages, believing that these causes advance the glory of God.

¹ This paper grows out of a presentation I made in the context of the Shenk Mission Lectureship, held at AMBS on Nov 30 – Dec 1, 2007. I am grateful to Walter Sawatsky, convener of that event, for suggesting the topic for this presentation and for making it possible for me to share this paper at AMBS. I would also like to thank Harry Huebner, Titus Guenther and Rudolf Duerksen for their constructively critical comments, and Valerie Smith for her assistance with matters of language and style.

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Mennonites in Paraguay

Paraguay is one of the smallest countries in Latin America, located next to the giants Brazil and Argentina. It is a landlocked country with an area of 406,000 km² and a population of just over 6 million. About 90 percent of the Paraguayan population is Catholic; about 6 percent belong to Protestant churches. Paraguay has about 60,000 aboriginal people. The gross domestic product per capita in Paraguay is ca. \$1,600. The main sources of income are farming, cattle raising (for beef), dairy production, small industry, tourism and various services. 42 percent of the people living in Paraguay, 2.5 million, live in poverty, about one half of them in what the United Nations calls “extreme poverty.” The economic inequity is growing.



Smallest dots indicate general location of Immigrant Communities, light dots refer to indigenous, dark dots refer to “Paraguayan” Mennonite congregations.

Paraguay started to become home for Mennonites in the late 1920s as they settled in the central Chaco region. This was a very isolated and sparsely populated area, which is located at a distance of about 500 km from the capital city, Asunción. At that time of Mennonite settlement, there was virtually no infrastructure such as institutions for social services, communication or roads. Therefore, the Mennonites had to develop their own schools, social services, such as hospitals and health insurance, and the infrastructure for production, including

roads. From the beginning of Mennonite settlement, there was a strong emphasis on economic development. Cooperatives were introduced very early and they have contributed significantly to the economic survival and even prosperity of the Mennonite communities.

Mennonites took great care to develop and nurture the church, first their own congregations of the immigrant settlers, very soon however also the churches resulting from of their mission efforts. Over time, the “Mennonite family” in Paraguay came to include several mayor ethnic groups, which are markedly different from each other. First, the Mennonites of immigrant background, over time, spread their settlements all over the country. Most of these Mennonites continue to live in communities where they maintain their churches, their community administration, their private institutions of education, social services and welfare, and where the ethnic separation from other groups remains quite strong.

Secondly, during the 1930s, Mennonites started the mission outreach and settlement programs among the aboriginal people in the Chaco. The indigenous population in the area of the central Chaco grew from approximately 500 in the late 1920s to approximately 30,000 in 2006. Approximately 8,000 of them are baptized members of one of various Mennonite indigenous congregations in the area. Thirdly, the Mennonite mission outreach in the rest of Paraguay has resulted in a growing number of churches, totaling approximately 4,700 baptized members of “Latin - Paraguayan” background. In summary, there are about 28,000 Mennonite church members in Paraguay. *Figure 1*² shows the total number of Mennonites in Paraguay and their ethnic composition (as it refers to main ethnic groupings)

| | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Indigenous people | 8,200 |
| German – Paraguayans | 15,100 |
| Latin – Paraguayans | 4,700 |
| Total | 28,000 |

Figure 1: Number of Mennonites in Paraguay (baptized members of churches)

² Information provided by Dietrich Franz, president of the *Gemeindekomitee*, the association of churches of immigrant Mennonites in Paraguay (E-Mail, 25/11/2007).

Mennonites, Mission and Business in Paraguay

Mennonite mission in Paraguay began in the 1930s among the aboriginal or indigenous people in the central Chaco, where it was characterized by a holistic approach that attended to their spiritual as well as to their social, educational, economic and health needs. Over time, groups of aboriginal people migrated into this area. Today, the central Chaco is home for almost 27,000 aboriginal people of nine different ethnic groups, next to 16,000 Mennonites of immigrant background, and a smaller number of people of various backgrounds. [Figure 2](#) shows the composition of population groups in the central Chaco. It illustrates the challenge of a number of distinctly different groups of people learning to live together in an area that geographically still remains quite isolated from the rest of the country.

| | | |
|---|---------------|-----|
| Indigenous-Paraguayans | 26,800 | 52% |
| German-Paraguayans (immigrant background) | 16,500 | 32% |
| Latin-Paraguayans | 5,700 | 11% |
| Others (Braziguayans, Argentines) | 2,500 | 5% |
| Total | 51,500 | |

Figure 2: Population in the central Chaco in Paraguay (These numbers represent the entire communities, not only baptized members of churches.) Source: ASCIM³

The mission outreach of Mennonites among “Latin Paraguayans” aimed at people throughout Paraguay, including the eastern part of the country. It was characterized by its emphasis on conversion, church planting, education and moral living. Less attention was given to issues of economics. The economic factor was present mainly in the form of gifts to new converts and churches. It was not until the 1980s that attention to long-term economic issues increased in this Mennonite mission work in Paraguay. Over time, the relationship between business and Christian mission in Paraguay can be appreciated from three different angles, represented by the following three types of activities:

³ASCIM (July 02, 2007) *The Indians*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.ascim.org/english/index.php?The%26nbsp%3BIndians> [Accessed 26/11/2007].

1. *Church-based programs cooperating with business*: I present here three examples of these kinds of institutions for the sake of illustration. First, a *prison ministry* at the national penitentiary in Asunción developed close connections with business organizations. Business money was funding this ministry, and the businesses were prepared to integrate ex-inmates into their workforce after the inmates were released from prison. A second example is a group of Mennonite business leaders who, in cooperation with two Mennonite churches in Asunción, developed a *business chaplaincy* program. Started in the early 1990s, this program now employs 13 full-time business chaplains in addition to seven pastors working part time with this organization. They serve 35 companies with about 3,200 employees. Starting in 2007, the business chaplaincy program, in cooperation with the Department of Theology of the local Christian University (Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay), developed a one-year training program for chaplains.⁴

A third example is a *mentoring and training program* developed by the conference of Paraguayan Mennonites (CONEMPAR), one of the two major Mennonite conferences of Latin-Paraguayan background, in cooperation with business organizations and with individual businesspeople. It started when conference leaders and pastors observed the mentoring and training programs in these businesses and wondered how such a program could be carried out with the pastors, many of whom had very little training for their pastoral responsibilities. A team of business people and church leaders developed a program of training and mentoring for pastors, focusing on character formation, leadership development, theological studies and pastoral competencies, including administrative skills. The business people contribute to this program through finances, organizational oversight and occasional input at the training sessions. Alongside this mentoring program, they created several economic development activities related closely to the churches.⁵

2. *Mennonite Businesses with Christian mission in mind*: A number of Mennonite businesses in Paraguay have developed what I call a “business with Christian mission in mind.” The following four examples serve to illustrate this. First,

⁴Information provided by Hugo Berthold Friesen, executive secretary of the business chaplaincy program (E-Mail, 10/12/2007).

⁵Information provided by Alvin Neufeld, president of CONEMPAR (E-Mail, 27/11/2007)

Lacteos Trebol, of the Menno Colony cooperative is the major producer of dairy products in Paraguay. In 1991, *Lacteos Trebol* started to collect milk from farmers outside the Mennonite communities.⁶ This was a way to provide a regular income for these dairy farmers. Moreover, it proved to be an effective way of reducing crime (e.g. theft) in and around those communities. This policy of *Lacteos Trebol* thus contributed to the ordering of community and to the well-being (*shalom*) of the society by way of economic activity.

Second, *DDA S.A.* is a company owned and operated by a Mennonite businessperson in the area of the Friesland Colony. One of the important purposes of this company consists of assisting small farmers in their daily work, including consulting, providing loans and marketing of their products. This company, like several others with a similar business philosophy, has contributed significantly to economic progress and social stability in the area. These business people see this as a contribution to the kingdom of God.

Third, a Mennonite entrepreneur in Asunción founded *INVERFIN* in 1996 as a company that imports, produces and sells motorcycles, home appliances and furniture. Currently, the company has 36 branches and 420 employees, and is present in towns and cities throughout the eastern part of Paraguay. The company avoided establishing distribution centers in the capital city, partly in order to counteract the population migration from rural to urban centers. This company is thus investing in towns across the country, away from the capital city, and its policy is to reinvest a large portion of the corporate profits in the countryside where the profits have originated. This company is supporting rural development, church ministries, and health services.

Fourth, a group of business people in the Neuland Colony founded *SIA ALEMANA*. One of their primary objectives was to create jobs, with a particular focus on aboriginal people, thus contributing to the welfare of the aboriginal communities in the central Chaco, which are often plagued by unemployment. Moreover, this company sets an example of nurturing a multicultural workforce, composed of 52 aboriginal employees, 23 Latin Paraguayans, and 6 Germans.⁷

⁶ Information provided by Jacob Goertzen, Mennonite entrepreneur in Paraguay, formerly working with the distribution of *Lacteos Trebol* dairy products (E-Mail, 10/12/2007).

⁷ Information provided by Willy Franz, one of the owners of *SIA* (E-Mail, 11/12/2007).

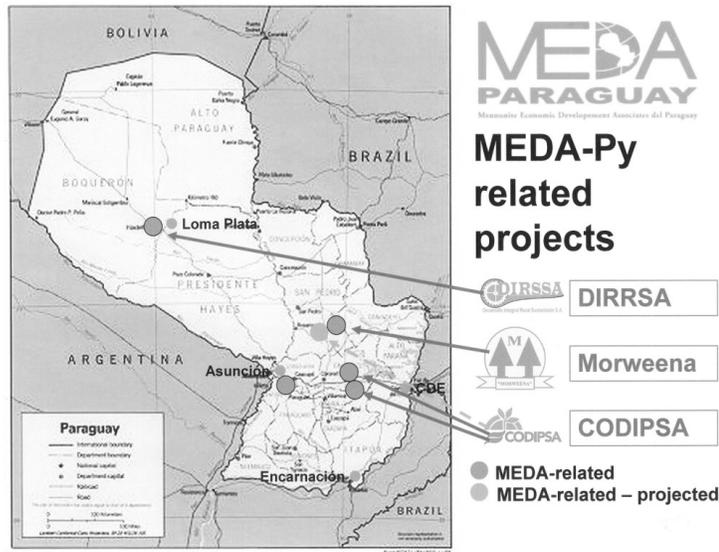
3. *Development with a holistic approach:* The biblical mandate to “seek the welfare (*shalom*) of the city” (Jeremiah 29) has given rise to the development of programs that have come to be known as *Cooperación Vecinal* (neighborhood cooperation). Mennonite leaders and professionals are teaming up with “Paraguayan” small entrepreneurs, such as farmers and cattle ranchers, to assist them in the development of their farms, businesses and of their communities. The following six projects are among the best known and developed: *COVECHACO* (near Fernheim), *Campo Aceval* and *Campo Grande* (near Menno), *Cuatro Vientos* (near Volendam), *COVESAP*⁸ (near Friesland), and *COVEPIRIZAL* (near Neuland). These programs of economic and community development organized by Mennonites are often supported by Mennonite community cooperatives and churches. They are designed to help people become self-sufficient in all areas of their life, and in the context of their community.

MEDA - Paraguay

An important event for the promotion of the mission - business connection in Paraguay was the founding of MEDA-Paraguay, an institution based on the model of MEDA North America. The story of MEDA North America⁹ (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) began in Paraguay in 1953 with several business projects among the immigrant Mennonites and then among the communities of the aboriginal people. It might have been in honor of those Mennonite pioneers involved in the MEDA projects in Paraguay that MEDA-Paraguay was founded in 1996, developed in fraternal relationship with MEDA North America. In terms of business initiatives, MEDA-Paraguay has so far initiated and put into operation two production plants for manioc starch (CODIPSA), a coal production plant with aboriginal people in the Chaco (DIRRSA), and a cooperative with immigrant Mennonites in the San Pedro area (MORVEENA).

⁸ For further information on COVESAP, see <http://www.covesap.org>.

⁹ For further information on MEDA North America, see <http://www.meda.org>.



CODIPSA¹⁰ is a company for producing starch from manioc. CODIPSA is a for-profit corporation, organized and initiated by MEDA-Py. The two production plants already in operation are located in the area of Caaguazú, East Paraguay, a region known historically to be economically weak and a seedbed for social and political unrest. The third plant, which is scheduled to be built in 2008 – 2009, is located in San Pedro, another one of the poorest regions of East Paraguay, heavily populated and known for its political and social unrest.

The *intentions* behind establishing the CODIPSA starch production plants were to reduce poverty and to “seek the welfare (*shalom*) of the city.” The biblical text of Jeremiah 29 was referred to repeatedly in the MEDA-Py meetings when CODIPSA was being planned. The two production plants are located near immigrant Mennonite communities, the first one put into operation in 1999 and the second one in 2006.

The *results* of the CODIPSA project can be observed in four areas. First, there are the results measured in economic terms. After CODIPSA started in 1999, 170 Paraguayan families were benefiting from CODIPSA. They were small farmers, producing manioc, the raw material for the starch production. By

¹⁰ CODIPSA stands for *Compañía de Desarrollo y de Industrialización de Productos Primarios Sociedad Anónima* (company for the development and industrialization of primary products). Egon Rempel, project coordinator of MEDA-Py, provided the information about CODIPSA. For further information on MEDA-Py see <http://www.meda.py-online.com>.

November of 2007, this number had grown to 1,600 families that now have regular income, because they are able to sell their products at a fair price to CODIPSA. The hope is that after completing the third plant, an additional 1,500 families will have a regular income from this source. These are rural families, working their small farms of 1-3 hectares of land.

Secondly, a result of the CODIPSA project is what could be called community-building through the development of networks among the farmers. They are all organized in "committees," which serve to facilitate the numerous tasks related to production such as consultation and training related to farming methods, and administration of loans. As a result, social unrest is reduced, and community networks are strengthened. Thirdly, CODIPSA has provided substantial financial contributions for the construction of schools and hospitals in the area. Fourthly, CODIPSA, as a for-profit corporation, has been able to pay modest dividends to its shareholders who are mostly local German Mennonite investors.

The *challenges* CODIPSA is facing in the future are significant, but not discouraging: stabilizing production and especially the work habits of the farmers, securing international markets, strengthening community building, developing conflict management skills and practices within the communities, and strengthening the relationships with the churches.

Theological Reflections: Mission and Business

How are business projects part of the mission of the church? What is the function of the church in relation to business or business people? How do Christian missions and business together contribute to *shalom*, to the welfare of the city? These and similar questions have grown out of my experiences with CODIPSA (MEDA) and other business related activities. I will address these questions relating them to ecclesiological consideration.

1. *Ecclesiology*: As I was reflecting on these questions, I was relating them to John Howard Yoder's ecclesiology. Yoder places a special emphasis on Christology (Christ's life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension) for defining the nature of the church. The church is inseparably related to Christ, and at the same time, the church is inseparably related to ethics. Indeed, as Yoder claims, ecclesiology

is social ethics.¹¹ How does this claim relate to business? In my search for answers, I will explore what Yoder calls the *practices of the Christian community*.

In *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*¹² Yoder presents a succinct yet comprehensive treatment of the five practices, presented here in a brief summary: 1) 'Rule of Christ' (fraternal admonition, 'binding and loosing'): Jesus describes the process of restoring dialogue with the purpose of bringing about reconciliation on occasions of conflict (Mat 18:15-20). 2) 'Lord's Supper' (breaking bread): Yoder presents the Lords Supper ('breaking of bread', Acts 2:42) as the common meal of the early Christians, believers sharing with one another their ordinary day-to-day food. Bread eaten together is economic sharing, not merely symbolically, but in fact. It extends to a wider circle the economic solidarity that normally was obtained in the family. The Eucharist thus becomes an act of economic ethics. 3) 'Baptism' (induction into the new humanity): Through baptism persons are accepted or introduced publicly into a new people, and one of the distinguishing marks of this new people is that all prior given or chosen definitions of identity are transcended. There is equality of status, which is acted out by baptism. Social differences are relativized (not erased), and their discriminatory impact is rejected. 4) 'Fullness of Christ' (the universality of charisma): Paul uses the term 'the fullness of Christ' (Eph 4:13) to describe a new mode of group relationships in which every member of a body has a distinctly identifiable, divinely validated, and empowered role. 5) 'Rule of Paul' (participatory process of decision-making): In the context of the vision of body process, Paul instructs the Corinthians about how to hold a meeting in the power of the Spirit (Acts 15; 1 Cor 14), where everyone who has something to say can have the floor. There is decision-making by open dialogue and consensus.

That is, according to Yoder, the nature and dynamic of the church. Jesus calls men and women to become part of a community characterized by these five character traits: a community that is forgiving and reconciling, giving and

¹¹ John H. Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 102ff.

¹² John H. Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001). See also John H. Yoder, "Sacrament as a Social Process: Christ the Transformer of Culture," *Theology Today* 48: 1 (Apr 1991), 33-44. (Reprinted in John H. Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press, 1998), 359-373.

blessing, covenanting and including, empowering, and communicating. To live these character traits is what it really means to be human.

2. *The church as paradigm*: With Yoder, I take this a step further in claiming that these practices, while describing what the church is, are also meant to be normative for the rest of society. The church with its practices thus becomes a paradigm for people in their behavior in everyday life, even beyond the church. In Yoder's words,

The believing body is the image that the new world – which in the light of the ascension and Pentecost is on the way – casts ahead of itself. The believing body of Christ is the world on the way to its renewal; the church is the part of the world that confesses the renewal to which all the world is called. The believing body is the instrument of that renewal of the world, to the (very modest) extent to which its message is faithful. It may be 'instrument' as proclaimer, or as pilot project, or as pedestal.¹³

This high calling of the church compels me to explore *how* the church can be a paradigm for business - for a business like CODIPSA, for business with the aboriginal people, and for other businesses which I previously listed. Let me spell out some possible implications: 1) '*Rule of Christ*': Forgiveness and conflict resolution based on open direct dialogue with the offender will have priority over common business practices which tend to use less peaceful ways to solve problems of labor/management relations, policies of dismissal, or practices of cashing in debts. Reconciliation and restoration of the offender will be more important than maximizing profits. 2) '*Eucharist*': A spirit of hospitality, solidarity and a willingness to sacrifice personal advantages for the sake of others will permeate the company culture. Economic sharing, care for each other and policies of social security will not only be practiced with members of the company and their families, but also toward those outside who are in need. This will create opportunities to celebrate economic solidarity, which is one way of 'breaking bread together'. 3) '*Baptism*': The business company will be functioning as a body (corporation) that values its members regardless of their gender, ethnic or religious background, or social status. People will be treated inclusively in a manner that dignifies each of them, overcoming barriers present in the larger society. 4) '*Fullness of Christ*': Each member of the firm will be expected to

¹³ Yoder, *Body Politics*, 78.

participate in a unique way to the mission of the organization. Each person will be seen as one who has something distinctive to contribute. The company will recognize the multiplicity of gifts and seeks to empower every one, especially the weaker ones, thus signaling alternatives to hierarchy in social process. 5) *'Rule of Paul'*: The decision-making processes of the firm will be opened up to allow all to participate. This will challenge and enrich commonplace practices in business. Owners and managers will need to train themselves in the skills of attentive listening, which will be a sign of their honoring the dignity of everyone in the company.

I have been tempted to develop a business ethic for businesspeople based on these practices. I realized, however, that above all we need an ethic for the church. That will mean above all to let the church be the church. That is, let the congregation or church be that group of people which practices and celebrates the binding, loosing and reconciling, which is known for its spirit of solidarity, hospitality and sacrifice, which celebrates the overcoming of barriers in the process of creating of a new humanity, and which realizes the universality of charisma and a participatory decision-making process. Members of a church that strives to live out these practices will develop the character and the skills, which enable them to transfer these same practices to the areas of their everyday life. There will then be no other ethic.

3. *Church – world tension*: Christian mission and business are not the same. Business will never be the church, yet the church will never be without business either. There will always be a tension. Harry Huebner speaks of this tension when he says that, for the sake of the healing of the nations, the church will engage in four tasks: 1) modeling, 2) demythologizing the powers, such as the powers in business, 3) ad hoc partnering with various institutions, such as banks, and 4) repenting and re-reading the story. Followers of Christ live in this tension of not being of the world but being in the world. As Huebner puts it, there are different rationalities, different ethics, different ontologies, yet Christians are called to be there in this world as a redeeming and hence “strange making posture.”¹⁴

¹⁴Harry Huebner, *Echoes of the Word: Theological Ethics as Rhetorical Practice* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2005), 101-106.

In view of this strangeness, there are threats that the church faces when there is a close connection with business. 1) The power of the business paradigm with its emphasis on efficiency sometimes enters powerfully into the church, so that a growth mentality becomes predominant and obsession with growth and numbers seems pervasive. "Grow or die." they say in business. As a church, we affirm numerical growth, but measurable results are not important in the same way as they are in business. "The client is king." they say in business, whereas in the church we would reserve this title for Christ alone. 2) The gospel of prosperity easily creeps into the churches, and economic optimism overshadows the faith characterized more by suffering and sacrifice than by economic prosperity. 3) Finances are diverted away from the church to more personally attractive development projects. As a result, the local congregation could suffer. 4. *Learning for church and business*: As members of the church, the body of Christ, we must learn in a new way that 1) Christ is Lord. 2) The church is the primary agent of God in history, yet that at the same time, 3) God works not only through the church but also through other agencies. 4) Strategic planning and management focused on objectives is important, yet it is perhaps not important in the same way business people sometimes want to make us believe. 5) The transformation of society and culture is God's doing and not the church's. As Mark Galli, senior editor of *Christianity Today Magazine*, puts it, "Christians are certainly responsible for going to the ends of the earth and making disciples from people of every nation. There is plenty in Scripture about doing justice and loving mercy and feeding the hungry and caring for the widow and orphan. But I find little or nothing about us having the task of transforming the culture."¹⁵ Nevertheless, if the transformation of society should come about as a result of the faithful witness of Christians, then followers of Christ will certainly celebrate it as an act of God. 6) Faithfulness is no guarantee for economic prosperity, and economic profit or prosperity does not equate to God's blessing.

Business people also have lessons to learn. 1) Christ is Lord, even over the powers of business. 2) The church is the primary agent of God in history. 3) Personal failures within the company can be dealt with redemptively. 4)

¹⁵ Mark Galli (August 8, 2007) "On Not Transforming the World", *Christianity Today Magazine* (web edition). [online]. Available from: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/augustweb-only/132-42.0.html>. [Accessed 14/08/2007].

Entrepreneurs are stewards, not owners. 5) Success is more than economic profit. 6) Employees are persons with dignity; they are more than production units. 7) Faithfulness must not be made subservient to profitability. Business people who learn these lessons are preparing to be in business long-term, for that is how God intends humanity to live. How can business learn from the church? This question certainly merits more extensive treatment than I can give it here. Perhaps Yoder's middle axioms¹⁶ or Lindbeck's second order language could be good starting points for exploring how *agape* can be the norm even in business.

Concluding Reflections

I close this presentation with three questions and observations for further reflection. They could help us to explore in more detail the interaction and creative tension between the mission of the church and business.

1. *Economic progress – desirable or counterproductive?* On the one hand, economic progress seems to be desirable as a support for Christian mission or even an integral part of it, yet on the other hand, it often seems to be counterproductive, that is, to become wealthier often seems to contribute to building roadblocks for faithful living as follower of Christ.

2. *Cultural and economic differences – hindrance or help for mission?* Mennonites in Paraguay know what it means to live with cultural and economic differences or disparities between different groups of Christians. For instance, the average income of Mennonites of immigrant background in Paraguay is at least ten times that of the national average. Distinctions between different ethnic groups of the "Mennonite family" in Paraguay are quite apparent, and most members of these groups would not seek ethnic integration (e.g. intermarriage). Sometimes, these disparities are perceived as a hindrance, at other times they seem to be more like an advantage for Christian mission. At first sight, this last statement might seem to be a heretical observation. On some occasions, however, people of lower income have communicated to their wealthier brothers and sisters, "Don't become poor like us, because we need somebody to look up to." Does such an observation have a theological basis, or is it simply a piously framed form of justifying one's higher standard of living or one's cultural idiosyncrasies?

¹⁶ John H. Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1977), 72-73.

3. *Business people – key figures in helping the church to be the church?* On the one hand, Christian businesspeople and entrepreneurs as members of the church and with their special gifts and skills, such as creativity, optimism and management, intimate connectedness with society, they could contribute greatly to enhance the dynamics of the ministries of the church. At the same time, their way of seeing and doing things often reflects the paradigms of the profit-driven business world. Hence, their sisters and brothers perceive them as overpowering or even intimidating. As a result, they sometimes manipulate the decision-making processes in the church in ways that do not seem Christ-like. In the midst of this tension, how can businesspeople and entrepreneurs become key figures in helping the church to be the church, helping the congregation, to which they belong, to become the body of Christ in ever more faithful ways?

I share these reflections so that they might stimulate further dialogue on the topic of mission and business. I myself expect to continue ponder these issues.