

Appendix VIII.

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW WORLD SOCIETY AND THE POWER OF JESUS CHRIST

REPORT OF THE SOCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS CONSULTATION

I

1. Together with adherents of other faiths, Christians perceive that the world community is facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions. The economic gap between rich and poor, hunger, the armaments race, the violation of human rights, the waste of raw material resources and damage to our natural environment are some of the signs of a profound illness in our world society. These are only a few of the characteristics of the present economic order which has deepened the whole international crisis. Such a world is unable to promote the fundamental values and purposes of a society necessary to preserve the human community. There is a genuine awareness among both developing and developed countries that the world cannot go on as it is.

2. There is a need for a radical re-orientation, experiments with alternative models of development and creation of new solidarities which would ensure equal participation of all people in the creation of a new world society. Development is not merely economic progress but the growth of the whole human person. Moreover, no development process is possible without active involvement of the poor. The have-nots must themselves break the fetters of injustice, and a pattern of co-operation with them must be determined in partnership.

3. We ask how can Christians respond to God's question, "Where is Abel your brother?" (Gen. 4:9) We are again becoming aware that the Gospel is clearly on the side of the poor and the oppressed. One of the most pressing questions, therefore, is precisely this: What can Christians do to build a new and better society, to help overcome the widening economic, social and political barriers which separate peoples and nations? How can they help seek a more just world community in which love rather than selfishness becomes dominant? Our concern is based on our belief that humanity is one family under the fatherhood of God and that all people should share justly in His blessings and His peace. As Christians we have a special responsibility to seek actively the signs of God's coming kingdom, enabled by the power of Jesus Christ. The single and most important thing is that all must learn to share their material, intellectual and spiritual resources. This is part of sharing the Good News.

II

1. As Methodist Christians, we listen to those who suffer hunger, poverty and violence and we are reminded of our historic concern for the "down-trodden and heavy-laden." We renew this commitment today by proclaiming "good news to the poor, freedom to the oppressed and joy to the afflicted," by pooling our spiritual and material resources to assist the disinherited majority of the world's population and to help bring into being a new world society of justice and peace.

2. The World Methodist Council urges its member churches to engage in a comprehensive programme of study, reflection, dialogue and action in order to search for a more just, participatory and sustainable society. Although many Methodist churches, particularly those in the rich countries, are no longer churches of the poor, they must renew their identification with and commitment to the poor.

3. Specifically, the Council recommends that its member churches:

(a) Continue to up-date, intensify and widen traditional church social programmes (e.g. educational, medical and developmental) and orient them towards the reform of unjust social structures.

(b) Organize study and reflection groups at local, national and international levels on the search for a just and participatory society. These should be ecumenical in nature, taking advantage of the resources provided by the World Council of Churches, SODEPAX (Society, Development and Peace), and other similar bodies.

(c) Sharpen the ethical and theological perspective of their members.

to be human, the meaning of ownership and property, the meaning of freedom and self-fulfilment...to develop symbols and patterns of worship that express and reinforce our commitment to Christian simplicity and non-exploitation of natural and human resources...to build and strengthen communities of understanding and support for covenant groups, families, international communities, alternative lifestyle groups by providing affirmation and encouragement." (General Conference of The United Methodist Church, USA, *Daily Christian Advocate*, 4/27/72, p. 25) Economic growth with justice in developing countries needs to be balanced by an intentional change toward simple, less wasteful living in the developed world. The churches should work to create a climate of world citizenship and see in every human being a brother or sister who is entitled to "the abundant life" which Jesus came to bring. They should raise their prophetic voice in defence of justice and human solidarity. They should teach human rights and responsibility, interdependence and freedom.

(d) Seriously consider the Ecumenical Development Co-operative Society (World Church Bank) as an investment for involvement in development.

4. In addition, the World Methodist Council directs the Committee for Social and International Affairs to encourage and co-ordinate this study and reflection process of the churches during the forthcoming quinquennium (1976-1981).

III

Our hope for a new society lies in the power of Jesus Christ. We pray that we may be the instruments of God, as He works in the world. May the churches always be the extension of the ministry of Jesus Christ, which He announced in the Synagogue of Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." (Luke 4:18)

Appendix IX.

WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL REPORT OF YOUTH COMMITTEE AND YOUTH CONFERENCE

YOUTH COMMITTEE

Between 1971 and 1976 the Youth Committee has met briefly three times. With no travel budget it could only meet when some of its members attended the WMC Executives in 1972, 1973 and 1975. Those members present at the 1973 Executive participated in a valuable meeting with young people and youth workers at a seminary outside Mexico City.

It made preliminary plans to hold a youth event in Singapore but when the venue of the Conference was changed, arranged for the European Methodist Youth Council to plan a small youth event in Ireland prior to the 13th Council.

YOUTH CONFERENCE

A Youth Conference has taken place from 18th-24th August 1976 on the theme "Conflict and the Gospel". Representatives attended from: Britain, Federal Republic of Germany, German Democratic Republic, Ireland, Rhodesia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia and Zambia. The subject was discussed under three subheadings: a) Conflict in our own lives, b) Conflict in the Church, c) Conflict in our countries.

Among the insights discovered were that the Gospel brings conflict and that nobody's conflict is unimportant. Among the most worthwhile features of the conference were the opportunities to share the situations in our own countries and, in particular, to learn about the conflict situations in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Rhodesia. A resolution concerning these countries was passed and will be brought to the Council.

Submitted by the Youth Committee and Youth Conference

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