

THE SHAPE OF GLOBAL ANABAPTIST MISSIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: *The Whole Gospel to the Whole Broken World by the Broken Whole Church*

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The Confluences in Church and World

A moment at the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in India in January 1997 captured the present diversity of the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement within the pluralistic nature of the world. Here were about 4,500 Mennonites from about fifty countries meeting in Calcutta, one of the world's great cities. We were sheltered by a huge "shamiana" on the grounds of the St. Thomas school, an institution of the Church of India (Anglican). The speaker was the leader of a North American Mennonite mission agency, South African born Stanley Green. He was quoting Mahatma Gandhi, the non-violent Hindu liberator of India from the time of his struggle for civil rights for all races in South Africa. At this very moment in the speech, the call to prayer from a Moslem imam wafted from a nearby minaret through the smoky air.

In the confluence of cultures, nationalities, personalities and religions at the verge of the 21st century--within the Anabaptist movement as well as in the wider world--what could and should the shape of global Anabaptist missions be?

The Body of Christ Broken for Us

As Christians we have drawn inspiration and insight from the depiction of the church as the Body of Christ (1. Cor. 12). The headship of Christ, and the unity of the diverse members of Christ's body has guided our striving for mutual acceptance and collaboration as Christians.

Increasingly we have become aware and appreciative of the diversity within the Christian church: placed in scattered locations, adapted to diverse cultures, fluent in numerous languages, worshiping in divergent ways, emphasizing various doctrines, operating by contrasting polities, taking differing ethical perspectives, organized in distinct denominations, and undertaking complementary missions.

There are also differences among Christians around the globe which are painful: uncritical identification with opposing ethnic groups, political parties or nation-states; over-abundant material wealth for some and desperate poverty for others; repressive persecution for some and debilitating assimilation for others; tolerant

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24 The Shape of Global Anabaptist Mission for the 21st Century

ambiguity on faith tenets by some and intolerant rigidity on doctrine by others. Sometimes the diversity leads to misunderstanding, distancing and separation, impeding any unified witness of the gospel to the world which is broken itself. At worst it can prompt condemnation and violence by some Christians towards others. The Church, despite its ideal wholeness, is broken.

From this perspective, the words of Christ, as he broke the bread for his disciples are startling: "This is my body that is broken for you." (1 Cor.11:24). Was Jesus speaking about the breaking of the church, his body as well as the breaking of his own earthly body? If so, did Jesus condone the breaking of the Church, his body, to save the world? The communion bread is the symbol of the body of Christ. In the New Testament the church is also described as the body of Christ. So Christ, in breaking the communion bread, signified not only the breaking of his physical body and life on the cross but also the breaking of the church thereafter. Indeed he permitted this breaking.

Christ accepted the breaking of his body on the cross to demonstrate the power of God over sin and death in the lives of persons. The brokenness of the body of Christ, i.e. the church, by diverse cultures, beliefs, and perspectives makes God's grace and power accessible to me and my peers in our particular contexts. The breaking of the body of Christ, i.e. the church, makes the incarnation and witness of Jesus Christ in diverse cultures and to various worldviews possible. For this breaking all Christians, indeed all persons on earth, should be grateful.

There are hazards in the breaking and in the brokenness of the church, Christ's body. We may consider our partial perception and unique experience of the Gospel as the complete truth. We may limit our own spiritual breadth and depth to the possibilities within our worldview and our customs. We may present the portion of the gospel which we grasp as the whole gospel. We may minimize the insights and gifts of other members for the inner life and outward mission of the church. We may refuse cooperation or mutual accountability in mission.

Though it was the breaking of the body of Christ in the form of the church which brought the gospel to us, we yearn for the time and place when this brokenness is healed. Together with God we long for the restoration of the wholeness of the Body of Christ. Blessings come whenever the brokenness of the body is superseded or healed. So, appealing to God for grace, we strive for wholeness and unity in mission.

Mission involves presenting the whole Gospel to the whole broken world by the broken whole church. This understanding can give shape to global Anabaptist missions in the 21st century.

The Legacy of Anabaptist Missions

Before we cast into the future, let us review the legacy of Anabaptist missions. The Anabaptist movement could be regarded as one of the historically necessary but

regrettable breakings of the body of Christ, a breaking which made the Gospel accessible to particular social and intellectual groups in Europe in the sixteenth century and to more in the ensuing centuries.

The core teachings of Anabaptism have been rehearsed innumerable times, most recently by Arnold Snyder in *From Anabaptist Seed* 1. These teachings, taken separately, are not unique to the Anabaptist movement. Indeed, the Anabaptist movement shares the essential affirmations of Christian faith as well as many traits, values and beliefs with other movements in Christianity. The Anabaptist distinctiveness resides in the unique combination of these teachings and traits.

As the Anabaptists articulated their convictions in reaction to the prevailing theology and praxis of the church in the Holy Roman Empire, there is the risk of inappropriately perpetuating their inevitable Eurocentrism into other contexts. Anabaptists in Congo and Colombia, India and Ethiopia are living and articulating Anabaptist Christian faith in and for their context. This may appear to deviate from classical Eurocentric Anabaptism. But it needs to proceed.

Today Anabaptists can claim that the trajectories of the various Protestant, Evangelical and Catholic renewal movements are converging so that key Anabaptist convictions about the church, discipleship and justice are held in common and are no longer exclusively held by Anabaptists. Adherents of these other renewal movements can claim the same convergence albeit bringing their best theological convictions to the fore.

If God is the author of human history and of the history of Christian churches, then we can trust that sincere biblical studies, shared church life and the Holy Spirit's guidance are ultimately bringing Christians to common God-pleasing convictions and actions. If the biblicality of any of the Anabaptist convictions are confirmed in the broader stream, then we Anabaptists thank God for entrusting it to our tradition and we rejoice in finding commonalities with other Christians. And if any are not, then we should be open to correction or modification from the Christians around us.

The interaction with other Christians can also prompt Anabaptists to re-discover and recall traits from their time of origin which contribute to Christian unity and mission in the present. Thus the missionary activity of the Anabaptists in western Europe has been described and highlighted in recent writings.² Here the convocation of Anabaptist leaders in Augsburg in 1527 at which they set aside theological differences and delegated one another as evangelists to various regions is instructive.

Less noticed have been views and traits of the sixteenth century Anabaptists which could open a vision for God's mission in the whole world, not confined to mission

¹Pandora Press & Herald Press, 1999. Commissioned by Mennonite World Conference.

²John Roth, "Anabaptist Missions and the Critique of Christendom," in Lin Stutzman & David W. Shenk, eds. *Practicing Truth: Confident Witness in our Pluralistic World*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1999. pp 82-101.

26 The Shape of Global Anabaptist Mission for the 21st Century

within Europe. Many of these are found in the "spiritualist" wing of the Anabaptist movement, generally overlooked by Mennonites seeking a normative Anabaptism which could undergird their inclinations in the twentieth century. These horizon stretching factors include:

- The commitment to obey the teachings of Jesus, including his commission to his disciples to go into the world, to make disciples, and to baptize and to teach them.³ Thus the Anabaptists were impelled by their literalism to be missionary within Europe and beyond.

- The readiness to love the enemy, namely the Turks, the scourge of Europe in their time (see Michael Sattler's statement on the Turks at his trial): Again, their convictions about obeying Jesus prompted them to take a peaceful rather than a hostile stance toward a non-European people.

- The dependence on the Holy Spirit as the overcomer of barriers between humans, whether cultural, geographical, theological, or intellectual: Thus the Anabaptists could conceive of God's spirit present and working in people who were not Christian, especially as their treatment at the hands of magistrates and clerics of the Holy Roman Empire could lead them to question the impact of the Holy Spirit on these Christians.

- The conviction that discipleship to Christ is a choice of the person rather than the consequence of being born within Christendom: Thus this choice was available to persons outside Christendom as well as within its borders.

- The belief in the presence of the "Inner Word" in persons to which even non-Christians may hearken: This created optimism about the prospects of non-Christians choosing to become disciples of Christ if and when the gospel would be presented to them.

- The expectation of Christ's imminent return: This fostered an eschatological fervency for rescuing sinners before Christ's return would end the opportunity to join the ranks of God's kingdom.

- The perspective shaped by persecution: In this way Anabaptists perceived a bond with all those who suffered under the rulers of their world.

- The emphasis on the "celestial body of Christ" rather than on the transubstantiated body of Christ in the Eucharist of the Roman Catholic: This understanding of the "body of Christ" was deemed to be much more accessible and understandable to non-Christians.⁴

³cf. Abraham Friesen., *Erasmus, the Anabaptists and the Great Commission*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.

⁴cf. Clement Ziegler, a forerunner of the Anabaptists: "It is the celestial body of Jesus which should be stressed in the mission to the Turks, Tartars, Greeks, Jews and heathens, for non Christians have direct access to the heavenly Christ in his glorious body but may be offended by the Catholic pre-occupation with the

The potential of the Anabaptists for engaging in global mission is summarized by George H. Williams:

"The Radicals, even though not strategically located or equipped to carry out a world mission, were, far more than the Magisterial Reformers, concerned for the salvation of pagans near and far. In various theological adjustments they had taken account, not only of the pagan races beyond Islam in dark Africa, India, Cathay, and the Americas, but also of the pagans who lived before the accomplishment of Christ's redeeming work." (*The Radical Reformation*, pp. 836-837).

By the mid-nineteenth century the Mennonite descendants of the Anabaptists were strategically located for mission. Some had migrated eastward into Prussia and Russia, some westward to North America in response to pressures in their land of origin. Those who remained in Germany and the Netherlands resided in countries in which they now had freedom to worship in their unique manner and to engage in mission. Furthermore, by the beginning of the 19th century many of these dispersed Mennonite churches were equipped for mission, having acquired wealth, education and organizational capacities for foreign missions. But they needed the influence of the Pietists and Baptists to move out of their quietism into mission. The Doopsgezinde of the Netherlands led the way with a mission to Java and eventually drew significant funds and workers from the Mennonite colonies in Russia.⁵ Thus the first foreign mission endeavour by Mennonites was a cooperative venture of two strands which had diverged for the preceding two centuries.

Steps Toward Transnational Cooperation in Anabaptist Missions

Since the start made by the Doopsgezinde Zendingsrad in 1847, missions by Mennonites have proliferated in all dimensions: the number of agencies and of missionaries, the amount of funds expended for missions, the variety of countries, and the various forms of ministry. The most recent developments are the increasing participation in missions detached from the Mennonite denominations and the beginning of mission activity by the Mennonite churches of Africa, Asia, Central and South America.⁶

Eucharistic flesh and the accompanying idolatries." tract "On the Body and Blood of Christ." quoted in Williams, p. 246.

⁵Wilbert R. Shenk, *By Faith They Went Out: Mennonite Missions 1850-1999*. Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1999. See the chapter entitled "Growth Through Mission", pp. 67-91; revised from its initial appearance in *Mennonite World Conference Handbook*, 1978.

⁶Ibid.

28 The Shape of Global Anabaptist Mission for the 21st Century

What have Mennonites undertaken in transnational cooperation in mission since the fruitful collaboration of the Dutch and Russian Mennonites before World War I? The mission theme was raised in several ways at the first Mennonite World Conference (MWC) gathering in Basel, Switzerland in 1925. The delegates from Russia, though prevented from attending, proposed coordination of mission as one role for the new inter-Mennonite venture. Though the next two MWC meetings were devoted to the practical ministry of alleviating the plight of Mennonites in the Soviet Union, MWC did not become an agency for mission or forum for mission coordination.

The MWC resumed its attention to cooperation among Anabaptists in mission with a special meeting of its presidium in Puerto Rico in 1975. Its finding on cooperation remains relevant at the outset of the 21st Century: "We must seek to overcome the false understanding that most of the resources for evangelism and world mission are in the Western churches. . . . Can we find genuinely mutual structures for developing and sharing our resources of personnel, money, and spiritual gifts so that together we may carry out our common calling to mission as a worldwide fellowship?"⁷

Consultations on mission were held in conjunction with the MWC assemblies in 1978 and 1984. Again pledges toward transnational partnership in mission were made but little if any concrete measures were taken at the global level.

In North America the need to improve understanding and cooperation between Mennonite Central Committee, the agency for relief, development and peace ministries formed in 1920, and the mission boards of the several Mennonite and Brethren in Christ denominations, led in 1958 to regular meetings of the Council of Mission Board Secretaries with the MCC Executive Committee. This forum for inter-Mennonite conversations on missions was reorganized in 1976 as the Council of International Ministries (CIM) composed of denominationally-based mission agencies, inter-Mennonite service agencies (eg. MCC, Mennonite Economic Development Associates) and mission training programs in North America. Through annual consultations on mission topics, information exchange and supporting projects in area committees and informal fellowship, cooperation among North American Mennonites for mission has been facilitated and increased. Perhaps a basis has been laid for increased cooperation on a global as well as North American scale.⁸ The annual consultations of CIM in 1992, 1993, 1996, and 1999 all dealt with aspects of global cooperation in mission.

⁷In appendix to Wilbert R. Shenk, *God's New Economy: Mission and Interdependence*. Elkhart: Mission Focus pamphlet, 1988. pp. 52-54.

⁸For details see Wilbert R. Shenk, *An Experiment in Interagency Coordination*. Elkhart, 1986. A CIM pamphlet.

In the 1980s a group of the larger North American mission agencies (Mennonite Board of Missions, Commission on Overseas Mission, Eastern Mennonite Missions and Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services) together with Mennonite Central Committee sponsored the Mennonite International Study Project. Church leaders in many countries were questioned about their priorities for their churches and their expectations of the North American churches. The report on the study published in 1990 gave a comprehensive set of recommendations for advancing inter-church mutuality and cooperation on an international level.⁹

In summary, there have been several declarations for partnership in mission on a worldwide basis but to date no definite steps toward a global (re)organization for mission have been undertaken.

On the other hand, North American agencies have instituted various measures for strengthening their cooperation and conferral with partner churches in other countries. These include: declaring their commitment to partnerships; increasing exchange visits; making bilateral agreements with national church bodies; holding international consultations of related churches; appointing staff, mission workers and board members from outside North America; facilitating contacts to local congregations; and placing representatives as liaisons to partner churches rather than for program purposes.

However, these several measures have been separate initiatives by the agencies, seemingly not guided by an over-arching or common strategy or goal. There seem to be restraining cautions about modifying the structures or the modes of decision-making on the part of the North American agencies, probably based more on concerns about diminishing the comprehension and loyalty of their North American constituencies through major re-structuring and less about mistrust in the wisdom and capacity of their potential international partners.

The ventures into cross-cultural mission by the newer churches in the southern continents have been enhanced by regional consultations on mission themes. In Europe, mission committees of the historic Mennonite churches in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland have disbanded their European Mennonite Missions Committee which bound their efforts under one organization and have reverted to an annual joint consultation. The Consultation of Mennonites in Latin America in 1999 focused on mission and yielded a declaration on "A Church in Mission." The Asia Mennonite Conference in the following year also focused on mission, emphasizing the primary responsibility of the Asian churches for mission in their continent.

The Global Anabaptist Missions Consultation, held in Guatemala in July 2000, was intended to bring the commonality and cooperation in mission to a new level.

⁹Nancy Heisey & Paul Longacre, *Final Report: Mennonite International Study Project*. Elkhart: MBM, 1990.

30 The Shape of Global Anabaptist Mission for the 21st Century

About 90 leaders in mission from about 40 countries joined 100 members of the MWC General Council for celebration and conversation around mission. The vision for mission discerned at GAMCO by a team of mission leaders will be the centerpiece of ongoing deliberations at the MWC level.¹⁰

Ferment in the Wider Church: A Sampling of Recent Events

At the beginning of the 21st century of Christian mission, it behooves us to hear what God's spirit is saying to other members of the body of Christ about mission. We need to hear these messages because beyond our immediate goals of increasing oneness and faithfulness in the mission of the Mennonite churches there are the goals and benefits of unity and discernment with the entire family of Christian churches.

Several recent global gatherings of Christians of various traditions have yielded statements on mission and unity which would be instructive for us in the Anabaptist tradition.

International Relationships in Mission Consultation (India, 1996): While missions momentum in the World Council of Churches has weakened since its founding, its discussions on "responsible relations in mission" from the perspective of denominational bodies are instructive for the Mennonite Church quest for partnerships in mission.¹¹

Subsequently the WCC has issued a new statement on "Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today"¹² This comprehensive paper on mission theology and practice addresses issues of concern to Anabaptists and could be the basis for helpful conversations on mission with a broad spectrum of Christian churches.

Global Evangelism Roundtable (Norway, 1999): The World Evangelical Fellowship, the AD 200 Movement and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation participated in a roundtable in Norway to overcome the undue competition between these mission networks and to consider closer cooperation. As Mennonites we should emulate the stances of confession, repentance and forgiveness manifested at this gathering and could investigate participating in the regional networks which are now being formed though our own networks such as the Council of International Ministries in North America.

International Consultation on Discipleship (England, 1999): This consultation addressed the perception that while the global church may be growing numerically, there is a widespread deficiency in "discipleship". It produced a Joint Statement on Discipleship which included declarations which Anabaptist Christians would affirm¹³:

- "True discipleship ... is a matter of radical submission to [Christ's] Lordship."

¹⁰See "Vision Discernment Team report" in this issue of *Mission Focus*.

¹¹*International Review of Mission*, July 1997.

¹²*International Review of Mission*, Jan/April 1999.

¹³See www.cookministries.com/discipleship.

- "The marks of true repentance in the life of a disciple are evidenced by ongoing transformation, personal holiness, compassionate service, and the fruit of the Spirit."

The concluding commitments include:

- [not to] water down the cost of discipleship in order to increase the number of converts.
- to acknowledge that a local church is the primary community within which discipleship should take place."
- to refocus on Christ and Christ-likeness,... the perfect pattern for our discipleship.

A Latin American group, CLADIS (www.pibsatelite.org.mix), is following up the global consultation with one on discipleship in Latin America. Will Anabaptists in Latin America, including mission workers sent by North American Mennonite agencies, participate?

Global Consultation on Evangelical Missiology (Brazil, 1999): The World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission held this consultation "to continue developing and applying a relevant biblical missiology which reflects the cultural diversity of God's people. One of the key debates in Iguassu questioned whether mission is "a manageable enterprise" which is shaped by statistical analysis, strategic planning and measurable goals.

The Iguassu Affirmation included the following:¹⁴

- The Lord Jesus Christ is the unique revelation of God and the only Savior of the world.
- Believers, led by the Holy Spirit, are encouraged to create culturally appropriate forms of worship and uncover biblical insights that glorify God for the benefit of the whole church.
- The Gospel is good news and addresses all human needs.
- Opposition to the spread of the Gospel is foremost a spiritual conflict involving human sin and principalities and powers opposed to the Living God.
- Our obedience in mission involves suffering.
- Economic and political systems deeply affect the spread of God's kingdom.
- To be effective witnesses to the holy God, we need to demonstrate personal and corporate holiness, love and righteousness.

The commitments include:

- to challenge the churches to respond with a deeper level of unity and participation in mission

¹⁴www.worldevangelical.org.igua-affirm.

32 The Shape of Global Anabaptist Mission for the 21st Century

- to the uniqueness of Christ as savior even as we work for increased tolerance and understanding among religious communities
- to increase our biblical understanding of spiritual conflict while guarding against syncretistic and unbiblical elements
- to a healthy critique of mission theories that depend heavily on marketing concepts and missiology by objectives
- to give voice to all segments of the global church in developing and implementing our missiology
- to equip ourselves and others to suffer in missionary service.
- to reflect God's concern for justice and the welfare of all peoples
- to ecological integrity in practicing responsible stewardship of creation
- to renewed efforts at cooperation...[and] to find ways to address this imbalance [of resources].
- to support and nurture our missionary workers for their sake and for the Gospel witness

The Iguassu Affirmation, and the subsequent regional consultations on it, merit the attention and consideration of Anabaptists in mission.

New World Mission Congress for the Third Millennium (Japan, 1999): This gathering was intended to highlight the participation in mission of the churches from the so-called Third World and to "prepare a new 'wine-skin' for missions in the third millennium."¹⁵ Perhaps Mennonite churches in "third world" countries could be encouraged through this forum. Or perhaps this discussion will yield ideas helpful for devising transnational cooperation in mission by Anabaptists.

*"Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church."*¹⁶ Most recently, the Vatican has issued a new declaration relevant to missions as well as pertaining to relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian churches, including those in the Anabaptist tradition. Expanding on the message of the Second Vatican Council "Ad Gentes" (1965) and the papal encyclical "Redemptoris Missio", this declaration expounds the beliefs of the Catholic Church on the limited though real revelation of God to non-Christians and the exclusive access to salvation through the Catholic Church. Thus the statement addresses one of the burning questions about missions. It justifies mission, including respectful dialogue, with adherents of other religions. While Christians outside the Catholic Church will not be pleased at being informed that only in the teachings of the Roman Catholic church will they receive the full truth of God and only as its adherents will they have access to the

¹⁵*World Pulse*, December 3, 1999.

¹⁶www.vatican.va

instruments of salvation administered, the declaration's position in relation to non-Christians is a helpful perspective on a major controversy.

Anabaptists engaged in international ministries need to follow these discussions and participate in them.

Present Context for Missions

Informed observers of life on this earth will not need a detailed description of the present trends and traits of our world at the outset of a new century and millennium. Here the main ones are only mentioned: a globalized economy, a globalized pop culture, a globalized elite and middle class, an exploited, isolated, and marginalized and increasing poor population, rapid urbanization, recurring conflicts over environmental resources, massive refugee movements, information overload, and innovative individualized spiritual quests.¹⁷

Embracing All Mission Methods

Anabaptist missions based in North America have focused on sending personnel from North America for ministries such as evangelism and church planting, leadership training, community social services, economic development, and material aid for disaster relief. In North American churches the predominant perception of "missions" is the sending missionaries from North America to other continents. Thereby missions interest has been narrowly focused on ministries in which North American missionaries are deemed to be crucial. But North American involvement is not required for mission to happen.

From a global and ecumenical perspective, we North Americans participate in mission as God's mission alongside churches in other countries. The churches in other continents are or should be engaged in mission in their vicinity. North American churches as well as churches in other areas participate in mission by making their resources in personnel, funds, organizations, spiritual gifts, and insights fully available to the global church. This mindset places the sending of North American workers into a broader context and opens our attention to a wider range of tasks in which sending North American missionaries to foreign fields is not central.

From a global perspective the following mission tasks should be added or given more emphasis by the existing North American mission agencies in cooperation with those of other countries:

- dialogue with believers of other religions on basic human needs
- calling and equipping Anabaptists working in foreign settings
- peace evangelism in conflictual communities

¹⁷Consultation on Missional Identity, March 24-26, 2000 Harrisonburg VA, section 4 "The Emerging Context in Missions".

34 The Shape of Global Anabaptist Mission for the 21st Century

- advocacy of justice for oppressed people
- support of local evangelists and church planters
- networking of Anabaptist sympathizers in all denominations
- establishing centers of Anabaptist resources in the centers of political and economic power.

In North America where international ministries by Anabaptists have been separated, whether by good intentions, conference differences or personal clashes, between the "mission agencies" and the "service" agencies, the complementarity and missional nature of material aid, relief, economic development and other mission tasks carried out by MCC and MEDA should be formally affirmed and articulated and then strategically and cooperatively coordinated.

On the global level any structure or networking for Anabaptist missions needs to embrace the various ministries without entrenching the separations which have evolved in North America.

Principles for Shaping the Goals and Structure of Global Anabaptist Missions

To shape international cooperation in mission among Anabaptists around the world a functional definition of mission would be helpful so that the ministries in which cooperation is pursued are identified. For the purposes of establishing global cooperation in Anabaptist missions the following focus for a global missions council may be helpful:

The purview of a global Anabaptist missions council would encompass those ministries of word and deed by Anabaptist churches at local, regional, national, and continental levels, and their agencies, which witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ to persons and peoples outside the community of Christians with the goal of making disciples and bringing the new disciples into existing or new Christian communities. These ministries would include preaching, teaching, intercessory prayer, fasting, healing, deliverance, church planting, social services, disaster relief, development aid, peacemaking, conflict mediation and discipleship training. The global council would be a forum for information sharing, coordination and cooperation in these missional ministries when these cross cultural and/or national borders.

Principles for shaping the goals and structures for mutual accountability and cooperation in global Anabaptist missions include:

Appreciation of all gifts in the global church

The financial resources, strong structures, and higher education of the northern partners should not be deemed greater than the gifts of the southern churches, such as

personnel, spiritual insights, and cultural knowledge. Hitherto this has weakened the voice of the southern churches in the decisions about global mission. Indeed, the material wealth of the churches of the North is a burden for them whose bearing needs to be shared with the churches of the South.

Mutual accountability for mission agency priorities and goals

In addition to partnership in selected programs or projects, there also needs to be willingness on the part of mission agencies to let their partners scrutinize and question the goals and priorities of the agency's overall program. On the other hand, churches resident in a region which are missionally inactive may be challenged and encouraged toward mission activity by other churches and agencies.

International partnerships for all branches of the church

Hitherto almost all international partnerships operate via the mission and service agencies, i.e not only proclamation of the gospel beyond the church but also theological education, leadership training and other ministries directed at the building within the church. The leadership bodies of the churches in North America as well as the educational institutions, peace ministries, social services, etc. need to be active in international partnerships. Mission agencies can foster and facilitate these and then stand aside and focus on partnership in activities which reach those outside the church and its faith.

Multilateral partnerships across national and denominational lines

Partnerships between two partners are good; but there should also be multilateral cooperation and forums. Partnerships between groups of one Anabaptist denomination are good but there should also be interaction among different Anabaptist groups. Furthermore closer partnership among Anabaptist missions should still allow partnerships beyond the Anabaptist family of churches.

Creating a new global forum rather than expanding an existing northern one

The inclination to expand existing structures based in the north, such as the Council of International Ministries, should be resisted. Instead we should be ready to create a new global structure which is shaped by input from the churches of the south.

Local congregations as the base for mission

In the formation of a global structure for mission cooperation, the agencies will probably pre-dominate. There is the risk that the congregations will feel even more distance to global mission. Both the globalization of mission discernment and the localization of mission activity need to be fostered and then balanced. The local congregation has primary responsibility for mission in its location. This should be respected by Anabaptist churches and missions coming into the location with their mission efforts.

On the other hand the local church is accountable to the global church for its mission endeavours or lack thereof in its own location. For instance, North American

36 The Shape of Global Anabaptist Mission for the 21st Century

churches should give account of their mission in North America and not only intrude upon the territory of churches in other countries.

Respect historical denominational ties

There are several streams within the Anabaptist movements with historical ethnic, theological and mission ties. These ties need to be respected, indeed affirmed, as existing platforms for increased international cooperation in mission.

Global and Regional Missions Councils

The crucial components of a network for Anabaptist missions on an inter-Anabaptist and international level at this point in the history of the Anabaptist movement would include a global missions council and regional missions councils.

Global Missions Council

Composition - representatives of the regional missions councils or, if these do not exist, of the regional church body, and of the mission organizations of global bodies of Anabaptist churches, or of the global body.

Functions:

- monitor Anabaptist missions on a global scale
- receive reports from regional mission councils
- relate to other global councils related to Mennonite World Conference
(Faith and Life, Theological Education, Peace)
- relate to other denominational and inter-denominational mission networks
- relate to global mission bodies of Anabaptist churches
- report to Mennonite World Conference General Council.

Regional Mission Council

Composition - composed of representatives of the Anabaptist churches in the region, specifically from their mission agencies if possible, and of the Anabaptist-related agencies engaged in mission in the region.

Functions

- monitor missions in the region
- hold consultations on goals and strategies for mission in the region
- provide a forum for encounters between churches and agencies
- promote cooperation and accountability in mission efforts
- report to the regional Anabaptist body
- report to global missions council

In order to move beyond the narrow interests of the separate Anabaptist families and to maximize the networking potential, the development of these inter-

Anabaptist mission councils should receive more attention than the development of international mission networks for separate groups in the Anabaptist movement. Mission in any region, from whatever source, must relate to the Anabaptist churches in that region of whatever stream.

The evolution of the Council of International Ministries (CIM), the association which includes most Anabaptist missions based in North America and engaged in international missions, requires careful reflection. As the concentration of the agencies with the most material resources, most developed organization, and most extensive relationships, CIM's positioning and activity, could have an over-powering impact on the shaping of the global Anabaptist mission enterprise. CIM and its member agencies will need to consider the regional mission councils instead of the CIM area committees as the proper forum for their mutual reporting and deliberations on activities and relationships in a particular region. The CIM area committees may then become opportunities in which the deliberations at the regional councils are reported to CIM member agencies and considered from the admittedly limited perspective of North America. Analogously the broader CIM would be the forum for relating to the global missions council as well as for considering mission issues from and for the North American context.

Conclusion

With the gradual emergence of a global Anabaptist communion as intimated in recent statements from MWC leadership, increased international communications and the restructuring of several Anabaptist church groups in North America, we have an opportunity, and an obligation, to move toward increased commitment, global accountability and more effectiveness for mission by Anabaptists around the world.