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**THE MISSION OF THE EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND**



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PREFACE

WHAT IS MISSION

The church's reason for being is its participation in the mission of the Triune God in this world, i.e. *missio Dei*. God has revealed Himself and His holy will to this world which He created *ex nihilo* by His Word. This Word of God, the Logos, which is the Christ, has personally delivered His Great Commission: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:18-20, NIV). Today He is present in His preached Word, in the Old and the New Testament, and in His visible Word, the sacraments. In these He encounters and creates each person anew. The mission of the church, *missio ecclesiae*, contains everything Christ assigned as the ministry of the church. When mission is directed toward non-Christians, i.e. the unbaptized, it becomes a matter of mission activity, including the training and sending of mission workers among such peoples.

The genesis of the church is in accordance with the plan instituted by God the Father, as well as in the sending forth of the Son and the Holy Spirit (i.e. *missio*). In a special way the Triune God has manifested His missionary character to His creation by sending into this world His Son and the Holy Spirit, already partakers in the creation process. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). The Father sent the Son and the Son sent the church, which now in the Holy Spirit carries on Christ's mission task. The church is in its essence one, holy, catholic and apostolic. On this foundation the church with her congregations is missionary. Right from the beginning the Church has confessed one Triune God. God in three persons is the God

of Mission. This is the basis on which also the Lutheran concept of mission rests. Accordingly, we talk about God as Father and Creator, as Son and Redeemer and as Holy Spirit and Sanctifier. In Luther's model, the essential creed can briefly be formulated for mission: "I believe in God, the Father, who created me; I believe in the Son, who redeemed me; and I believe in the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me". "The Father gives us the entire creation, Christ His whole work and the Holy Spirit all His gifts" (The Great Catechism).

Today God continues mission by coming to people's lives as Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit. These three articles of the Creed delineate and separate Christians from all the other people in the world. Luther puts it this way: "Even if all the pagans outside Christendom, Turks, and Jews as well as false and hypocritical Christians believe in one, real God and worship Him, they still do not know what He expects of them. Neither are they prepared to expect love and good gifts from Him. Therefore they remain under eternal wrath and judgment as they neither have the Lord Jesus Christ nor has the Holy Spirit shed light or mercy on them through His gifts" (The Great Catechism). The ultimate purpose of God's mission is to implement His kingdom. In its fullness this will be carried out only at the end of time, but we are on our way toward that fulfillment.

The whole Bible speaks about mission, which becomes the thread running through the Book, starting with the promise included in the account of the Fall (Genesis 3:15) and ending in the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. The promise and the fulfillment have become a reality. While the church is in its essence missionary, i.e. carrying out mission work, it is also essentially an eschatological phenomenon. Thus the time of the church's mission is located between the First and the Second Coming of the Lord. During this time God realizes salvation history in a visible manner through the mission of the church. Participation in the mission task is the most significant enterprise for man in the world.

The mission task is found in all four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew's text emphasizes the 'making of disciples', 'obedience' and 'commands' (Matt 28:18-20). Mark, on the other hand, stresses preaching, so that the gospel is proclaimed with a certain authority (Mk 16:15-18) and we are reminded of the divine necessity of this proclamation (Mk 13:10). For Luke the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins are central. The Holy Spirit receives a significant role in mission work (Lk 24:46-49). The Holy Spirit, i.e. the Triune God, reveals that mission work is the church's ministry not only to Jews but also among other peoples (Acts 1:8, Acts 10). John, finally, bases mission work christologically: "Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'" (Jn 20:21). The mission work begun by God in Christ Jesus goes on consistently as the mission of Jesus' disciples, including also mutual love and service (Jn 13:34; 15:12) and the unity of Jesus' followers (Jn 17:11, 22-23). The Apostle Paul presents the mission task, e.g., in his Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor 5:18-21), where mission task is grounded in Christ's redemptive work (see also Eph 2:14-18).

The above demonstrates that the dynamic and holistically oriented church sent by God is on the move in this world, performing the work of God with His authorization. Responsibility for mission and for mission work are the most essential tasks of the church. Thus it is possible to define the concept of mission in accordance with the 1988 document on mission of the Lutheran World Federation, "Together in God's Mission":

"Mission is the ongoing, saving work of" (the Triune)
 "God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"; and
 "mission is God's mandate to God's people to participate in this continuing, saving work".

(From the book in Finnish and English: Timo Vasko, Luterilainen lähetyskäsitys - Foundations of Lutheran Mission. Helsinki 1991 ISBN 951-625-027-0)

Raimo Harjula, Docent

MISSION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and its parishes carry out mission through the Church mission organizations. The present pattern of these organizations is the result of a long historical process. The Church has six officially recognized mission organizations, with altogether about 700 missionaries in 1991 in more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Latin America and Europe. During the same year, the sum used by local parishes in their mission through Church organizations amounted to about 133.6 million FIM. Furthermore, the mission organizations' development cooperation efforts were supported by the Foreign Ministry's department for development cooperation (FINNIDA), by more than 36 million FIM altogether. The advisory and coordinating body for Church mission organizations is the Division for Global Mission (DGM).

History of Lutheran mission in Finland

Finnish Lutheran mission has its roots in the 18th and 19th-century revival movements. When missionary work was initiated in practice, it was based on voluntary efforts of Church members, and activity within the framework of a society. The first channel for mission was the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, founded in 1859, which began work in Ovamboland, South-West Africa in 1870. The next important stage within Finnish Lutheran mission was achieved in the year 1900, when the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland started mission in Japan, as a result of the development within the Evangelical revival movement.

The situation remained unchanged up to the 1960's, when the number of Church mission organizations was increased significantly. The Swedish-language sister organization of the

Lutheran Evangelical Association, the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, started a mission of its own in Kenya in 1963 - so far, it had worked together with the Lutheran Evangelical Association in Japan. As a mission channel for the Neo-Pietistic revival movement, the Finnish Lutheran Mission was founded and started work in 1967 in Ethiopia, Japan and some Islamic countries in Asia. In 1974, the Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission parted from the Lutheran Mission and became an independent organization. Furthermore, the Finnish Bible Society, founded in 1812, changed its traditional profile in the 1960's. The Bible Society had so far been engaged in Bible distribution mostly in Finland, but was now transformed in to a special organization working in Bible mission in various parts of the world.

Mission becomes work of the Church

Before the World War II, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland regarded mission as the task of the so-called friends of mission. Since the war, attitudes towards mission began to change. Increasingly, mission was seen as the privilege and responsibility of every Christian and every parish: mission of the Church as a whole. In 1950, an initiative was made to the Synod for the foundation of a Finnish Church Mission Society.

Anything resembling the Swedish Church Mission was not founded, however - there were already two mission organizations within the Church through which parishes could take part in the world-wide mission responsibility of the Church of Christ. Instead, the Enlarged Bishops' Conference in 1954 appointed a mission council as a coordinating body for the Church, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland. At the same time, work done by these organizations was approved as mission of the Church.

In 1969, the Enlarged Bishops' Conference determined requirements and course of action upon which a mission organization could get official recognition as a Church mission organiza-

tion. In 1975, the Synod appointed a Church Mission Committee, and the following year the Church Mission Centre started its work. In 1979, the Synod defined the requirements and conditions for the approval as Church mission organization valid at the moment (see next title).

Respective development in regard to mission was realized also in the Ecclesiastical Act which states: "The parish and its members participate in raising funds in order to bring the Gospel among those who are not yet Christian." To advance and to supervise mission, are especially mentioned as the task of the parish vicar and parish council, as well as the bishop.

The Church and its mission organizations

The status of a Church mission organization is granted by the highest decision-making body of the Church, the Synod. A qualification for the official recognition is that the existence of the organization is necessary for the fulfillment of the Church's mission, and that mission is the main activity or one of the essential forms of activity of that organization. A further qualification is that the work of the organization is based on the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, and is done in connection with the Church. If the organization's work is limited to translating, publishing and distribution of the Bible, confinement to the Evangelical Lutheran confession is not presumed, however.

The Synod has also linked certain conditions with the recognition as a Church mission organization. The most important is the requirement that the organization must negotiate with the Division for Global Mission, regarding plans of opening new fields of mission or transforming essentially the activities of the organization. Moreover, mission organizations are obliged to submit information to the Division for Global Mission, when necessary, on their finances and other functions.

For the moment, the Church has six officially recognized mission organizations, through which the mission of the Church is carried out. These are Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland, Finnish Bible Society, Finnish Lutheran Mission and Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission.

Church mission: characteristics and directions of development

Mission of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland today is mission cooperation with local national Churches. The work of Church's mission organizations is carried out, as far as possible, in cooperation with the national Churches. Most important partners of cooperation are Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia, Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and Christian Church in Pakistan. In Europe, our Church is in cooperation with e.g. German Lutheran Churches, Lutheran Church in France and (Anglican) Church of England. Among other important partners of cooperation are certain international organizations (such as United Bible Societies and Wycliffe Bible Translators) as well as Lutheran mission organizations in other countries (e.g. Norway). In regard to international federations of Churches, contacts with the Department for Mission and Development of the LWF are considered the most significant ones.

Regarding the contents of mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the aim is to serve the human being as a whole in all needs. The aim of the work is expressed in the well-known slogan: to bring the whole Gospel to the whole man in the whole world. The Christian mission serves the human being as a whole, for the whole man is created and redeemed by God. This can clearly be seen also in the diversity of professions among missionaries: they represent clergy and other theologians, medical doctors and nurses, teachers of various

fields, engineers and other technical personnel, agricultural specialists, pilots, computer specialists and so forth. In practice, mission forms an entity, the basic aim of which is the founding of a new congregation and a new Church in an area where one does not exist already: "Area" in this context stands for both a geographical area and a social group or part of a culture.

Finnish Church mission has of old had a special emphasis on Africa. For some time now, the tendency has been to shift the emphasis of work to Asia, especially to the metropolitan cities of the continent of Asia. Also in Africa, the big cities are seen as a special challenge to the Christian mission. At the moment, mission cooperation is being enlarged in the direction of Latin America. At the same time, the work is going to have more and more ecumenical dimensions, as the Church's mission contacts with also the WCC and the Lausanne movement are being developed.

Division for Global Mission (DGM)

The relatively large number of Church mission organizations creates the necessity for continuous development of cooperation between these organizations. This cooperation is managed by the DGM, which is one of the eleven Divisions subordinate to the Synod. According to its rules and regulations, "the DGM is the advisory and coordinating body of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Church mission organizations." Work of the DGM is supervised by a board of directors, consisting of a chairman and ten members. Six of the members represent dioceses, and four are representatives of mission organizations. One of the bishops has acted as chairman of the board.

The task of the DGM is to plan and supervise those aspects of mission which take place in Finland, in cooperation with other administrative bodies and mission organizations of the Church. To manage this task, the DGM arranges e.g. wide-base Church mission negotiations every year. For the needs of mission at

home, the DGM has developed the practice of using "year-themes", which helps to concentrate on issues of current interest like the challenge of urbanization and the role of youth in mission. Every fifth year, a 2 to 3 -day church mission conference is held, where e.g. individual parishes send their representatives.

The DGM also has a wide-range training programme. The most important forms of training are work-orientation of theologians responsible for parish mission work, missiological supplementary training, and training of parish mission secretaries. The DGM also participates in the training of missionaries arranged by mission organizations, and also arranges itself basic and supplementary training courses for the employees of mission organizations.

One of the tasks of the DGM is to develop and carry out missiological research. Missiological as well as theological research is carried out by the DGM in cooperation with the University of Helsinki, Church Research Institute and Department for Theology of the Division for International Relations. The DGM publishes a magazine called "Mission of Our Church" (Kirkkomme Lähetys) which is issued twice a year and a journal called "Journal of Mission Theology" (Lähetysteologinen Aikakauskirja" in Finnish and English).

The DGM manages the contacts of Church mission with the State authorities of development cooperation, and with international Church federations and related movements such as the Lausanne movement. Domestic ecumenical contacts are managed by the DGM through the Ecumenical Council of Finland, and the Finnish Missionary Council. Among Church Offices, the most important partners of cooperation are Division for International Relations (especially Finnchurchaid), Church Research Institute, Division for Communication and Division for Diaconia and Society.

In regard to mission at home, as planned and organized by the DGM, one should mention "Church Mission Actions" arranged

every fifth year, and diocesan mission seminars held every autumn.

For the part of mission abroad, common planning of mission as commissioned by the Synod, is becoming more and more important. This will be an essential issue in creating a common mission strategy.

To accomplish the above mentioned tasks, the DGM has various committees and working teams such as committee for work at home, committee for missiology, committee for work abroad, committee for the training of missionaries, editorial staff of the magazine "Mission of Our Church", Institute of Mission Theology and Islam section. Represented in these committees and working teams are dioceses, parishes, Church mission organizations and, when required, Finnchurchaid and other Church bodies.

One of the newest activities of the DGM relates to Islam. The main areas of activity of the Islam Section are research, follow-up, information, training and strategy planning. The Section follows the development of Islam in Finland and in the whole Europe as well as in other areas where the Church of Finland has work. From these areas the Section edits annual reports which are shared with church and mission leaders and workers among muslims. - The international conferences attended by members of the Section in 1990 included the Conference of Islam in Europe Committee meeting in Leningrad. The chairman of the Islam Section, Rev. Seppo Rissanen, has completed his licentiate's dissertation "The Theology of Theodor Abu Durra with Special Emphasis in Inter-religious discussion between Muslims, Jews and Christians". A list of themes on "Ecumenical Considerations on Muslim-Christian Dialogue" was prepared by the Section for the World Council of Churches Programme unit on faith and witness. As a joint effort of three of the church mission organisations and the Islam Section a project secretary, Marjatta Kyyhkynen was employed for six months in order to compile an book on Islam and Chris-

tianity: "Contemporary Islam" ("Ajankohtainen islam" ISBN 951-625-103-X).

The DGM participates actively also in NIME's Missio Nordica project. In missiological research and training, the DGM has in recent years been interested in the following areas and themes (researcher's name in brackets): Theology of religion(s), The impact of urbanization upon the concept of God in Asia (Dr. Raimo Harjula, Docent of Comparative Religion, University of Helsinki). Lutheran fundamental missiology, Islam, Judaism, New Religions (Dr. Timo Vasko, Secretary for Mission Theology at the DGM). Missionary congregation and missionary church (missiological ecclesiology) (Cand. Theol. Kaija-Liisa Halme, Secretary for Education at the DGM). Missiological research and training is planned and carried out by the DGM in close cooperation with the Lutheran church mission organizations, Dioceses, University of Helsinki and various missiological and other institutions in Finland and abroad.

Local parishes: basic units of Church mission

Mission activities are lively and diversified also in dioceses and deaneries. However, local parishes are the basic units of Church mission. Parish mission activities are supervised by a mission board. In practice, due to the division of tasks between parish workers, parish mission activities are the responsibility of a theologian. There are more than 500 mission secretaries employed by parishes, who are in key position with regard to the practical accomplishment of the work. In addition to traditional small mission circles, various campaigns by young people have become more common. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of regular donors, who submit their support through so-called mission "links".

Almost without exception, individual parishes act as sponsors for their own missionaries, projects, mission countries of scholarship holders. The sponsor activity makes the work more

concrete and creates contacts and interaction. Financial contribution to mission by local parishes has indeed been increasing delightfully, throughout the 1980's, from 35 million FIM at the turn of the decade to more than 152 million FIM in 1991.

Structure and Staff

The General Synod

DIVISION FOR GLOBAL MISSION (DGM)

Board

Executive Committee

Committee for Mission Education	Committee for Domestic Affairs	Committee for Foreign Affairs	Committee for Missionary Training	Committee for Mission Theology	Institute of Mission Theology
Ad hoc Working Groups	Ad hoc Working Groups	Ad hoc Working Groups		Islam Section	Library and Archives

The Division for Global Mission is one of the eleven Divisions of the Church.

The Division for Global Mission is the advisory and coordinating body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Church mission organizations.

The Church mission organizations:

- + Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
- + Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland
- + Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland
- + Finnish Bible Society
- + Finnish Lutheran Mission
- + Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission

The Staff: General Secretary, Secretary for Mission Theology Director for The Institute of Mission Theology, Secretary for Mission Education, Project Secretary for Islam, Office Secretary.

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THE FINNISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MISSION IN THE 1990s

From the five-year plan 1991 - 1995 of the FELM, edited by Liisa Helminen, M.A.

Developing View of Mission

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM, founded in 1859) is the oldest and largest of the official mission agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. According to its statutes, the objective of the FELM is "to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as taught by the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, among those peoples who are not yet Christian". This objective has been developed into a view of mission where a Lutheran interpretation of the Gospel has been a precious value in contacts with people of other faiths as well as modern western people. Another visible characteristics in the work of the FELM has been a holistic view of mission: it is not only verbal proclaiming of the Gospel, but always takes the whole person with all his needs into consideration.

In the 1990s the work of the FELM is determined as participation in the mission of the Triune God, a missionary thinking based on theocentricity. The perspective of the triune nature of God also helps to reevaluate mission activities from the point of view of creation, redemption and spiritual life.

The mission of God was discussed in the protestant mission theology already in the 1950s. In the '60s the term was often used in connection with the first article of the Creed. The mission was much concentrated on questions of our world, especially its social problems. The perspectives were opened in the 1970s and the mission of God was understood as the mission of God the Creator and the Redeemer. The holistic

vision of mission, keeping proclamation and service in balance, was brought up into discussion. In the beginning of the 1980s, when the dimension of spiritual life was strengthened in the church. The time was ripe for a broader missionary thinking. The mission was understood as the mission of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Mission and Creation

Sometimes the Creator, God as characterized in the first article of the Creed, has been understood as God of law, the opposite of God of Gospel presented in the Creed article II. Such thinking is alien to Lutheran theology. In his commentary to the Creed article I Martin Luther sees God first of all as God of grace, giver of life and gifts. God's goodness and mercy does not reach to believers only but to all the creation. Struggling for human rights and worthwhile existence must be a natural consequence of creation.

The creative work of God also includes a clear "commission". The New Testament makes it clear that the "image" the human being was created is Jesus Christ (Col.1:15). What was not realized in the first creation because of the fall of Adam is fulfilled in Christ. From this point of view the missionary task is integration of the image of God all people were created in.

The belief in God the Creator is a starting point for the shaping of the holistic missionary vision of the FELM. God called all people to be His co-workers in the care of creation. On the basis of this faith the care for body and soul, social work and verbal proclamation, are linked together. FELM's participation in development programmes, efforts in seeking rightful solutions in social and economical problems, as well as its attitudes to ecological questions derive from this same faith.

The article I of the Creed is, however, not limited in questions of our own world. Man's relation to God must also be seen in the light of creation. According to Luther, the religions derive from God's general revelation. Thus the non-Christian religions were not invented by the devil but rather a general indication that God exists. But the general revelation is not enough. Because of the Fall a radical change was necessary also in the religions.

Mission and Redemption

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) This eternal life comes from the same God who made man to a living being. Nothing can prevent God from carrying out his scheme of creation: not sin nor human rebel. In sending his Son to the world God did something that no human being, as a sinner, would not be able to do. As the "new creation" he took up the guilt of Adam's children.

Christ - the Only Way

God's action in Christ shows better than anything the nature and purposes of God. The atoning death and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ show the way of salvation to the world. God has not given any other way to the children of Adam. Here is the basis for the Christian mission as God's mandate to his people and his church.

The sending of the Son shows the methods chosen by the Father for his mission in the world. Paul writes about the way of renunciation and humbleness: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and

became obedient to death - even death on the cross!" (Phil. 2:5-8)

Mission in the Sign of the Cross

In connection with the above-mentioned, the mission of the cross has also been emphasized. The cross symbolizes suffering and death, humiliation and shame, but at the same time reconciliation, hope and possibility for new life. Above all the cross is a symbol for the love that does not look out for its own interests but is there for others. The mission of the cross does not build on human power or wisdom but on God's power.

Mission in Jesus' way

The life-work of Jesus is the best exemplification of the methods of God's mission. Jesus spoke simply and clearly of the way of salvation and took care of the weak and the helpless. Obedient to his call, the disciples left everything and rose to follow him. His commission "Go and make disciples of all nations" showed the direction of God's mission. The holistic activity of Jesus, taking both spiritual and physical needs into consideration, is the best working model for the mission even in the 1990s.

Spiritual Life, Communion and Mission

Spirituality is not always a self-evident fact in a Lutheran mission agency, because the work of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual life are generally not very much emphasized in Lutheran churches. Theological research on the Holy Spirit has also remained rather insignificant for a long time. No wonder if many Lutheran missionaries feel uncertain in front of contemporary charismatic movements and living spirituality in third-world churches.

A good and healthy starting point in these questions is Luther's commentary to the Creed article III. According to Luther, the question of Spirit and spiritual life is in close connection with the belief in Christ. Without the Holy Spirit the faith cannot be born nor keep living. Human intellect and deeds will not be of any help. This fact, being valid all over the world, is therefore most essential for the Christian mission.

The "communion of saints" has always been a problem in the Christian mission. There are thousands of mission agencies and religious movements participating in God's mission. They all believe to know the right Christian interpretation of the way of salvation. To create deeper communion has proved to be difficult even when there are no open conflicts between different groups. Yet a mission without cooperation and contact with others involved in the same activities is impossible in the world of today.

In questions related to peace, justice and wholeness of creation, the FELM is trying to develop partnership and cooperation across religious and denominational frontiers. As far as deep questions of faith are concerned, we have another starting point. The most natural partnership and cooperation in mission can develop between Lutheran churches and mission agencies, since essential questions of Christian faith are interpreted in a similar way. One of those is the understanding of sacraments. The Lutheran view of baptism and Holy Communion is setting limits to communion with several churches. Although the Lutheran community will be given preference even in the future, it must not exclude other Christians.

GUIDELINES FOR MISSION STRATEGY

Thinking in terms of the Trinity is an inspiring starting point for the strategy and the work of the FELM in the 1990s. It reminds us in the first place that all mission activities must

base on a theological interpretation of God's plans, will and aims. Furthermore, the view of the mission as the mandate of the Triune God naturally opens global perspectives: the whole creation and all people are of the same origin and thus equal.

Substance and Quality of Work in the Focus

All through the 1980s the FELM was continuously growing, due to increasing needs in different parts of the world. The growth was mainly quantitative, without forgetting the quality anyhow. In the 1990s the FELM is concentrating more and more on the substance and the quality of the work. One of the most important aspects here is that the theological view of mission penetrates and characterizes all the activities both at home and further afield.

Missionaries and Financial Support

In evaluating the growth of the FELM the usual yardsticks have been the number of missionaries and the annual budgets. In the 1980s the number of missionaries increased more than expected in the long-range plans but the budgets did not grow at the same pace. This development contributed to the missionary-centeredness. Such a trend might have a negative influence on the cooperation with churches and Christians in the Third World - especially if the result is that a growing part of the budget is spent to maintain Finnish missionaries instead of increasing help to young churches and aid to suffering people. The aim in the 1990s is to keep the number of missionaries and the total work and its costs in a reasonable balance. We are planning to train 20-30 new missionaries annually.

Identity in Cooperation

The question of the FELM's self-governing in overseas work is a part of the principles and aims of the international coope-

ration in mission. The task and the role of a mission agency is always discussed in joint mission activities with young churches and international organizations. For the FELM it is very important to preserve its theological identity so that the direction of the activities is not dictated from outside. During the past years the FELM has been receiving considerable financial support from the state of Finland for development projects in Third World countries, which we have every reason to be grateful for. At the same time we have to keep in mind that we apply for financial aid from the state only for such programmes and activities which we would willingly participate in even without governmental aid. The direction of the work and the targets of the mission must be determined on the basis of FELM's own identity.

Geographic Foci

Since the FELM is an agency for foreign missions, its activities will be concentrated outside the borders of our own country even in the future. Changes of geographic foci are not of current interest. Thus the activities are mainly directed towards Africa, Asia and more and more also towards Europe and Latin America.

Mission Challenges

The work on different continents is largely determined by local needs and challenges. In some areas the primary challenge is how to meet other religions. First of all we must try to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet met God's love in Christ Jesus. The migration of people into cities with enormous problems is one of the special challenges in many of our working areas. The poor and the gap between the rich and the poor need to be taken seriously in the work of the FELM. Youth and children and their involvement in church and mission challenge us as well. In planning mission activities and

development programmes, the FELM is taking the ecological questions and environmental problems into consideration.

THE FELM IN AFRICA

More than 120 Years in Africa

The work of the FELM in Africa has been continuing more than 120 years. Co-operation with independent churches is well advanced. Nevertheless, nothing indicates that the work should be reduced in the near future. Challenges and needs seem to be growing in many African countries where the FELM is involved in mission. Even there the objective is to extend the work into such areas where there are no congregations so far.

Health Care, Education and Urban Mission

The political developments, e.g. the independence of Namibia and new possibilities for development in Angola, are bringing many new tasks to the churches and the mission. The building of the new nation by intensive education, health care, struggle against drug abuse etc., are special challenges also for the FELM. Urbanization has proceeded and become a problem also in Africa. The FELM is intending to concentrate more and more on big cities, trying to serve urban people together with partner churches concerned.

Theological Education and Training in Mission

Theological education in seminaries and Bible schools will be an important task even in the coming years. Production of adequate theological literature for parishes and training institutes is of great importance as well.

The rapid growth of the churches in Africa continues to call for new tasks. A great number of church workers is needed to guide, to teach and to educate the new members of the church. The objective is that the members of the congregations become mission-minded and that the baptized people take growing responsibility for mission.

Meeting African Islam

The "mission strategic" plans of Islam and its increasing activity in Africa challenge the FELM to develop the work in the Islamic areas. In Tanzania, for instance, the local church needs to be encouraged to bring the Gospel to adherents of Islam. In Senegal the FELM is working both in its own programmes in Islamic regions and together with the local Lutheran church. Special attention has to be paid to the training of missionaries, ones who are equipped to meet the particular demands in an Islamic environment.

Partnership with Young Churches

Mission in Africa is to a large extent cooperation with independent African churches. Even if it is still said that the mission should be integrated in the young church, such a form of cooperation is often considered as out-of-date and not very adequate. Instead, the idea of partnership has gained new territory and contributed to practical models of cooperation. The emphasis is on the fact that the mission is God's, and that both independent churches and mission agencies are invited to participate in God's mission as his co-workers. Both partners are equally serving and carrying out the missionary task. The FELM tends to promote cooperation based on equal partnership in mission.

We have many things to learn from the young African churches, especially regarding spirituality. The throbbing life in the worships and a holistic view of Christian Faith are enriching elements in the cooperation. This contribution of African Christians can also be channelled into our home church.

FELM IN ASIA

The Asian continent has for a long time been considered as the greatest challenge for the Christian mission. The percentage of Christian population in Asia is much lower than on any other continent. On the other hand, more than a half of the whole population of the world is living in Asia.

The FELM's attempts to extend the work in Asia since the second half of the 1970s have borne fruit. Nevertheless, the work has not grown as much as we had hoped for, mainly because of visa restrictions. Working permits are difficult to obtain for political and religious reasons, and many countries continue to keep the doors closed for Christian mission. There are no signs of new possibilities for western mission in the near future. Thus we have to be prudent enough in planning future mission activities in Asia. Instead of new areas, the FELM tries to further develop the work in open countries in Asia.

Working in Big Cities

The Asian metropolises present one of the main challenges to the mission. The FELM has to a large extent concentrated on church planting and evangelism among people of other faiths, except in Hong Kong where social programmes have been a part of the FELM's work from the very beginning. Caring ministry and Christian service, particularly among the poor in big cities, need special attention in the future.

Mission in the Islamic World

Mission among the Muslims in Asia has been and still is a problem. In Islamic countries the work has mostly been directed to Christian minorities instead of Muslims. Hoping for fruits of this kind of "indirect" mission some time in the future can hardly be enough for a mission agency. The FELM continues to look for new possibilities of conveying the Gospel to adherents of Islam in those parts of Asia where we are already involved. One of the important tasks is to strengthen the missionary nature of the Christian churches in Islamic countries.

To China After a Long Time

The FELM was working in China from 1901 to 1949. The developments in the local church have resulted to new contacts and possibilities of cooperation. It is a question of providing financial assistance to social projects of the Chinese church and of sending language teachers to some schools. Any large-scale mission activities seem to be out of question in the near future.

Religious Life and Cooperation

The origins of the major world religions are to be found in Asia, and religion has still a strong position in many Asian countries. Religion penetrates the whole philosophy of life and has a deep influence in the daily life of people, contrary to our European lifestyle. Prayers, sacrifices and questions of faith are a central part of human life. The FELM and its missionaries in Asia have to face this and to make the plans for the work and the further training of missionaries accordingly. The reality of spiritual life as a counterbalance to material values and godlessness is something which we could channel from Asian churches and congregations into our own ones.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

Only a few years ago Europe seemed to be a continent without signs of rapid changes. The economic structures and the political life were adapted to existing constellations, and the rather low profile of the church and the religion was generally accepted. But then started the drastic changes: A new union was born in Western Europe and the eastern part of the continent experienced enormous political changes. At the same time the position of the church and the religion was altered. Thousands of East-Europeans could worship in their churches for the first time after tens of years.

New Possibilities

The new Europe of the 1990s presents new challenges and possibilities to the Christian mission. The presence of other religions is now stronger than it has been for 2000 years. Atheism is still a reality, and a large segment of European population does not belong to any Christian church. The FELM has to adapt its work in Europe to the new situation. There are many signs of awakening interest in new patterns of cooperation in global mission.

Cooperating With Lutheran Churches

Cooperation in mission with East-European churches is included in the current long-range plan of the FELM. As a Lutheran mission agency, the FELM will be cooperating with local Lutheran churches even in the future. The existing partnership in France and in Germany, where the FELM works among migrant Muslims, will be further developed.

LUTHERANS NEEDED IN LATIN AMERICA

When the FELM was planning to start missionary work together with a couple of local churches in Latin America, there were many open questions. Latin America was for long regarded as a Roman Catholic continent where Protestant mission was unnecessary. The political situation was unstable in many countries and their economy was encumbered with heavy debts. Even if the same questions are still up-to-date, the need of Lutheran mission seems to be greater than we believed. The Roman Catholic Church has no objections in this regard, furthermore it seems to appreciate the growing interest of the Lutherans in the problems and unmet challenges of Latin America. This was clearly stated in the LWF General Assembly held in Brazil in 1990.

Urban and Rural Mission in Colombia and Venezuela

The FELM's activities in Colombia and Venezuela were from the very beginning directed towards both urban and rural areas, the main emphasis, however, being in big cities. The main target groups are the poor and the young people. We are aiming at holistic mission programmes, keeping the verbal proclamation of the Gospel and the social service together.

In both countries the FELM is working together with local Lutheran churches. The agreements of cooperation reflect the idea of partnership in mission. All activities must be carried out in mutual understanding, observing the rules agreed upon together.

THE FELM AND THE CHURCH OF FINLAND

The FELM is not only one of the official mission agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland but also clearly congregation-orientated in its domestic work. This tendency also shows itself in the organization. All local congregations

of our church have been called as members of the FELM and thus have the right to send their representatives to the annual meeting, where the fifteen members of the governing board are elected. In addition to the elected members, three bishops are ex officio members of the FELM board.

The Work in the Dioceses

The changing situation in the church has resulted in new structures in the FELM's domestic work. Plans are being made together with congregations, deaneries and diocesan offices. Special attention is given to missiologic questions and stimulating the missionary dimension of the church as well as its responsibility for global mission.

Principles at Home and Abroad

The guiding principles for participation in the mission of the Triune God are equally valid with regard to the work of the FELM at home as well as abroad so that the aspects of creation, redemption and spirituality are taken into consideration. The main objective in the domestic work remains the same as before: the FELM wants to witness in word and deed of God's mission and his seeking love both near and far.

Seppo Suokunnas, Th.D.

THEOLOGICAL FOCI IN THE MISSION WORK OF THE LUTHERAN EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION OF FINLAND

The Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF) is one of the six officially recognized mission organizations within the Lutheran Church of Finland, in addition to its role as the central organization of the extensive Evangelical revival movement at work in Finland. As such it is also an inner-mission organization covering the entire country, with its lay members and employees working jointly with the local parishes in maintaining the mission proclamation, in raising the funds needed for mission endeavor, and in sending missionaries to the fields.

In 1991 LEAF had a total of 85 missionaries, some 76 abroad, the remainder on furlough. The mission department of the association employs 8 workers, the inner-mission having some 70 workers carrying out spiritual work domestically, with an additional 16 in administration and finance. The annual mission budget amounts to some 20 million FIM. With the budget for domestic activities in 1991 totaling 37 million FIM, the final budget was approximately 45 million FIM (10.7 million USD).

The LEAF mission fields are as follows: Japan (since 1900), Kenya (1970), Papua New Guinea (1981), Zambia (1989), Cameroon (1990) as well as Malawi (1991). In addition, support is given to the Lutheran Church of South Korea and to the work among Japanese immigrants carried out in Brazil by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Japan.

Principal areas and objectives of the work

The pivotal form of the mission work carried out by LEAF is the calling of preaching and teaching performed with the young churches, the basis for this being the worship life of the parish, the regular and occasional services of the church, Bible training/courses at various levels, and fellowship meetings. This involves the integration of ministries to women, children and youth. The goal of these activities is to develop parishes and equip them with local workers, to the extent that wherever the parish of a young church is self-sufficient, the missionary is transferred to a new area of service or placed in the service of the diocese or national church.

Social work on the LEAF mission fields consists of health care and child care. In these, once again, the trend has been to provide the health clinics, kindergartens/nurseries, and other forms of work with an ever increasing number of national workers. The churches LEAF has the privilege of coöperating with have also been assisted in maintaining a school for the retarded as well as in various construction projects. Moreover, the Finnish government also contributed to these with the allocation of developmental aid monies. Service is the very nature of mission work, yet its concrete realization keeps changing in accordance with the field, the time and the situation. More and more, large cities are becoming significant centers for mission activities. Tokyo has been such a hub for quite a long time; the situation there requires, on the one hand, skills for carrying on individual work and, on the other hand, abilities to reach out to the vast masses, e.g. through radio work. In African cities such as Nairobi and Kisumu, Kenya and Yaounde, Cameroon, the homeless, the refugees, the immigrants and the drug addicts are met face to face, together with a plethora of problems. The work needs to be moved into the mega-cities to an increasing extent.

The third principal form of work is education. The weight and share given to training will by no means decrease in the

future, rather the opposite. The educational system is served by teachers, even the children of missionary families have their own Finnish schools in Japan and Kenya. Parishioners are trained both in various trade skills and in the Christian faith. The training of church employees continues to increase in significance. The training of clergy, evangelists and other church workers may have a greater impact on the lives and activities of coöperating churches than any other form of work. The training of missionary candidates in Finland will be developed throughout the 1990s in order to allow the training of reserves as well. It ought to be made possible to enter missionary training courses in short sections and without unconditional commitment. Nevertheless, there should be ways of utilizing those trained and also those experienced in mission work for lengthy periods of time both at home and in the field. There is a need to increase contacts between the missionary organization and the receiving field and church. Correspondingly, this includes the augmentation of communication with Finnish parishes as well as the expansion of their missionary awareness. Despite a positive increase in mission work we Finns do not seem to be the kind of church lit by missionary fires that we could be. The fact that we increase our share of mission contributions, that our sacrificial preparedness grows and that we build up contacts with Christians residing on the other side of the globe in no way robs us of our own faith, spiritual capital and zeal, but rather increases them. The Church of Christ is one and catholic.

Cooperation of the Lutheran church

Treating on theological foci, primary emphasis must be laid on the fact that the mission carried out by LEAF harmonizes with the work accomplished by and with the theology practiced in both the Lutheran Church of Finland and the young churches of the mission fields. Organizationally based mission activity, with its roots in the history and activities of the Church of Finland, does not embody its own theology, but grounds its work in the common legacy of Lutheran faith. Thus its primary

objective is the fulfillment of the Great Commission, as given by Jesus Christ Himself to His Church. The aim is to lead people to God, to find in Him through the means of grace the salvation of their souls, peace of mind, the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. This means teaching people, guiding them to Holy Baptism and to the fellowship of the Christian church and the communion of faith.

Commitment to God's revealed word

The church ties of a mission do not remove each organization's right and obligation to continually ask what its own vision of the work is and what is emphasized by its missiology.

To begin with, the mission work of LEAF is bound to the Word of God. Our organization sees no possibilities for mission outside this basis. Missiology is the theology of God's Word. Even to employees involved in this work and to members of a missionary organization this statement is extremely familiar, it nevertheless in the early 1990s seems necessary to emphasize this second principle of Lutheranism, i.e. everything must be evaluated on the basis of the Bible, God's Holy Word. May we formulate this in the following manner: the existence of God's special revelation is not only to be accepted, but is that to which we bind ourselves. We comprehend that the special revelation of God is found in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. The point of departure is the fact that the Bible is an altogether human and an altogether divine Word, the handbook of salvation, conformed according to the will of God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is power in the Word of God.

A great number of discussions, current themes of debate, and work-related problems are crystallized into the question of whether there is a special revelation from God. Is there such a Word one can fully depend on? Is there such a revelation that does not expire or age, one which can serve as the basis of instruction and proclamation for all time and in all cul-

tures? Do we believe that there is at work in this world of ours a reality called God? The endurance of the individual missionary, his motivation for ministry, his spiritual vision for work in the service of God's Kingdom and in the reaping of eternal fruits, his confidence in the power and activity of God, his concept of Christianity as saving faith, this all stands or falls with what he thinks about the nature of God's Word, about special revelation.

Proclaiming Christ

The second necessary point of emphasis in missiology is the person of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. This, too, is a classic theme unspoiled by the new. Yet mission work does not mean the exportation of novelty or earthly wisdoms but rather building on a lasting foundation. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ," says the Apostle Paul.

There is no mission work without the gospel. There is no gospel without Christ, for it is the good news concerning Him. The dynamic gospel in the New Testament always starts with Christ, ever with new viewpoints and variations, but always beginning with Christ. It is remarkable that in the New Testament texts these three are one, i.e. Christ - Christ's work on behalf of us sinners - the emphasis of universality, inclusive of all mankind. The gospel of Jesus Christ belongs to all people as it is needed by all people. "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." When the hope of the resurrection is preached in accordance with 1 Pet. 1:3-4 (note: special revelation, i.e. the level of the reality of God), this does not mean just general hope, but is rather based on the works God has accomplished in Christ. Thus Christ's cross, redemption, and victory over the power of death are the content of the gospel.

The primacy of Christ means, not only in the New Testament mission situation, but also today, the contrast of the theology of grace and the theology of works. If Paul was forced by the situation at hand to continually emphasize that no one could become righteous through the deeds of the law (as in Rom. 3:21, Gal. 2:16, 3:11, etc.), the same emphasis is necessary today. In the hearts of men all over the world dwells the singular thought of merit, works. The recurrent theme of various religions is that of anthropocentric righteousness. The great pearl of Christianity is its radical gospel, the forgiveness of all sins, the pardoning of man, the ready reality of reconciliation and redemption. If the Evangelical revival movement in Finland has been blessed by the proclamation: "It is fulfilled", it then wants to convey that same grace to people in mission lands.

Christ-centricity means that it is not yet enough for the missionary to have an awareness of his missionary call. It is good that he has the message and spirituality. But over and over again in the religious situation in Finland, and the same may be seen from other countries as well, this fact has stood out: a strong awareness of the message and a clear call to act may nevertheless come out in practice as legalistic Christianity. Therefore we must always ask whether we carry the message of Christ's mercy.

Lutheran confessionalism and the theology of the means of grace

We at LEAF feel that missiology and missionary activity need the clear objective of promoting biblical Lutheranism. In the day-to-day situation of the coöperating churches on the mission fields, there frequently is competition between the many denominations and spiritual and ideological movements. The fragmentation of Christendom is a painful reality. On the streets of African and Asian cities one can see a never-ending stream of religious groups advertising their own activities. This sight gives rise to the question as to whether our group,

too, is needed here. Giving up at this point may, however, mean that we leave a young church or a budding parish at the mercy of extremist groups and unbiblical teaching. It is better in those places where the call has taken us and the work has been established that we represent a clearly defined biblical Lutheran Christianity based on our Confessions. In this respect we believe that the Scandinavian Lutheran churches have a great deal to offer.

Many LEAF mission fields currently offer a truly historic opportunity to hold forth the trustworthy content of the Lutheran doctrine. The Matonga Theological Seminary strives for this in Kenya, training clergy and evangelists, in addition to offering a variety of courses. In conjunction with the church the seminary is carrying on the translation of the Augsburg Confession into Swahili. In the spring of 1992 LEAF and the Lutheran Church of Kenya will jointly arrange an international theological conference on the theme of the Lutheran Confession. The urgency of this issue is indicated by the desire of the small churches of Zambia and Malawi to grow rapidly in accordance with the teachings of the Small Catechism of Luther and the instruction of Augustana. On the other hand, the theological seminary in Japan needs Lutheran support for quite different reasons. Thus problems are faced whenever a church in a new area is taking her first faltering steps; whenever established congregations are under the pressure of Pentecostalism or the various other free churches; whenever old pagan beliefs threaten to darken the brightness of God's Word; and whenever connections with worldwide churches and their organizations may have brought along the perils associated with liberal theology. The question of the future of Lutheranism in the world is a serious one. In mission work, however, we do not make calculations based on church attendance. The important issue is to keep the message of God and His saving work in Christ bright and clear, thus giving people peace and a lasting foundation for their lives and belief.

Apart from the doctrine of justification, Christology, the image of God and the Bible, the need for the teaching of the

Lutheran Confession is greatest in the area of the doctrine of the sacraments. Adult baptism and rebaptizing threaten to push aside the teaching of the New Testament in many areas of Africa. In some emerging churches there may be confusion over whether both elements should be distributed to the parishioners; or then the concept of the Eucharist is entirely Reformed, with the real presence of Christ not understood at all.

It is for these reasons that LEAF has found it necessary to redouble its efforts in promoting Lutheran instruction on all its mission fields, this intensification of the task taking place through on-the-job training of workers, preaching, translation of Christian literature, basic instruction in the parishes, and short-term Bible courses.

Religious encounter and outreach

The rough outline of a missiological model presented above affects the way other religions are encountered.

On the basis of the general revelation, e.g. on the ground of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans or St Luke's Acts, the declaration of faith includes the view that the adherents of other religions also seek God and that they have the same yearning for eternal life as we Christians do. This signifies that we join them in all that does not jeopardize the biblical doctrine of justification, meaning that we undertake the difficult task of fellowship and mutual respect.

Being a fellowman to someone, an assignment given to us in the Bible, means encountering people in their own environment, with as much openness as possible towards their own traditions and history. The acceptance of this call for contextuality denotes that, e.g. in worship life, African music and life style is retained as intact as possible. In mission work people are helped in their needs. The starting point for encountering the adherents of other religions springs from the Biblical command to love all people. This has brought about

LEAF social services, e.g. kindergartens in Japan, the health clinics in Matonga and Monianku, the school for developmentally retarded children in Kisumu, the Nairobi slum ministry, etc.

Encountering the religions themselves, i.e. their beliefs, world views and paths to salvation, is yet another matter, and an even more difficult one. Here, too, openness and respect are needed. But openness and vulnerability can become a delusion, with respect and consideration turning out as diffidence and bashfulness or even stagnancy. From the point of view of the church, contextuality can be negative, when association and coalescence with the local environment and thought threaten to change the Christian message into something else. The mission committed to God's revelation bewares of such contextuality.

Among missionary organizations and churches both on the fields and at home the rising trend in recent years seems to have been the encounter of various religions on the basis of the concept of equality, a term with multifarious interpretations. The equality of all humanity is proper; yet to place various religions on the same soteriological plane is highly dubious. The pivotal point of Christian mission work has traditionally been that there is no salvation in any other than Jesus Christ. This truth about the uniqueness of faith in Christ has frequently been relativized, thereby opening up the road to the confusion of religions, i.e. syncretism, which the Christian church can neither afford nor justify. Dialogue with other religions is easy to implement from mission headquarters and central offices in the West, whereas the tone of voice may drastically change as soon as the invasion of other religions reaches Europe and the Scandinavian countries. This has been a cause of concern in the jubilee book of LEAF, 1990, bearing the title *God's Mission, Missiological Foundations and Viewpoints*. In that book the messages received from Kenya and Japan, e.g., declare the fact that dialogue between religions cannot denote the denial of the absolute truths of Christianity.

The fervid, continual problem of the missionary goals and theology of LEAF is whether the gospel reaches new people, new nations and new groups. Christian mission in Japan is very old, yet Christians still comprise only one percent of the population, despite the concerted efforts of missionaries and local churches. Even today Buddhism and Shintoism remain strongly entrenched. Yet our hearts are burdened with the question of how to forward Christianity in Japan. One of the main foci for future work is to answer the question as to how the mission work, the church, its workers and message can reach out more specifically. Also in the African nations questions are being raised as to how to reach new regions and people, these queries being closely connected to the increasing challenge to Christianity offered by Islam. The same theme is found in the West.

Indifference, the rise of new cults, and the power of materialism have often made Christians apathetic and destitute of strength. Here in Finland we, too, find the need for the kind of Lutheranism that sinks its roots deep, where the signs of Christ's church are not concealed. A strong doctrine coupled to the personal joy produced by the gospel creates the courage for confessionalism and outreach ministry. The rise of theology and parish life is the rise of mission. We in the Evangelical revival movement and LEAF want to pray and work towards this goal.

Seppo Suokunnas

TEOLOGISIA PAINOPISTEALUEITA EVANKELIUMIYHDISTYKSEN LÄHETYSTYÖSSÄ

Suomen Luterilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys on yksi Suomen evankelisluterilaisen kirkon virallisista lähetysjärjestöistä. Samalla Evankeliumiyhdistys on kirkkomme sisällä vaikuttavan laajan evankelisen herätysliikkeen keskusjärjestö. Sellaisena kyseessä on myös kotimaassa työtä tekevä sisälähetysjärjestö, jonka kenttäväki ja työntekijät yhdessä seurakuntien kanssa pitävät ulkolähetystä esillä, hankkivat lähetykselle vuosittain tarvittavat miljoonat ja lähettävät työntekijät lähetyskentille.

Vuonna 1991 Evankeliumiyhdistyksellä oli yhteensä 85 lähetystyöntekijää, heistä noin 76 oli kentillä ulkomaille ja loput kotimaan lomilla ja -kausilla. Evankeliumiyhdistyksellä oli lisäksi lähetysosastolla kotimaassa 8 työntekijää, sisälähetysosaston palveluksessa noin 70 työntekijää kotimaan hengelistä työtä varten sekä hallinnon ja talouden alueella 16 henkilöä. Ulkolähetysten budjetti on vuositasolla noin 20 miljoonan suomen markan luokkaa. Yhdistyksen toiminnallinen budjetti oli yhteensä 37 miljoonaa ja talon kokonaisbudjetti 45 miljoonaa.

SLEY:n lähetyskentät ovat seuraavat: JAPANI (vuodesta 1900), KENIA (1970), PAPUA-UUSI-GUINEA (1981), SAMBIA (1989), KAMERUN (1990) ja MALAWI (1991). Lisäksi on tuettu Etelä-Korean luterilaista kirkkoa sekä Japanin evankelisluterilaisen kirkon Brasiliassa tekemää työtä.

Toiminnan pääalueet ja tavoitteet

Evankeliumiyhdistyksen tekemän lähetystyön keskeinen työmuoto on nuorten kirkkojen keskuudessa tapahtuva opetus- ja julistustyö. Jumalanpalveluselämä, kirkon pyhät toimitukset, seurat

ja eri tasoilla tapahtuva raamattukoulutus ovat perustana. Siihen niveltyy naistyö, lapsi- ja nuorisotyö. Tavoitteena on seurakuntien kasvattaminen ja varustaminen paikallisilla työntekijöillä. Sieltä, missä nuoren kirkon seurakunta itse tulee toimeen, lähetit siirtyvät uusille alueille tai kokonaiskirkon palvelukseen.

Sosiaalinen työ on Sleyn lähetysalueilla ollut sairaanhoitotyötä ja lapsityötä. Siinäkin kehityssuunta on ollut varustaa terveysasemat, lastentarhat ja muut työpisteet enenevässä määrin kansallisella työntekijöillä. Yhteistyökirkkoja on autettu myös kehitysvammakoulun ylläpidossa sekä erilaisissa rakennusprojekteissa, joiden taloudelliseen panokseen toisi-naan on saatu myös valtion kehitysyhteistyömäärärahoja. Palvelu kuuluu lähetyksen olemukseen, mutta sen konkreettinen muoto muuttuu työkentän, ajan ja tilanteen mukaan. Suurkaupungit ovat muodostumassa yhä enemmän työn tärkeäksi painopisteal-eiksi. Tokiossa työtä on tehty jo kauan ja sikäläisessä tilan-teessa tarvitaan toisaalta yksilötyön taitamista, toisaalta suurten joukkojen puoleen kääntymistä esimerkiksi radiotyön välityksellä. Afrikan kaupungeissa kuten Kenian Nairobissa ja Kisumussa sekä Kamerunin Yaoundessa kohdataan asunnottomien, pakolaisten, siirtolaisten ja huumeikäyttäjien kasvot ja monet ongelmat. Työn painopistettä pyritään siirtämään juuri suur-kaupunkeihin.

Kolmas Evankeliumiyhdistyksen lähetyksen päätyömuoto on koulu-tus. Sen osuus ja painoarvo ei tulevaisuudessa suinkaan vähene vaan kasvaa. Koululaitoksen palveluksessa on opettajia, lähe-tyslapsilla on Japanissa ja Keniassa oma suomalainen koulu. Seurakuntalaisia koulutetaan niin erilaisten ammattitehtävien kuin kristinopin taidossa. Kirkon työntekijäkoulutuksella on yhä suurempi merkitys. Pappien, evankelistojen ja muiden työn-tekiöiden koulutuksella vaikutetaan yhteistyökirkkojen elämään ja toimintaa ehkä enemmän kuin millään muulla tavalla. Kentäl-le lähetettävien koulutusta kotimaassa pyritään 1990-luvulla uudistamaan siten, että olisi mahdollista kouluttaa myös reserviä. Lähettikursseille pitäisi voida osallistua myös lyhyissä jaksoissa ja ilman ehdotonta sitoutumista lähtemi-

seen. Toisaalta koulutettuja ja myös jo lähetystyössä olleita pitäisi voida käyttää pitkään sekä kentällä että kotimaassa. Yhteysien lisääminen lähettävän järjestön ja vastaanottavan kentän ja kirkon välillä on tarpeen. Siihen kuuluu myös yhteysien lisääminen sekä lähetystietoisuuden kasvattaminen Suomen seurakunnissa. Ilahduttavasta lähetysten edistymisestä huolimatta emme Suomessa vielä ole sellainen lähetystulen sytyttämä kirkko, joka voisimme olla. Lähetysten osuuden lisääminen, uhrivalmiuden kasvaminen ja yhteysien rakentaminen toisella puolella maapalloa asuviin kristittyihin ei suinkaan vie meiltä, vaan lisää omaa uskoamme, pääomaamme ja intoamme. Kristuksen kirkko on yksi ja yhteinen.

Luterilaisen kirkon yhteistä työtä

Kyseltäessä Sley'n lähetystoiminnan teologisia painopisteitä on ensiksi korostettava sitä, että lähetystyömme niveltyy Suomen luterilaisen kirkon ja lähetysmaiden nuorten kirkkojen omaan työhön ja teologiaan. Historiallisista ja toiminnallisista syistä hahmottunut järjestöpohjainen lähetystoiminta ei edusta mitään omaa teologiaa vaan rakentaa luterilaisuuden yhteiselle uskonperinnölle. Sen mukaisesti ensisijaisena tavoitteena on Kristuksen kirkolle antaman lähetys- ja kastekäskyn täyttäminen. Tavoitteena on ihmisten johtaminen Jumalan luo, löytämään Hänessä armonvälineiden kautta sielun pelastus, omantunnonrauha, syntien anteeksiantamus ja ikuinen elämä. Se merkitsee ihmisten opettamista, johtamista pyhälle kasteelle ja kristillisen seurakunnan elämän ja uskon yhteyteen.

Sitoutuminen Jumalan ilmoituksen sanaan

Lähetystyön kirkollisuus ei poista lähetysjärjestön oikeutta ja velvollisuutta itse jatkuvasti kysellä, mikä työnäky meillä on ja millaisia painotuksia lähetysteologiassamme edustamme.

Ensimmäisenä näkökulmana Sley'n lähetystyötä ajatellen tuotakoon esiin halun sitoutua Jumalan sanaan. Emme näe mahdolli-

seksi tehdä lähetystyötä missään ilman tätä perustaa. Lähetysteologia on Jumalan sanan teologiaa. Tämä on meille kirkon ja lähetystyön työntekijöinä kovin tuttu. Siitä huolimatta tuntuu kuitenkin tarpeelliselta juuri nyt 1990-luvun alussa erikseen korostaa tätä luterilaisuuden toista perusprinsiippiä: kaikki on arvosteltava Raamatun perustalta, Jumalan sanan mukaan. Haluan muotoilla tämän asian seuraavaan muotoon: on hyväksyttävä Jumalan erityisen ilmoituksen olemassaolo ja sitouduttava siihen. On hyväksyttävä, että tämä Jumalan erityinen ilmoitus on Raamatun kirjoituksissa. On lähdettävä siitä, että Raamattu on kauttaaltaan inhimillistä ja kauttaaltaan jumalallista sanaa, pelastuksen oppikirja, joka Pyhän Hengen johdatuksessa on tullut juuri sellaiseksi kuin Jumala on halunnut. Jumalan sanassa on voima.

Monet keskustelut, ajankohtaiset teemat ja työn ongelmat kristallisoituvat kysymykseen siitä, onko olemassa mitään erityistä Jumalan ilmoitusta. Onko olemassa sellaista sanaa, jonka varaan saa heittäytyä? Onko olemassa sellaista ilmoitusta, joka ei vanhene ja joka on opetuksen ja julistuksen perusta kaikkina aikoina ja kaikissa kulttuuripiireissä. Uskomme, että tässä meidän maailmassamme on vaikuttamassa jokin Jumalan todellisuus? Lähetystyöntekijän jaksaminen, hänen työmotivaationsa, hänen hengellinen työnäkynsä Jumalan valtakunnan palveluksessa ja iankaikkisen hedelmän korjaamisessa, hänen luottamuksensa Jumalan voimiin ja tekoihin, hänen ajatuksensa kristinuskosta pelastavana uskontona, kaikki seisoo tai kaatuu sen mukana, mitä ajatellaan Jumalan sanasta, erityisestä ilmoituksesta.

Kristuksen julistamista

Toinen välttämätön lähetysteologinen painopiste on Jeesuksen Kristuksen persoona ja hänen lunastustyönsä. Tämäkin on tietysti klassinen teema eikä uutuudella pilattu. Mutta lähetystyö ei olekaan uutuuksien eikä viisauksien viemistä vaan kestävän pohjan rakentamista. "Sillä muuta perustusta ei

kukaan voi panna kuin mikä pantu on ja se on Jeesus Kristus", sanoo apostoli.

Lähetystä ei ole ilman evankeliumia. Evankeliumia ei ole ilman Kristusta, sillä se on ilosanoma Hänestä. Ulospäinsuuntautuva evankeliumi Uudessa testamentissa lähtee aina Kristuksesta, uusin ja uusin näkökulmin ja variaatioin, mutta aina Kristuksesta. Merkillisesti Uuden testamentin teksteissä nämä kolme ovat yhtä: Kristus - Kristuksen työ meidän syntisten hyväksi - kaikkia ihmisiä koskeva korostus, universaalisuus. Evankeliumi Kristuksesta kuuluu kaikille ihmisille ja kaikki tarvitsevat sitä. "Sillä Jumala oli Kristuksessa ja sovitti maailman itsensä kanssa eikä lukenut heille heidän rikkomuksiaan." "Meidän vielä ollessamme heikot kuoli Kristus oikeaan aikaan jumalattomien edestä." Kun saarnataan ylösnousemuksen toivoa (obs. erityisen ilmoituksen eli Jumalan todellisuuden taso) 1. Piet. 1:3-4 mukaisesti, ei se ole mitään yleistä toivomista. Se perustuu niihin tekoihin, joita Jumala on Kristuksessa tehnyt. Siten Kristuksen risti, lunastus ja voitto kuoleman valloista on evankeliumin sisältö.

Kristuksen ensisijaisuus merkitsee - ei vain alkuseurakunnan lähetystilanteessa - vaan myös nykypäivänä armoteologian ja ansioteologian vastakohtaa. Jos Paavalin täytyi toistuvasti korostaa, ettei kukaan tule vanhurskaaksi lain teoista (Room. 3:21, Gal. 2:16, 3:11 jne), on sama korostus tänään välttämätön. Kaikkialla ihmisten sydämessä asuu ansion ajatus. Eri uskontojen toistuva teema on ihmiskeskeinen hurskaus. Kristinuskon helmi on radikaali evankeliumi, kaikkien syntien anteeksiantamus, ihmisen armahtaminen, sovituksen ja lunastuksen valmis todellisuus. Jos evankelinen herätysliike on Suomessa saanut paljon siunausta "Se on täytetty" -julistuksesta, halutaan sitä samaa armoa viedä lähetysmaiden ihmisille.

Kristus-keskeisyys merkitsee sitä, ettei vielä ole tarpeeksi, kun lähetillä on kutsumustietoisuus. On hyvä, että hänellä on sanoma ja spiritualiteetti. Mutta oma uskonnollinen tilanteemme kotimaassa on näyttänyt ja sama on ollut nähtävissä ulkomailla, että vahva sanomatietoisuus ja selkeä aktiviteetti

voikin purkautua lainomaiseksi kristillisyydeksi. Siksi on kysyttävä, onko meillä mukana juuri Kristuksen armon sano-
ma.

Luterilaista tunnustuksellisuutta ja armonvälineteologiaa

Lähetysteologia ja -toiminta tarvitsee mielestämme selkeän tavoitteen luterilaisuuden edistämiseksi. Lähetysten yhteistyökirkkojen tilanteessa usein hyvin monet kirkkokunnat ja hengelliset sekä henkiset virtaukset kilpailevat keskenään. Kristikunnan pirstoutuneisuus on ahdistavaa todellisuutta. Afrikkalaisen ja tai aasialaisen kaupungin kadulla voi nähdä uskonnollisen ryhmän toisensa jälkeen mainostamassa omaa toimintaansa. Tästä voi ensi ajatuksena olla: onko meidänkin täällä vielä toimittava. Luopuminen voi kuitenkin merkitä nuoren kirkon tai vasta muodostumassa olevan seurakunnan jättämistä ääriryhmien armoille ja epäraamatullisten opetusten varaan. Parempi on siellä, minne työkuutsu on saatu ja toiminta alkanut, edustaa selkeästi luterilaista kristillisyyttä tunnustuksemme pohjalta. Katsomme, että tässä mielessä esimerkiksi Pohjoismaiden luterilaisilla kirkkoilla on paljon annettavaa.

Evankeliumiyhdistyksen työkentillä näyttää monin kohdin olevan aivan historiallinen tilaisuus tuoda esiin luterilaisen opin turvallinen sisältö. Keniassa tähän pyritään Matongon teologisen seminaarin opetuksen välityksellä. Siellä koulutetaan pappeja ja evankelistoja ja pidetään muitakin kursseja. Samaan aikaan yhdessä kirkon kanssa käännetään Augsburgin tunnustusta swahiliksi. Keväällä 1992 järjestetään Sleyn ja Kenian luterilaisen kirkon kanssa kansainvälinen teologikonferenssi, jonka aiheena on luterilainen tunnustus. Sambian ja Malawin pienten evankelisten kirkkojen polttava kysymys on, kuinka voidaan nopeasti kasvaa Lutherin Vähän katekimuksen ja Augustanan opetusten mukaan. Japanissa taas teologinen seminaari tarvitsee luterilaista tukea toisista syistä. Ongelma kohdataan siis siellä, missä uudella alueella alkava kirkko ottaa horjuvia ensi askeleita, samoin siellä missä vakiintuneet seurakunnat

ovat helluntalaisuuden tai muiden vapaiden yritysten puristuksessa, siellä missä vanha pakanuus uhkaa pimentää Jumalan sanan kirkkauden ja siellä missä yhteydet maailmankirkkojen ja niiden järjestöjen kautta toisinaan ovat tuoneet mukanaan liberaaliteologian vaarat. Kysymys on vakava maailman luterilaisuuden itsensä kannalta tulevaisuutta ajatellen. Lähetystyössä ei kuitenkaan laskelmoida kirkkokuntien kannatusluvuilla. On kyse siitä, että sanoma Jumalasta ja hänen pelastustyöstään Kristuksessa säilyisi kirkkaana ja antaisi ihmisille rauhan ja kestävän perustan.

Paitsi vanhurskauttamisoppia, kristologiaa, jumalakuvaa ja Raamattua, luterilaisen tunnustuksellisuuden tarve on polttava sakramenttiopissa. Aikuiskaste ja uudelleen kastaminen uhkaa työntää monilla afrikkalaisilla alueilla Uuden testamentin kasteopetuksen syrjään. Jossakin alkavassa kirkossa voidaan ihmetellä, onko seurakuntalaisille annettava ehtoollisen molemmat aineet. Tai sitten ehtoolliskäsitys on täysin reformoitu eikä ymmärretä Kristuksen todellista läsnäoloa.

Näistä syistä Sley on katsonut tarpeelliseksi kaikilla kentillä tehostaa luterilaista opetusta. Se tapahtuu paitsi työntekijöiden koulutuksen, julistustyön ja kirjallisuuden kääntämisen muodossa, myös seurakuntalaisten perusopetuksena ja lyhyinä raamattukursseina.

Uskontojen kohtaaminen ja ulos suuntautuminen

Edellä - vain pääpiirteissään - hahmotettu lähetysteologinen malli vaikuttaa siihen, millä tavalla muita uskontoja kohdataan.

Yleisen ilmoituksen, esimerkiksi Paavalin roomalaiskirjeen tai Luukkaan Apostolien tekojen pohjalta, tunnustaminen merkitsee sen näkemistä, että myös vieraitten uskontojen kannattajat etsivät Jumalaa ja että heidän sisimmässään on sama iankaikkisuuden kaipuu kuin meidänkin. Se merkitsee liittymistä heihin kaikessa, mikä ei vaaranna raamatullista vanhurskauttamisop-

pia. Se merkitsee yhteyden ja kunnioituksen vaikean tehtävän vastaanottamista.

Raamatun meille antama lähimmäisyyden tehtävä merkitsee ihmisten kohtaamista heidän omassa ympäristössään, heidän tapojensa ja historiansa pohjalta mahdollisimman suurella avoimuudella. Tämän ns. kontekstualisuuden vaatimuksen hyväksyminen merkitsee esimerkiksi sitä, että pyritään säilyttämään jumalanpalveluselämässä mahdollisimman pitkälle afrikkalainen musiikki ja elämäntyyli. Lähetystyöhön kuuluu ihmisten auttaminen heidän hädässään. Vieraiden uskontojen kannattajien kohtaamisen lähtökohta on Raamatun käskyssä rakastaa kaikkia ihmisiä. Tältä pohjalta ovat versoneet myös Sley'n lähetystyön sosiaaliset muodot, Japanissa lastentarhat, Keniassa Matongon ja Moniankun terveysasemat ja Kisumun kehitysvammaiskoulu, Nairobin slummityö jne.

Itse uskontojen, siis niiden oppien, maailmankäsitysten ja pelastusteitten kohtaaminen on toisenlaista ja vielä vaikeampaa. Siinäkin tarvitaan avoimuutta ja kunnioitusta. Mutta siinä myös avoimuus voi muuntua harhaksi tai kunnioitus arkuudeksi ja paikallaan pysymiseksi. Kontekstualisuus voi olla kirkon kannalta negatiivista, jolloin paikallisiin oloihin ja ajatuksiin liittymisen uhkaa muuttaa kristillisen uskon sanoman toiseksi. Jumalan ilmoitukseen sitoutuva lähetys varoo tällaista kontekstualisuutta.

Lähetysjärjestöjen ja kirkkojen keskuudessa kentillä ja kotimaassa on nousevana trendinä viime vuosina ollut uskontojen kohtaaminen tasa-arvon pohjalta. Tämä voidaan käsittää monella tavalla. Ihmisten tasa-arvo on oikein, mutta eri uskontojen asettaminen pelastusteinä samalle viivalle on sangen kyseenalaista. Kristillisen lähetystyön lähtökohta on perinteisesti ollut se, ettei ole pelastusta yhdessäkään toisessa paitsi Jeesuksessa Kristuksessa. Tämä totuus Kristus-uskon ainutlaatuisuudesta on tehty usein suhteelliseksi ja avattu tie uskontojen sekoitukselle, synkretismille. Siihen kristillisellä kirkolla ei ole varaa eikä oikeutta. Uskontojen kohtaamisen keskustelua on helppo käydä lähetysjärjestöjen päämajoista ja

kirkkojen keskusten toimistoista täältä länsimaista käsin, mutta kun vieraitten uskontojen invaasio saavuttaa myös Euroopan ja Pohjolan, äänenpainot voivat muuttua. Tähän liittyvää huolta on kannettu mm. Evankeliumiyhdistyksen lähetystyön juhluvuoden 1990 kirjassa "Jumalan lähetys, Lähetysteologian perusteita ja näköaloja". Siinä esimerkiksi Keniasta ja Japanista lähetetyissä puheenvuoroissa tuodaan esille, ettei uskontojen välinen dialogi voi merkitä kristinuskon absoluuttisuuden kieltämistä.

Lähetyksemme toimintatavoitteiden ja myös teologian polttavana ongelmana on koko ajan, tavoittaako evankeliumi uusia ihmisiä, uusia kansoja ja uusia ryhmiä. Esimerkiksi Japanissa lähetystyötä on tehty kauan. Lähettiemme ja paikallisten kirkkojen ponnisteluista huolimatta kristittyjen määrä on edelleen vain yksi prosentti väestöstä. Buddhalaisuus ja shintolaisuus ovat edelleen ylivoimaisesti "niskan päällä". Mutta silti meitä polttaa kysymys, miten kristinuskko voisi edetä Japanissa. Tulevien vuosien yksi painopiste on asetettava siihen, miten lähetys, kirkko, sen työntekijät ja sen julistus voisi selkeämmin suuntautua ulospäin. Afrikan maissa kysellään samoin, miten tavoitettaisiin uusia alueita ja ihmisiä. Tähän liittyy läheisesti myös islamin yhä suuremmaksi tuleva haaste kristinuskolle. Myös täällä länsimaissa kohdataan sama teema. Välinpitämättömyys, uususkontojen nousu ja materialismin valta on tehnyt kristityt usein apaattisiksi ja voimattomiksi. Täälläkin tarvitaan juurevaa luterilaisuutta, jossa Kristuksen kirkon tuntomerkit eivät peity. Vahva oppi ja omakohtainen evankeliumin ilo synnyttävät rohkeutta tunnustukseen ja ulospäin suuntautuvaan työhön. Teologian ja kirkon elämän nousu on myös lähetysten nousu. Sitä tahdomme rukoilla ja sen hyväksi tehdä työtä myös evankelisen herätysliikkeen ja Sley'n voimin.

Lyhennelmä

Suomen Luterilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys on yksi Suomen evankelisluterilaisen kirkon virallisista lähetysjärjestöistä. Yhdistys on toista sataa vuotta vanha, kirkon sisällä vaikuttavan evankelisen herätysliikkeen keskusjärjestö, joka tekee laajaa työtä myös kotimaassa.

Vuonna 1991 Sleyllä oli yhteensä 85 ulkolähetystyöntekijää, heistä 76 oli kentillä ulkomailla ja loput kotimaan lomilla ja -kausilla. Työ Japanissa aloitettiin 1900, Keniassa 1970, Papua-Uusi-Guineassa 1981, Sambiassa 1989, Kamerunissa 1990 ja Malawissa 1991.

Evankeliumiyhdistyksen lähetyksen tavoitteena on yhteistyökirkkojen kanssa evankeliumin vieminen mahdollisimman monelle ihmiselle ja heidän johtamisensa kasteelle, seurakuntien perustaminen, kasvattaminen ja varustaminen paikallisilla työntekijöillä. Opetus- ja julistustyö seurakunnissa on siten mitä keskeisin työmuoto. Lähetyksemme toteuttama sosiaalinen työ on lapsityötä, sairaanhoitotyötä, suurkaupunkityötä ja erilaisissa projekteissa avustamista. Kolmas toiminnan perusmuoto on koulutus. Siihen kuuluu sekä pappis- että evankelistakoulutusta että seurakuntalaisten raamattukursseja ja erilaista käytännön ammattikoulutusta.

Lähetystyötä halutaan tehdä kirkolliselta pohjalta. Se merkitsee läheistä yhteyttä yhteistyökirkkoihin ja täällä Suomessa oman kirkon seurakuntiin. Toiseksi se merkitsee sitä, että työn perustana on luterilaisen kirkon tunnustus ja uskonperintö.

Lähetysteologisessa keskustelussa Evankeliumiyhdistys korostaa Raamatun merkitystä Jumalan erityisenä ilmoituksena. Lähetystyön sisältö, työnäky, motivaatio ja sekä lähettien jaksaminen

ovat ratkaisevasti kiinni siitä, hyväksytäänkö Jumalan ilmoitus Raamatussa perustaksi ja halutaanko sitoutua siihen.

Lähetys on toiseksi Kristuksen julistamista. Se on Kristuksen suorittaman lunastustyön kirkastamista. Lähetystyö tarvitsee radikaalia evankeliumia, jossa vapaa armon sanoma ja syntien anteeksiantamus Kristuksessa on keskeisenä. Ihmisen oman ansion ja uskonnollisuuden sijasta halutaan korostaa sitä, mitä Jumala on Kristuksessa tehnyt ja mitä Jumala yhä tekee armonvälineiden kautta. Lähetysteologiassa tarvitaan siten myös kipeästi sakramenttien korostamista luterilaisen tunnustuksen pohjalta. Protestantismin pirstoutuneisuus ja toisaalta ei-kristillisten uskontojen ja kristinuskon kohtaaminen on luonut tilanteen, jossa selkeällä luterilaisella teologialla on kysyntää. Evankeliumiyhdistys pyrkii lähetyskentillään tehostamaan tunnustuksellisen luterilaisuuden opettamista. Vahva oppi ja siihen liittyvä omakohtainen evankeliumin ilo synnyttää rohkeuden ulospäin suuntautuvaan työhön.

Lähetyksen tulee merkitä avoimuutta ja pyrkimystä uusien ryhmien tavoittamiseen heidän omalta pohjaltaan. Tämä kontekstualisuus ei kuitenkaan voi olla sellainen tavoite, jonka myötä kristillinen sanoma ja kristinuskon absoluuttisuus heikennettäisiin. Lähetyksen lähtökohta on Raamatun sanoma Kristuksesta ainoana tienä pelastukseen.

Boris Sandberg, MTh, BA

SWEDISH LUTHERAN EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION IN FINLAND

The Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland (SLEAF)¹⁾ (in Swedish: Svenska lutherska evangeliföreningen i Finland r.f.) has its roots in the revival, which occurred in Finland in the middle of the 19th century. As a result of this revival the Association was founded in 1873 as a bilingual association. Then in 1922 it was divided into two separate and independent associations, one Finnish-speaking (LEAF) and one Swedish-speaking. The basis for the association was a certain theological understanding, mainly concerning the relationship between law and gospel. It was Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg who had come to a new understanding. This new understanding, or actually it was felt as a rediscovery of the old truth, that salvation is by grace, and grace alone, did not originate in a vacuum. It was on the contrary a response to the pietistic way of understanding, which had Paavo Ruotsalainen as a spokesman, among others. As a result of this understanding an association was formed, although Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg was not in favour of a separate organization in the beginning.

Some notes from Church History

SLEAF has somehow at times been a theological opposition group within the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Finland. Still at the end of the 19th century, (actually from 1726 to 1889), it was forbidden to gather in homes for spiritual meetings. But it was felt that there was a need to gather for fellowship

¹⁾ The word "evangelical" does not have the same meaning as what is usually understood by the expression "evangelicals" in the English-speaking world. Here it stands for the revival movement within the Evangelical-Lutheran state church which have the understanding that salvation is by grace alone in a very emphasised way in contrast to a more legalistic approach.

and spiritual discussions, not only attending the Sunday services. This was felt as a threat by the established church body and by many vicars.

In some parishes the evangelicals were not allowed to have their meetings in the church, and even more difficult times were expected to come. This forced them to build their own houses for worship. The impulse for these houses came from Denmark and they were called prayer houses. The first prayer houses were built in the beginning of the 20th century and in the middle of the 20th century there were more than 40 such houses within the Swedish-speaking areas of Finland. Although the tension between the church and the Association was high at times, the Association remained within the church, not forming a new church body. The Evangelicals have been loyal to the church, but not accepting every doctrinal position or stand taken by the church.

The association started as an inner mission society in 1873. The undivided association started mission work in Japan in 1900. The Swedish-speaking association continued supporting this work also after the association was divided, but gradually the support faded away. One of the reasons were maybe that missionaries from among themselves could not be found. At the beginning of 1960 SLEAF was invited to join hands with Bibel-trogna Vänner from Sweden, who had started mission work in Kenya in 1948. This work resulted in an indigenous Lutheran church in Kenya which was registered in 1963.

SLEAF As a Mission Organisation

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Finland does not have any mission work of its own, but she has accepted the mission work done by six mission organizations as its own work. In 1969 SLEAF was given the status of one of the official mission organizations representing the church.

The invitation from the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Kenya to join hands with the church and Bibeltrogn Vänner was received as a challenge. This new venture got an overwhelming support from the Evangelical people. The first missionaries were sent in 1963, followed by another family in 1964. At present there are eleven missionaries working in different capacities. Some are builders, some are nurses, some are teachers, some are administrators, some are in parish work etc. From time to time missionaries have been working in different capacities and within different activities. The spiritual work has been emphasised, but unfortunately SLEAF has not been able to keep a missionary pastor on the field continuously. The first missionary was a pastor and he was succeeded by another pastor in 1973, but from 1986 there has not been any pastor from SLEAF. There have been other missionaries who have been in parish work, working especially among the youth, and with religious education in schools. In 1992 SLEAF expects to send two more families on a regular basis and a couple for a shorter period. An increase in the number of missionaries is expected.

Some Comments on Mission Theology

SLEAF has always emphasised that mission work is mainly, if not solely, preaching of the gospel. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation, and faith can never be brought about by any other means than by the word of God. Any missionary is foremost a witness by words. He or she may be working with relief projects, but these kinds of activities must be connected in a clear way to the witnessing about Jesus Christ. Christian presence as mere presence is not our way.

Kenya is considered to be Christian to 60 %. This would indicate that there is no need of any help to do mission work there. The situation is quite complicated since there are so many different kinds of sects, which have sprung up sometimes because of leadership struggles or because of theological disagreement or even because of dreams of individuals. There

is a mixture of all proportions of Christianity, animism and man-made philosophies. This fact poses a real challenge since we believe that Christianity is unique.

Centres for the work

SLEAF has built two so called missionstations in Kenya, Atemo and Rukongo. Both are in the south-west among the luo tribe, which inhabits the shores of Lake Victoria. The first one was started in 1967 and the other one which is still under construction was started in 1986.

Medical work

Medical work is an integral part of our work. At Atemo there is a clinic and a maternity ward. The medical work is nowadays very much in the hands of the nationals, but the missions are still supporting it by staff and by giving financial aid.

Parishwork

There is also a center for different activities such as camps for young people, courses for different groups of church workers and women groups. Especially refresher-courses for pastors and evangelists (preachers) are to be mentioned. These courses are of greatest importance for the church. Since there is a constant lack of pastors and preachers in a young growing church, these courses help to educate laypeople in the Christian faith. At the same time they act as screening ground for those to be taken for further training to become pastors or evangelists. Through the years it has become quite obvious that Christian knowledge must be given on a broad basis to laypeople, to enable them to participate in a meaningful way as leaders of local congregations.

Women's work

Work among women has also been very important to us. Their situation has not been so easy. Many of them have got very little education. Therefore it has been important to give them opportunity to learn how to read and write. How to make clothes has also been very important since that is one of the ways by which they can make ends meet. Health care and child care are topics which are also being taught in the women groups.

Schools

Kenya has many children and their number is growing very fast. At present about 60 % of the countrys population is 15 years of age or younger! It is understandable that Kenya has difficulties in providing all these young people with health care facilities, educational opportunities and work. SLEAF has tried to alleviate the situation. With small means available two Youth Polytechnics have been built. Lutheran Youth Centre and Training School, which is situated not far from Atemo, has now about 80 students. There are three different courses, metal-work and welding, masonry and motor vehicle repair and maintenance. All courses are two-year courses and at the end of the training they sit for a government trade test. Many of them fail to get a job, even if they have a trade. To help them in getting a job, the school is trying to make some kind of agreement with major firms and companies, where the students can get some practice during their training, and if they prove to be skilled people, they have a fair chance of getting a job at those companies after completing the course.

At Rukongo another Youth Polytechnic is being built. It has just started with only one course, i.e. masonry. Later on other courses will be added. Since it is situated not far from Lake Victoria effort is being made to try to find something which could be useful for the fishing industry in which many people are engaged in this area. The school will also do some

experiments with agro-forestry on a plot which is being prepared for the purpose.

Construction work

Whatever a mission organization is doing, there is always need of construction work. Schools, dormitories, livinghouses, clinics, churches, parish halls, staffhouses and many other kinds of construction are needed. SLEAF has tried to build at least one concrete church every year. The local congregation has been contributing at least 10 % of the building costs in money or in labour. Up to five congregations a year have been given aid to build smaller churches with earth walls and iron sheet roofs.

Conclusion

The Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland is a very small mission organisation compared with all the others within the Evangelical-lutheran Church in Finland. The Swedish-speaking population in Finland is a minority of about 300.000 at present among 4,5 million Finnish-speaking people. Among these 300.000 people there are not so many active church members. If we also consider that there are all the other major denominations also among the Swedish speaking people, we can realize that the number of those who are actively supporting the mission work through SLEAF are quite few. The membership number is somewhere around 1700 people. Most of these people are living in the southern part of Ostrobothnia.

Although SLEAF is a very small association we do think that we have a specific contribution to make out of our theological and spiritual heritage.

Boris Sandberg

SVENSKA LUTHERSKA EVANGELIFÖRENINGEN I FINLAND

Lyhennelmä

Suomen ruotsinkielisellä luterilaisella evankeliumiyhdistyksellä (SLEF) on juurensa 1800-luvun keskellä puhjenneessa herätyksessä. Yhdistys perustettiin vuonna 1873 kaksikielisenä, mutta jaettiin kielellisiin perustein vuonna 1922. Liike syntyi vastapainoksi pietistiselle näkemykselle armosta ja sen käsittämisestä.

SLEF tuki kauan aikaa SLEY:n työtä Japanissa. 1960-luvulle saakka vaikuttivat ns. Japanin lähetyksen ompeluseurat. SLEF alkoi Kenian työnsä yhdessä Kenian ev.lut. kirkkon kanssa vuonna 1963. Tämä työ toteutui yhteistyössä ruotsalaisen BIBELTROGNA VÄNNER -yhdistyksen kanssa. Näin tuki Japaniin vähitellen lakkasi. Työ Keniassa koettiin "omaksi".

Lähtökohtana on aina pidetty sitä, että evankeliumin saarna on kaikkein tärkeintä lähetystyössä. Auttamistyö ja palvelu kuuluu kuitenkin tähän työhön kiinteästi. Se on ilmausta Kristuksen rakkaudesta. Työn on oltava aina kiinteästi yhteydessä Kristus-todistukseen.

SLEF on rakentanut Keniaan kaksi lähetysasemaa. Atemossa työ alkoi vuonna 1967 ja Rukongossa 1986. Lähetystyöntekijät toimivat sairaanhoidon, seurakuntatyön, naistyon, rakennustyön ja hallinnon erilaisissa tehtävissä.

Kaksi piirrettä voidaan erityisesti mainita. Ne ovat materiaallinen apu ja seurakuntatyö. Evankeliumiyhdistys on rakentanut kaksi ammattikoulua. Atemon koulussa on kolme linjaa, muuraus-, hitsaus- ja automekaanikkolinjat. Rukongon koulussa alkoi vuonna 1991 muurauslinja. Ammattikoulutus on tärkeää maassa, jossa 60 % väestöstä on alle 15 vuotiaita.

Seurakuntatyöstä voidaan mainita kurssitoiminta. Atemossa se on ollut mukana alusta alkaen. Papeille ja saarnaajille (evangelistoille) on järjestetty jatkokoulutusta. Samoin on seurakunnissa mukana toimiville maallikoille järjestetty koulutusta. Samanaikaisesti on pyritty myös tukemaan niitä, joilla on kykyjä korkeampaan koulutukseen.

Vaikka SLEF on pieni organisaatio, siinä on noin 1700 jäsentä, sen teologisessa ja hengellisessä perinnössä on jotain erityistä jolla voimme palvella.

Esko Rintala, MTh

OCEAN WAVES CARRY THE WORD

The birth pangs of a century

A new world was in process of being built. Continuous wars had been fought for more than twenty years, and young people knew no more what the word peace had meant. The petty cabinet wars of the previous century faded in comparison with the cataclysmic ferocity of the world war of nations, Veit Valentin describes the birth pangs of the 19th century in his World History. Millions longed for peace - even for that peace rooted in the traditional inequality which had characterised the bygone era before the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. But no return to the past was possible.

The doctrines of revolution, which had been conceived in the silent chambers of Enlightenment philosophers, had ignited bloody class wars and series of aggressive conquests. After the terror by revolutionary tribunals and ravaging armies, peoples longed for a peaceful, sheltered life. Many people sought refuge in the Christian faith. Strong Christian revival movements emerged in many parts of Europe.

Even one ruling monarch was touched deeply, to his innermost being. In 1812, an alien army penetrated Russia, even the heart of the country, Moscow. A fire went ablaze and destroyed the Third Rome. Emperor Alexander told later that it was the shock of these events that made him to seek God. He abandoned the teachings of the Enlightenment philosophers, began reading the Bible and seeking for guidance for his duties as an autocrat.

A Scotsman sailed to Finland

Only some months earlier, on 26th August 1811, at Stockholm harbour, a stranger boarded a small vessel bound for Turku, Finland. With evangelistic zeal, John Paterson, that Christian Scotsman, and his friend Ebenezer Henderson had begun their long voyage for India to be engaged in missionary work there. Overwhelming difficulties had interrupted their missionary journey in Copenhagen, but they had soon found opportunities for fruitful work in the Danish capital.

After an arduous voyage of three days and nights, John Paterson arrived at Turku. He had arrived in a country which, only two years previously, had passed from Swedish to Russian rule. Paterson was a devoted emissary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which had been founded only seven years earlier to meet the needs of thousands of Christians, who had been touched by the revival - but had no access to the Bible.

From Russia - with love

Paterson was finally able to meet Bishop Jakob Tengström who returned from his visitation tour. The Scotsman described to the Bishop the Christian revival movement in Britain and what was done to distribute Bibles to the people. Tengström and the newly appointed Governor General Fabian Steinheil were favourably impressed. It was clearly essential that a Bible Society should be founded also for Finland. However, they later wrote to Paterson, who had returned to Stockholm, the permission of the Emperor must be sought first.

John Paterson lost courage. He was sure that all his hopes were now in vain. The Russian Tsar could not possibly be positively inclined to such a plan! But Paterson was wrong. Emperor Alexander not only gave his permission, but was also willing to become the High Protector of the Finnish Bible Society. He also donated 5000 gold rubles from his personal fiscus to be used for Bible distribution among his new Finnish

subjects. John Paterson was invited to St. Petersburg, where the Russian Bible Society was founded in 1813.

The sower at work

The Finnish Bible Society started active work, and several Bible Societies were soon founded in provincial towns. The first Bible edition was published by the Finnish Bible Society in 1816. During its first century, the Finnish Bible Society, supported heavily by the British and Foreign Bible Society, distributed some 1,8 million Bibles and New Testaments in Finland.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the agents of the Bible Society succeeded in persuading the local churches to give a Bible to every couple in the wedding ceremony. In the early years, the recipients had to pay part of the price, but later the Wedding Bible was given as a free gift. This practice is clearly the cornerstone of the astonishing success - numerical at least - of Bible distribution in Finland. According to a recent Gallup poll, 88 per cent of all Finnish households have one or several Bibles.

Hundreds of languages encountered

In the year 1800, when the legendary Welsh girl Mary Jones walked barefooted from Llanfihangel to Bala to get a Bible - and unknowingly gave a strong impulse for the founding of the Bible Society movement - the entire Bible had been translated into 40 languages of humanity, and the New Testament or part of it into 31 more languages. But the era of Protestant world mission had just begun, and the first missionaries were busily learning many languages spoken by exotic tribes living in the coastal regions of Africa and India.

One of them was William Carey, who had arrived in 1892 in Bengal. Carey's decision of preference coincided with many

missionary men of the first Christian millennium, with that of Wulfila, Mesrop of Armenia, St. Cyril, St. Methodius and many others: there must be a Bible! With astonishing energy and skill, Carey penetrated into no less than 40 Indian languages. The result in each of them was first a grammar, then a Bible translation.

The indispensable Bible

From those days, the number of languages possessing the Bible has grown with astonishing speed. At the end of 1990, the Bible had been published in 318 languages, the New Testament in additional 726 languages, and at least one Biblical book in 902 other languages. The total is 1946 languages. The rapid increase of languages possessing the Bible is one of the clearest indicators of the strong bond, both practical and theological, that links the Christian Mission with the Bible.

Because Bible translation work often begins with the phonological analysis of the language and the development of orthography and formation of standard language to bridge a number of dialects, the translation of the Bible has also very often laid the foundation for national unity and the literary culture of the people. Missionary historian David Barrett has also discovered, when studying the missionary history of a number of large tribes of Africa, that Christian mission has often come to a breakthrough approximately ten years after the publication of the entire Bible in the language of the people.

Hungry new readers

In his famous reference work **WORLD CHRISTIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA** David Barrett proves that Christian mission is expanding very fast in Africa and some parts of Asia as well. From 1970 to 1985, the number of Christians has increased by more than 300 million. His figures for the development of literacy are also very impressive: the number of literates has increased by more

than 500 million. The increase is most dramatic in Africa, where the number of adult literates is about 50 times higher now than in 1900.

Such a growth of the Christian church and such increase of literacy imply of course that the amount of potential Bible readers has broken all possible records. The importance of the Bible as an instrument of the Christian mission is increasing very fast. Because the Bible Societies are involved in Bible translation work into more than 600 languages and distribute the Bible in many Third World countries with heavy subventions, they need considerable sums of money every year for this work. Their international Bible aid amounts to some USD 44 million USD annually. Because of the rapid increase of needs, this is by far not enough. Another 20 million USD would be needed to cater for even the barest necessities of the worldwide Christian mission.

China and Russia - wide open

In such a situation, first China opened up wide for Bible distribution in mid 1980's, then, with the collapse of the rigid Marxist regimes, the Soviet Union and the former Communist controlled East European states. The Bible Societies responded at once. In cooperation with the China Christian Council they assisted to establish a modern and efficient Bible printing press in Nanjing, where more than three million Chinese Bibles have been produced so far, to fuel the dynamic and spontaneous missionary movement spreading out from numerous Christian centres in China into the surrounding regions. In 1990, the Bible Societies started the Four Year Plan for Eastern Europe to distribute 31 million Bibles and New Testaments to the peoples of the former Soviet Union and East European countries.

Supported by determined Christians

The vital missionary work of the United Bible Societies is financed by contributions from its member Societies in a number of more affluent countries. The Finnish Bible Society once received vital aid for its work, Rubles from the Russian Tsar, Pounds Sterling from the British and Foreign Bible Society. Now it is time to pay back some of this historical debt. It began with a modest sum, in 1966, for Bible paper for Hungary. Since 1980, the development has been quite rapid. The contribution by the Finnish Bible Society to the UBS World Service Budget has developed from 0,365 million FIM in 1979 to 6,4 million in 1990, about 17,5 times. In relation to population, this contribution, U.S. 1,8 million in 1991, is now second highest among the Bible Societies.

Roots in the Finnish soil

In 1970, the Finnish Bible Society received formal authorization from the majority Lutheran Church as a Missionary Organization working on behalf of the Church. This implies that the Bible Society fundraising has the same status as that of the other mission societies. The pastors and mission secretaries of local congregations are formally encouraged to further the fundraising and information work of the Bible Society, and Bible Society secretaries are always invited to attend various mission conferences to present their challenge. They are also being invited to visit local churches, to preach, tell about Bible Society work, show films and videos etc. Local churches are expected to allocate budget funds for the authorised missionary organisations, including the Bible Society. The income from budget allocations has been growing steadily as church authorities have emphasized the importance of mission. The income from offerings - there is an official annual offering Sunday for the Bible Society - also shows an upward trend.

Various methods of fundraising

In 1965, the old Auxiliaries, the oldest of which have been founded in 1818 by John Paterson, were largely dormant or stone dead. After they were, in the bylaws of 1968, invited to become members of the national Bible Society and received the challenge to work for Bible distribution overseas, they were soon revitalised and activated. In connection of the Annual Meeting, a working conference is always arranged where the work is being planned together. The membership of the auxiliaries is increasing, and the membership fees (FIM 120 annually) are used almost entirely for the Bible work overseas.

Since the late seventies, United Bible Societies, the world organisation of 110 Bible Societies, have been recommending to its contributing members the method of direct mail, and fundraising methods are being taught in annual workshops. After some modest experiments which were operated manually, the present donor file system of the Finnish Bible Society was computerised and is developing fast. It contains at present some 20,000 donor addresses. From 1986 to 1990, fund raising income by appeals in press and direct mail has grown by 415 per cent, much faster than the income from other sources. The projects have had a strong appeal to the Christian constituency: building a Bible printing press for China, donating Commentary Bibles to the Russian Churches, and from 1989 to 1991, printing and donating 150,000 Estonian Bibles to the Estonian churches.

The above mentioned projects have made the Finnish Bible Society better known and trusted by the public, and the Bible Society has been able to do much stronger information work and to use stronger media than before. When launching the fundraising appeal for the Commentary Bibles, TV commercials were used. Events like sending large consignments of Commentary Bibles in four big Russian lorries from the printing plant in Eastern Finland have attracted TV news cameras more than once.

Esko Rintaia

RAAMATTUSEURAT JA LÄHETYSTYÖ

Ranskan vallankumouksen repimät ja Napoleonin sotien uuvuttamat kansat kaipasivat turvaa. Monet löysivät sen kristillisestä uskosta. Herätysliikkeet levisivät voimakkaasti eri puolilla Eurooppaa. Raamattuseurat syntyivät 1800-luvun alussa sekä ruokkimaan miljoonien eurooppalaisten Jumalan sanan nälkää että tyydyttämään juuri liikkeelle lähteneen protestanttisen maailman lähetyksen raamatuntarvetta.

Suomeen raamattuseura-ajatuksen toi skotti John Paterson. Hän tuli vuonna 1811 Turkuun ja vakuutti piispa Jacob Tengströmin Suomen Piipilaseuran tarpeellisuudesta. Seura perustettiin vuonna 1812, ja se levitti ensimmäisen vuosisatansa aikana Britannian Raamattuseuran tukemana suomalaisille 1,8 miljoonaa Raamattua ja Uutta testamenttia. 1900-luvun alussa se juurrutti seurakuntiin vihkiraamattukäytännön. Siksi Raamatun levinneisyys on Suomessa verrattoman kattava: 88 % talouksista omistaa yhden tai useampia Raamattuja.

Vuonna 1800 Raamattu oli kokonaan tai osittain käännettynä 71 kielelle, vuoden 1991 alkaessa 1946 kielelle. Tämä raamattukielten räjähdysmäinen lisääntyminen osoittaa, miten välttämättömä Raamattu on kristilliselle lähetystyölle. David Barrettin keräämien tilastojen mukaan kristittyjen lukumäärä on vuosina 1970-1985 lisääntynyt yli 300 miljoonalla ja lukutaitoisten määrä yli 500 miljoonalla. Raamattu on siis tällä hetkellä paljon tehokkaampi lähetystyön väline kuin ennen. Raamattuseurojen varat eivät kuitenkaan riitä tämän välineen täysitehoiseen käyttöön: varoja tarvittaisiin noin 50 % enemmän kuin niitä on saatavissa.

Tässä rahapulassa tilanteessa avautui ensin Kiina ja sitten Neuvostoliitto lähes rajoittamattomalle raamatunlevitykselle. Raamattuseurat olivat mukana perustamassa Nanjingin raamattukirjapainoa ja aloittivat 1990 Itä-Euroopan nelivuotishjel-

man, joka tarvitsee runsaat 200 miljoonaa markkaa. Nämä varat on löydettävä, sillä tilaisuus on maailmanhistoriallinen.

Suomen Piipliaseura on lisännyt kansainvälistä raamattuapuaan 11 vuodessa noin 17,5-kertaiseksi eli 6,5 miljoonaan markkaan vuodessa. Erityisen nopeasti ovat kehittyneet vetoomus- ja postikeräys. Seura on lahjoittanut suuria määriä Raamattuja mm. Viroon ja Venäjälle. Voimistuva työ on käynyt mahdolliseksi, koska suomalaiset kristityt ymmärtävät yhä selvemmin Raamatun elintärkeän merkityksen kristilliselle lähetystyölle ja tukevat raamattuseurojen työtä vuosi vuodelta yhä suuremmin panoksin.

Juha Väliäho, MTh

FINNISH LUTHERAN MISSION - 25 YEARS OF EVANGELICAL MISSION WORK

Finnish Lutheran Mission

Finnish Lutheran Mission (FLM) is celebrating this year its 25th anniversary; 25 years of involvement in mission abroad and at home. Its activity at home is organized by the provincial district associations. There is also work among Finnish immigrants in Sweden. FLM works together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church and its local congregations, but at the same time retains its own spiritual and theological identity and autonomy. The district associations have more than 50 workers.

FLM engages in mission work in Asia, Oceania, Africa and Europe, altogether 16 different foreign fields with 110 missionaries (1992).

The Mission Centre in Ryttylä, some 80 km away north of Helsinki, comprises the headquarters of the FLM and schooling facilities where missionary candidates are trained. Besides the yearly mission course, a basic Bible course is available as well as an in-depth study programme for those wishing to become full time workers. Personnel of 50 ensures that the centre runs smoothly.

The Rev. Matti Väisänen is the General Secretary of FLM with the Rev. Timo Rämä as Associate General Secretary. Mr. Reino Sirviö leads the foreign missions department, Mr. Isto Pihkala, is responsible for the home mission work and the Rev. Sakari Leppänen as Director of Education is in charge of mission and theological studies. Timo Rämä, Reino Sirviö and Sakari Leppänen have a long experience of missionary work in Japan, England and Ethiopia.

FLM is closely linked to the recent revival movements within the Lutheran Church. Mission revival with emphasis on the strong unity and inseparability of home and foreign missions are the main characteristics of the movement. The work with the Church and its local congregations and on the other hand independent activities are considered essential. FLM represents pietistic Evangelical Lutheran theology.

In the ecumenical perspective the FLM's attitude towards the evangelical Lausanne Movement is positive. But to the World Council of Churches (WCC) linking to the liberal theology in it's ecumenical activity the movement takes up an unresponsive attitude.

How the Finnish Lutheran Mission started

FLM was founded in 1967. It is rooted in spiritual revivals that swept through young people's meetings during the 1960's. Spiritual revival also led to enthusiasm for foreign missions and called forth a need to establish a new channel for mission work. It is then that FLM came into being.

From the beginning the motto of the movement has been "Evangelize the Nation to Evangelize Nations". In the activities of the movement the close ties between home and foreign mission were emphasized. The aim was that everyone should feel responsible for evangelizing his or her own area as well as for sending missionaries abroad.

Through this vision a new kind of mission support practice came into being, where each missionary is adopted by a group of believers committed to support him or her financially and through prayer. Of the friends of FLM 60 % belong to these groups. In addition to the traditional means of collecting money by voluntary work, a new system of monthly offering was developed.

Statistics show that the rapidly spreading work of FLM in the first years did not lessen the support other mission organizations were enjoying at the time. It attracted those who had no previous connections with missions. At the same time, widespread activities and training work of the FLM helped raise a new generation of mission minded young people to be a blessing not only to FLM but to other organizations as well.

FLM was officially accepted as an authorized mission organization of the Church in 1971. The work in Western and Eastern Europe were recognized as mission work of the Church only in 1981.

The development of foreign missions of FLM

As FLM came into being a partnership was formed with Norwegian Lutheran Mission (Norsk Luthersk Misjonssamband, NLM). As a result, FLM was able to engage in mission work in Ethiopia and Japan with NLM since 1968. Nowadays independent, though still in connection with the national Lutheran churches, these two fields remain the largest ones with 30 % of FLM's missionaries active there.

The work in Japan is pioneer work; church planting in a modern country and a financial superpower, where Christianity is taking root very slowly. The 20 missionaries of FLM in Japan are working in close connection with the West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church. Since 1979 FLM has sent a few missionaries to Taiwan, too.

In Ethiopia FLM has served in the areas of development, medical work and education. Some of the missionaries have worked in parish ministry and in the administration of the national church. From the very beginning FLM has been working within the fast growing Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. FLM has 16 missionaries in Ethiopia (1992).

FLM started the islam mission in 1968. At the moment 13 missionaries are active in various muslim countries of Asia. Involvement in Egypt started in 1975 and now 12 missionaries work in an orphanage for boys in Cairo, in a mission hospital in Aswan and in a clinic at the Nubian village of Ballana. Further FLM extended its islam work to Europe. As time went by FLM came to realize the growing importance of islam mission and 1/3 of its missionaries now serve among Muslims.

In all 70 % of the FLM missionaries are divided up between these areas. The remaining 30 % are to be found in smaller fields.

At the end of 1980 the number of FLM missionaries exceeded 100. The highest total ever reached is 120.

Challenge of Europe

Within the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, FLM was the first to pioneer work in Europe. FLM is working among Turks in Germany (since 1972), among Asian immigrants in England in connection with the local Anglican churches (since 1973) and in Italy alongside the Waldensian church, reaching people estranged from Christianity (since 1971). Short term mission teams are used to train young people for mission work and to help long-term missionaries.

Another area of special interest to FLM concerns Eastern Europe. The FLM expanded its missionary effort toward Eastern Europe and founded the Slavic Mission Department in 1969. Bibles, Christian literature as well as diaconic help were taken to Christians of the socialist block for a period of about 20 years, up to the time of "perestroika", when the situation started to ease up. The opening provided the opportunity for FLM to expand its work in Russia and other East European countries and also to build up existing Lutheran connections. FLM is also providing help to the Christians in the Ingrian area, Estonia and other Fenno-Ugrian nations.

Other fields of the work

FLM has 12 missionaries (1992) in the Bible translation work (with Wycliffe Bible Translators, WBT) which began in 1982 in Kenya. More missionaries were later appointed to translation work to Ethiopia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Middle East and in 1991 to Russia.

Throughout the history of FLM from 1968 onwards, work amongst the Jews has always been on the agenda. Besides Israel, missionaries are ministering to the Jews in England and in Italy.

The most recent mission area of FLM is mission aviation. The first workers will be joining Mission Aviation Fellowship in Africa in 1993.

Missiological stresses of FLM

In the general theological approach as well as in missiology the Lutheran Evangelical Pietistic identity remains clearly visible. The movement emphasizes the infallibility of the Bible and its absolute authority as God's inspired word.

The mission vision of the movement is also rooted in the Word of God. Jesus himself commands that the good news of his atonement be brought to all peoples. Mankind fallen into sin needs the message of salvation. To proclaim this message is our way of showing gratitude for the events of Golgotha.

Christ has given the task of world evangelization to his church. Mission is the saving activity of the Triune God and its centre is the cross of Jesus Christ. This task is accomplished through words as well as through deeds and is the main task of the church in fact.

The aim of mission work is to gather people from all nations into God's flock, who Christ will draw to himself at his second coming. In mission strategy FLM gives priority to pioneer work aiming at reaching people who have not yet heard of Christ. Next priority is the support to the national churches in their work and to encourage spontaneous mission efforts in their midst. From the mission strategic aspect there is also a strong challenge to preach the Gospel in those areas where the possibilities are exceptionally limited.

One aspect considered important in the cross-cultural work of the FLM is the need to face other religions. During a missionary's training emphasis is placed on the need for a deep knowledge of the language, culture and religion of the country of destination. Preparation for work in urban settings is also considered essential.

Part of the aim of FLM is to help establish new independent Lutheran congregations. That is why the mission works primarily with Lutheran churches and organizations. However rapports of confidence at interdenominational level are necessary in particular instances and within certain limits. Doctrinal differences are set aside when the co-operation is to benefit the overall task of the Christian Church.

Part of the problem linked with planting Lutheran churches in Russia has to do with confronting the orthodox tradition whilst showing sufficient respect.

As mentioned above, the FLM emphasize greatly the unseparable character of home and foreign mission with regard to world evangelism. The foreign mission work and the support groups are both the fruit of the same spiritual awakening, spiritual life and renewal. Extended foreign mission work presupposes purposeful home mission. In its turn the work abroad will prove a blessing to the work at home. A balance between these two elements has to be maintained in intercession, in preaching of the Gospel, in the number of workers and in the offerings. This is the basis for effective mission work.

Juha Väliaho

KANSANLÄHETYS - NELJÄNNESVUOSISATA HERÄTYSKRISTILLISTÄ LÄHETYSTYÖTÄ

Lyhennelmä

Syntyessään vuonna 1967 Suomen Ev.lut. Kansanlähetys (SEKL) muodostui sekä sisä- että ulkolähetysliikkeeksi. Se syntyi nuorisoherätyksistä, joihin liittyi voimakas lähetysinto. Tätä intoa kanavoimaan Kansanlähetys syntyi herätyskristilliseksi lähetyskanavaksi. Suomen ev.lut. kirkko valtuutti SEKL:n viralliseksi lähetysjärjestökseen vuonna 1971.

Kotimaassa liike järjestäytyi 18 piirijärjestöksi, joissa kotimainen toiminta pääosin kirkon paikallisseurakuntien kanssa yhteistyössä tapahtuu. Kansanlähetyksen keskeinen työnäky on kiteytetty teemaan "Evankeliummaa kansa evankelioimaan kansoja", millä halutaan korostaa sisä- ja ulkolähetyksen kiinteää yhteenkuuluvuutta ja vuorovaikutusta.

SEKL tekee lähetystyötä 16 lähetysalalla Aasiassa, Oseaniassa, Afrikassa ja Euroopassa. Liikkeellä on 110 lähetystyöntekijää vuonna 1992.

Vanhimmat lähetyskentät ovat Etiopia ja Japani, joilla toimii edelleen 30 % liikkeen läheteistä kansallisten luterilaisten kirkkojen yhteyksissä. Alusta alkaen SEKL on tehnyt islam-työtä Aasian islamilaisissa maissa ja Egyptissä, missä työ alkoi vuonna 1975. Nykyisin islam-työssä toimii kolmannes liikkeen läheteistä.

SEKL on halunnut vastata myös Euroopan haasteeseen, mikä tarkoittaa ensinnäkin siirtolaistyyötä Saksan turkkilaisten parissa ja aasialaissiirtolaistyyötä Englannissa. Myös Italiassa on muutama lähetti kristinuskosta vieraantuneitten parissa. Erityisesti Euroopan työhön liittyy nuorten lyhytaikainen

lähetystyö, aktiotoiminta, mikä osaltaan on käytännöllistä lähetysesikoulutusta.

Toinen haaste, johon SEKL on alusta alkaen pyrkinyt vastaamaan, on Itä-Euroopan työ. Jo 60-luvun lopulta on tehty radio- ja kirjallisuustyötä sosialistisiin maihin. Ovien avauduttua perestroikan myötä työn luonne on muuttunut ja painopistettä on siirretty luterilaisten seurakuntien tukemiseen suomensukuisten kansojen keskuudessa, erityisesti Inkerissä ja Eestissä, minne on lähetetty myös työntekijöitä.

Lähetysteologiensa, kuten muunkin opetuksensa, perustana SEKL painottaa Raamatun luotettavuutta ja arvovaltaa Jumalan ilmoitettuna sanana. Lähetystyö on Kristuksen seurakunnalleen antama keskeisin tehtävä, joka perimmältään on kolmiyhteisen Jumalan pelastavaa työtä.

Sanoin ja teoin tapahtuvan lähetystyön päämäärä on koota ihmisiä kaikista kansoista yhteen Jumalan kansaan, joka Kristuksen tullessa takaisin kootaan hänen tykönsä. Siksi tavoitettava pioneerityö on liikkeen lähetysstrategian kannalta ensisijainen. Sen rinnalla halutaan tukea kansallisten kirkkojen työtä ja rohkaista niitä omaehtoiseen lähetystyöhön.

SEKL painottaa työssään vieraiden uskontojen kohtaamista ja pyrkii vastaamaan kapungistuneen kulttuurin haasteeseen. Lähetystyön tavoitteena on itsenäisten luterilaisten seurakuntien syntyminen. Siksi Kansanlähetys toimii yhteistyössä lähinnä luterilaisten kirkkojen ja järjestöjen kanssa. Erityisesti syistä työtä tehdään myös luotettavissa tunnustustenvälisissä yhteyksissä.

Ekumeenisissa yhteyksissään SEKL suhtautuu myönteisesti Lausannen liikkeeseen ja torjuu pääosin liberaaliteologiaan tukeutuvan Kirkkojen maailmanneuvoston edustaman ekumenian.

Juhani Lindgren, Th.D.

THE THEOLOGY OF MISSION AND THE STRATEGY OF THE FINNISH LUTHERAN OVERSEAS MISSION: MAIN FEATURES

The Triune God and His Mission

The Trinitarian understanding of the mission of God and the position of the mission of the Church within should be taken as essential. The growth of the New Age movement, for example, has amply demonstrated the need for the emphasis on the reality and the wonders of creation.

However, making the Trinitarian understanding of the mission of God fundamental carries with it at least two important qualifications. Firstly, the present formulations of the Trinitarian actuality as the basis of mission should not be absolutized or considered to be necessarily the last word on the subject. We find three sub-themes in need of a more accurate articulation.

One is the Trinitarian understanding proper. This includes the classic formulations of the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity. The danger of a modalistic understanding is often imminent.

Another one is the understanding of the natural law (*ius naturale*) and its significance for the understanding the so called Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12) and the related problems including the so called general or universal knowledge of God.

The third and also a very central one is the "balance" between the three articles of faith. What does actually constitute this balance? From one point of view the inference must be made that a wholesome understanding of all three articles together is the only legitimate way of comprehending a genuine missiological totality that is distinctly Christian. From

another point of view it must be stated that the "balance" here spoken of is and can never be understood as merely a "mathematical" or quantitative fabrication with "with an equal accent on each article". If this were the case, the pre-eminence of Christ, manifest in the written revelation of God, and, consequently, the sending of the Son, basic to the entire Trinitarian understanding of mission, would be easily jeopardized.

Another qualification that the initial fundamental Trinitarian point of departure requires is that although the Trinitarian understanding of mission is ontologically indispensable, there are other ways of formulating and presenting a legitimate framework as long as the existence of the Triune God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and his works of creation, salvation and sanctification are not in any way negated or contradicted. This must be pointed out especially in relation to the theologies of mission that are construed according to differently formulated paradigms, but within the ontological Trinitarian framework.

Proclamation and the Works of Love

The relationship between these two aspects of the Christian missionary calling has never been seen as a problem in our own missiological discussions. Both have a legitimate place and exist in their own right. Works of love are not to be regarded as a means toward some other goal. The law of God simply requires them and ideally they are spontaneously produced by a heart that first has received the love of Christ in and through the forgiveness of sins. Our Norwegian friends in Ethiopia used to say that it would have been an absolute impossibility for anyone with the love of Christ in his heart to pass by a suffering so intense and immense. But there is something more to this truth. In the light of the totality of Christian mission, the inference must be implied that where the proclamation of the Gospel message is absent, discredited or refuted, no reality worthy of the name of Christian mission

exists. In the light of this we interpret the well-known missionary maxim "serving the whole man" as one in which the spiritual aspect is primary. This does in no way render it unnecessary to take care of his physical and social needs. This, however, delineates the absolute order of priorities from the point of view of eternity.

In accordance with this basic premise, we have understood our calling to be to seek avenues of service with a possibility to exercise the ministry of the word in all its various - and very numerous - forms. There has been a clear understanding that this emphasis is not there at the expense of other types of service and does not discredit the works of love. Most of our missionary staff is engaged in non-preaching activities. The thought has never been raised that there were be two or more castes of missionaries judged by these criteria. This does not, however, hinder us from trying us to concentrate, if possible, on whatever openings and means there are for spreading the good news of Christ. It seems that there is a constant tendency to allow proclamation to be curtailed in one way or another. We believe that this drift must be counter-attacked constantly.

It goes without saying that potentially everyone has an open door for witnessing for Christ in one way or another. This has been brought sharply in focus by circumstances in the so called closed Islamic countries where all forms of public preaching have been strictly excluded. Furthermore, active verbal witnessing can never be made even an unofficial requirement, not even an outspoken general wish to be met by each and every missionary. Nevertheless, it should be always underlined as a general Christian principle.

Dialogue

Dialogue, understood as a method of communicating the Gospel, is a most natural means of mission. In this case the idea of sympathetic identification with the people we are trying to

reach with the Christian Gospel is closely related with dialogue. In the present missiological discussion, however, the fact seems to be overlooked that there is not only something called "dialogue" but that widely differing views of dialogue are being represented. The question is never whether there should be dialogue or not in cross-cultural communication. Instead, the alternatives are between various basic theological conceptions of what dialogue is and should be. Dialogue and proclamation are in no way opposites when the specific historical Christian presuppositions are professedly adhered to. An interpretation of dialogue whereby the Christian is said to have to risk his basic convictions about the Christian faith in order to be "genuine" in his dialogue, is not dialogue but a game in which life and death are at stake.

Another basically distorted point of departure for dialogue is one where the non-Christian is supposed to be in possession of "saving truths" by virtue of his knowledge of his non-Christian tradition. This manner of thought thoroughly nullifies the distinction between *revelatio generalis* on the one hand and *revelatio specialis sive Christiana*, i.e., the Bible and Christ, on the other. The so called general revelation is a reality, but carries with it no saving knowledge (Romans 1-2). It is obvious that the frame of theological thought propounded by, for example, a great number of representative voices in the WCC, is not one within which dialogue could be nurtured in its simple biblical form with a missionary intention.

The Bible and Its Use

The absolute importance of the Bible, manifested in disseminating its teaching and in encouraging and making possible its use in local parishes, is one of the central points of departure for some of our strategic judgements. The emphasis on Bible teaching has been dominant in many ways in several countries which are culturally far apart from each other and which have extremely different spiritual climates such as East Africa and Japan. In full harmony with the vision of our older

co-operating mission (NLM), we have underlined the importance of Bible training for ordinary church members. Thus Bible School work is one of the permeating ingredients in our strategy for building up the Church of Christ. This line of activity has always proved to be well attended and has been received with much enthusiasm. This emphasis is deeply related with the doctrinal one.

The doctrinal emphasis is not necessarily equal to a strictly orthodox understanding of doctrinal substance, though the significance of this line of thought would be endorsed. In any case it implies an accent on the Christian message and its contents. The classic distinction of *fides qua* and *fides quae* is readily focused on and the *quae* aspect, i.e., the substance of faith, is underlined. Consequently, we deplore the massive flow of literature on Christian and missionary strategy, planning, statistics and the like if and when it virtually omits reference to the subject matter of the Christian message. The message is assured, definite and well known, but it can never be taken for granted, because the trends that seek to distort and overthrow it are a legion and constantly at work.

Bible translation is an offspring of this very emphasis on the Word of God. Our workers have been engaged in several translation projects painstakingly and faithfully over a number of years. These include Sadri, Turkish and some Central Asian languages. Sadri is the language of the tribal Oraons of Northwestern Bangladesh. A thoroughgoing expert study of this minority language has been conducted over the past few years by one of our workers there.

Reaching the Unreached

Reaching the unreached and proceeding to new areas has been set as one of the strategic priorities in our long-range planning. On some fields the instability of political and religious life constantly endanger expatriate missionary

presence. It seems that proportionately a very high percentage of our workers are serving in this kind of areas. This has added immensely to the urgency of finding new avenues of service should present work be abruptly terminated on any one of our existing fields. In actual practice, due to the obligations and pressures of the present commitments, the tangible planning and surveying of new potential fields have been relatively limited. However, new geographical areas have been added little by little. Indisputably, establishing the integrity of the expressed intentions to take the Gospel to new areas is a constant challenge. New openings among hitherto closed peoples in central Asia, certain areas in Africa and some Muslim populations loom large in the present planning for the next few years. Another aspect of the quest for pioneering opportunities is the explicated aim of working actively for full Christ-dependence for the co-operating churches in the areas of self-propagation (mission), administration and financial resources.

The FLOM has also been led to avail itself of the new open atmosphere in the Soviet Union for Christian involvement. Together with other Finnish organizations there have been contacts with local parishes and individual Christians in Estonia, as well as with the Ingrian Christians. Assistance to the new Lutheran Church in Ingria in her efforts to reach the people of Mordva in the Soviet Union is being planned together with other Finnish Lutheran agencies.

Islam

Islam has been one the points of gravity in our over-all strategy. The fact that visible results are seemingly rather minimal in several Muslim areas has never been even discussed as an obstacle for investing considerably in this field. In all of our eight fields except for Japan, we affront Islam by way of encountering Muslims and/or being deeply surrounded, even engulfed by tensions created for the most part by Islamic influence. Where Islam meets modern culture, the West, forth-

right atheism, or the faith and the people of Israel, strong and stormy currents of passionate outbursts of emotion, antagonism, and belligerency of all kinds are certain to be born.

As to the Christian faith, an unbridgeable gulf exists. At the same time, a most friendly and fruitful friendship exist between individual Muslims and the Christian messengers willing to identify with the Muslim population among whom they live. Our workers in their encounter with Islam could cite innumerable testimonies about this. The strategy to reach Muslims for the faith cries for close relating with the people at grass root level and practical, far-reaching caring in the outworking of personal Christian love in all its ingenuity. All this does not and must not mean an existential or theological compromise of any kind as far as the basically and mutually exclusive aversion of the two faiths is concerned. What is said of identification with people of Islam is, of course, similarly pertinent to adherents of any other non-Christian faiths.

Baptism and Communion

In the absence a fixed pattern for an established co-operating church, the following, formulated in rather general terms, furnishes some of the basic guidelines in our practical mission theology. In leading the seeker to baptism, the pattern of becoming Christians by family and village is recommended in tribal and other comparable circumstances. In some cases where the local situation seems to require this, as in Ethiopia, the adults are advised to confess in public, firstly, that they want to believe in Christ, and, secondly, that they want to renounce Satan.

There have been examples of national pastors who have administered Baptism at a very early stage, on the basis of Acts. 8:35, 16:30. However, it has been noticed, that some people from whom evil spirits had been cast out (this applies

to Ethiopia) did not remain in fellowship with the local church after their baptism, which was possibly administered too early. Normally a regular attendance in meetings and the appropriate baptismal instruction for a substantial period of time are required of the baptismal candidates. However, it seems that in some cases the workers proceeded rather too carefully. Baptism should not be pushed off too long unnecessarily. The actual timing of Baptism remains open to debate - at hindsight it is safe to say that in many cases Baptism was delayed for long periods without a good reason.

The local congregation should always be a mixed group. God alone knows the hearts of people. All those willing to attend church services and other meetings should normally be encouraged to do so. Thus the message of salvation can be proclaimed to as large a group of people as possible. But this, of course, means that all who participate in congregational meetings could not be given the same status in the structure and fellowship of the local church. Only the communing members could be given special tasks within the congregation, such as those of elders and deacons. The confirmation process and the instruction connected with it varies from place to place. Normally, in pioneer situations, those who confess their faith according to the three articles of the Apostles' Creed and who are willing to answer in the affirmative to certain questions concerning the contents of the creed, could be confirmed.

The Instruction of New Christians and National Workers

The risk of having to leave right from the pioneer stage of the work has accentuated the urgency to disseminate basic Christian instruction at the grass root level. In areas where new local congregations are born one of the most strategic problems at the initial stage is the lack of national workers. How to set a balance between the requirements of the gigantic work and the quality of co-workers is a constant dilemma. A good strategy seems to be to concentrate a great deal of effort on certain individuals who could carry on with the work

as the newly born congregations grow toward maturity. The guiding principle is then to find dependable men (2 Tim.), i.e., future leaders, teachers and pastors. The aim is always to have the national church attain self-determination and full responsibility at the earliest stage possible.

A fruitful pattern adopted for instruction, in the absence of established institutions and under restricted circumstances, is to present Christ, the Word of Life, to the co-workers-to-be at all times wherever possible - at home, at the office, while traveling etc. The Gospel message has to be constantly re-preached to those who are being trained to carry on the responsibility for the work. The introductory subjects that comprises well the initial instruction course are the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Benediction, Baptism, the Holy Communion, Confession, the Bible and Bible Study, and Prayer. This pattern has been applied with some variation in our teaching situations. Luther's Smaller Catechism, as can be seen from the cited points of basic teaching, is used as the book of instruction, together with the Bible.

The next stage for the new national workers is Bible School or systematic Christian teaching in other forms, as the TEE-programme. We feel it is basic that national workers get a thorough and substantial instruction in the Bible and the Lutheran confession. It seems that there is a crying need for "village pastors" or "non-professional" pastors who could be trained without being sent to a seminary or a college for years. Besides these, men trained at higher institutions for pastoral work and tasks of leadership are, of course, indispensable for new churches.

Ecumenical Relations

The FLOM is a confessional Lutheran organization. Wherever possible, the mission carries out its work in Lutheran framework. Though confessional in its basic outlook, the FLOM

wishes to retain open, brotherly relations with Christians of other denominations. In interdenominational contexts the workers are expected to adhere to their own confession but be willing to join hands with other Christians in service, prayer and Christian fellowship. The quest for Christian unity must be based on basic doctrinal unity. The choice is not between ecumenical relations and exclusivism, but between various modes of ecumenism. A decisive factor should be compatibility with the historic creeds of the early centuries which implies the trustworthiness of the Holy Scriptures and the unique, absolute and exclusive nature of the Christian faith revealed in it. From this point of view the WCC furnishes no viable forum for the quest for universal Christian unity. The LWF has a clear basis, the Lutheran confession, but suffers from wide theological pluralism. In the areas of, for example, information and development we find an opening for cooperation with the LWF. From the point of view of world mission and warm Christian fellowship, the conservative Lausanne movement offers a workable solution. Consequently, the mission is actively seeking ways and means of relevant contact with this international movement and agencies close to it.

General Information

The Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission (FLOM) was founded in 1974. The Finnish name Kylväjä (Sower) is a reference to Jesus Christ being the sower of the good seed (Mt. 13:37). FLOM is one of the six official mission organizations within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. It has work in Bangladesh, Japan, Ethiopia, Tanzania and among Muslims and Jews. The cooperating churches are the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the West Japan Lutheran Church and the Bangladesh Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church. On the fields of Japan and East Africa the Society works in close co-operation with the Norwegian Lutheran Mission. In Bangladesh the FLOM is a member mission of the Bangladesh Lutheran Mission together with the Norwegian and Danish Santal Missions and the World Mission

Prayer League. The organization is also a member with the International Assistance Mission. Currently it has 70 missionaries and publishes an eponymous monthly in Finnish. The FLOM runs its own missionary training course bi-annually and an operates an institute for biblical and missiological studies by way of education by extension.

Allan Franzén, Docent

HOW TO GET INFORMED AND TRAINED

Actual problems in mission information and in the preparation of missionaries can be grouped into some problem areas. To have things named in this way will hopefully also be of some help when problems have to be handled.

A. Problem areas in mission information

Generally it can be said that mission information is not a primary thing per se. If missionary work can go along without information, it is theoretically OK. In practice, however, information has to be spread in various directions for several purposes. And missionary work proclaiming the Lord of truth can hardly be thought to make progress, if it is not concerned with truth in its different aspects. People must be informed about truth. This does not mean only preaching.

Church history has taught us that all eagerness for the gospel is not always necessarily leading to mission activity. There are certain things to be known lest any mission will be triggered off. Hence mission information is needed in order to further a missionary process.

Problems in mission information have two threads. One has to do with information and the other with mission. Sometimes a separation of the two is helpful, though the analysis below mostly proceeds in another way.

1. Missionary motivation and mission information. Here we have a problem of "husband or servant". Is information taking place for the right sake?

Instructions for missionaries have stressed that missionaries should write or send materials for the mission's magazines.

Writing for magazines is part of the duties of a missionary. From a certain point of view missionary work is to act in such a way that one is able to write and inform. There can arise activities that mostly are going on because there has to be something worth of being written about. Information models the mission. Certainly mission cannot exist apart from information. To get the right balance is a problem all missionaries and their organizations have to handle.

Mission information has different shapes depending on whether information is based on people in need or on thankfulness for the gospel. Real problems occur if destitution and needs always have to be stressed more and more.

2. Target groups and their glasses. Mission information is reaching different groups of people: missionary workers, organization leaders and staff, inhabitants in mission countries, parish people and supporters. They all have different glasses through which information is observed and filtered. For all there should principally be the same information and the same truth, only adapted into varying forms. Yet information can easily become quite different due to direction and scope. In that case mission is interpreted in different ways by different groups, and co-operation naturally may get into difficulties.

3. Economic goals. Missions are giving but also receiving. Missionary work can seldom proceed without money or other resources handed over to it's use. Then people have to become aware of the needs of the missionary work.

Information and its settings are often constructed to give maximum economic output. This poses some, if not many problems. Sometimes it would be good to consider what mission information in magazines etc would look like, if missionary societies were not compelled to get money through it. There has been some "mission commercialism" and "romantics".

Information consumers have their preferences, and producers of mission information know some of them. There are, however, also things which should be exposed in information, but as they do not bring money they are easily neglected. There can sometimes be necessary information versus desired information. But if perspectives are widened enough, information producers get encouragement to act responsibly.

4. Allocation of resources. Big goals and small possibilities - that sounds familiar, doesn't it? It has something to do with how resources are allocated. The resources are not primarily economic but spiritual.

If you regard some things to be important enough, then you are also storing energy in order to be able to get it performed. When information is regarded as a chance to get people encouraged by letting them know the truth, then sufficient resources are allocated and results are achieved.

Resources have to be allocated separately for special campaigns and regular activities. Special information campaigns must not be repeated too often. In the regular activities, on the other hand, there has to be enough of both intrinsic weight and automatic functioning.

5. Balance of perspectives. Mission information is of course primarily dealing with today's situation. Yet responsible leaders must have a wider perspective, comprehending both historic retrospection and targets in the future. To find the balance between perspectives is surprisingly difficult.

The situation of Denmark has something to say about this. Among the Nordic countries Denmark has a very rich heritage of missionary research and perhaps the most exact way of making mission statistics. But the country also has the smallest amount of acting missionaries.

There is a tension between grasping the perspectives and how to act accordingly. To make this tension fruitful in mission information has proved very difficult.

It has to be understood that good planning does not automatically result in convincing information. But mission information cannot consist only of mayflies.

6. Balance between spiritual encouragement and information of facts. Missionaries and homeworkers have by tradition learnt themselves, and also taught others, that the experience of getting spiritual encouragement from the Scripture is a good base for mission information. To a certain extent mission is a dimension of spiritual well-being. Christians in lack of spiritual nourishment and strength hardly make any progress in mission. Mission information has to be spiritually edifying.

In home mission activities there is much work which is not very traditional. People engaged in that kind of work may be really surprised of some traditional mission gatherings, where there are not presented any mission facts at all. There are many unbalances in mission gatherings as well as in magazines and other materials.

7. Human beings versus structures. Mission magazines are very much dealing with individual people in their situations of life. To a great extent mission information is telling about people's lives. Such things have the interest of the great audience. Naturally readers are interested in other people. In mission human beings are concerned.

The problem is whether the amount of stories really gets knowledge to grow. Does one that has read 100 stories know any more than one that has read only 10 of them? Stories are "selling" in another way than facts, figures, analyses and explanations. Still there are some structures and conformities mission people should get to know in addition to what they know of the lives of individuals.

8. Delicate information. In every information there are delicate points. Often these are the most important ones, of which information should be both open and correct. But they often concern people of other countries and those may not themselves be able to participate in the process. They can get into difficulties in their own country because of information handled in a wrong way.

Because of the delicate nature of some things missionaries are advised not to write directly to newspapers or magazines. The possible feeling of being censored must be weighted against the responsibility for people in harder situations than ours.

9. Prayers and giving. Missionary societies want people to pray and give. Christians really like to do the same.

Most Christians, however, easily tend to make generalizations in their prayers, in order to cover as much as possible. In giving, on the other hand, donors have a natural wish to support things and activities they know something about, as directly as possible.

Missions and missionaries want their supporters to pray for specific people, situations and needs. When it comes to mission incomes, they like to handle them as cleverly and freely as possible. In other words mission agencies like to tell people to pray as specifically as possible and to give as generally as possible.

There is then a tension between different tendencies in praying and giving. Information producers do well in being aware of this.

10. Information and the practical view of life. Children and young people are especially to be considered in this respect. Many mission things do have the interest of children and young people. Therefore missionaries' visits at schools are generously received. But there is the problem of the missions's settings, when mission is presented for the young ones.

Mission is easily becoming a separate entity, concerned perhaps only slightly with geography and history. Or it may be reduced to some story-telling. But it really should have its place within a child's view of life, particularly in a country where teaching of religion is confessional.

This also has to do with the recruitment of missionary workers. Missionaries are not recruited by story-telling alone. It has not always been easy to grasp that every time when mission is at stage in churches, schools and media, it is also out to recruit workers. Not until mission forms any substantial part of a youngster's view of life can it influence the choice of his or her career.

B. Problem areas in missionary training

If missionary candidates receive at least any training in addition to language courses, either from their own organization or outside of it, then the training has consisted of some basic elements common of most missions. That means the basics of the Christian biblical faith, missions and religions, counselling and some training in practical things.

Problems that occur in missionary preparation and other mission education are of the same kind in most organizations. They do not as much arise from training arrangements as from the work situation of the mission.

1. The connection between recruitment and training. The recruiting of missionaries is recruitment for training. The great question of recruitment is: how get the right people? Behind this question there is not only the ability of people, but above all their missionary call. When the question is asked, recruitment is primary, training secondary. This is always the case, which means that training has the second place. Everything cannot be solved by training. (Sometimes educational projects have proved disastrous, see Patricia R.

Hill, *The world their household*, Ann Arbor 1985, p. 148 and others.) Principal readiness usually comes from other sources than training.

2. The need to have motivation strengthened. People should be motivated, though their organization is far from perfect. Training is needed to strengthen people's right motivation. Here ideals are coming into the picture. But people hastening to the field are more occupied by practice. Ideals, calls and visions are needed straight in the midst of practical problems, though there sometimes seems to be little room for them.

3. Resources. Missionary training is an expensive business. Language training costs most, but every week or month of paying the living of a missionary family before the departure to the field, is digging deeply into the resources of a mission. Missionary training or people's training at large must simply be regarded as one of the chief undertakings of a mission. When this is the case, there can be enough of economic and other resources allocated for training.

4. Christian knowledge. In the Nordic countries Christian knowledge among young people has diminished considerably. That is to a great extent due to less hours of Christian religion at schools. The effects of this has already been observed among missionary candidates. Today's faint knowledge of the Bible and the Christian faith is mirrored in the knowledge of candidates too.

As soon as missionary workers have to do with new Christians in an emerging church, there is a need for some ability to give Christian instruction. In fulfilling this need missions have more problems than before. Partly they have tried to solve them by giving more instruction of the Bible and Christian faith in missionary training courses.

5. Basic attitudes. There are some myths said to have been flourishing about mission. (Nine of them are mentioned by J. Herbert Kane, *Understanding Christian missions*, Grand Rapids

1975, p. 15-27.) Many of the myths may not be so dangerous any more. We don't for example believe that missionaries are disappearing or that missionaries are very primitively living beings. Still there are some misunderstandings left.

Missionary candidates themselves may have some prejudice implanted that is still left at the time of the first furlough. This appears from the fact that missionaries seldom feel themselves appropriately prepared before two periods of service. All this also has something to do with motivation for the work.

6. Adjustment and contextualization. Contextualization is not a new thing. Missionaries have always had to relate and adjust to their environment in a proper way. Problems in this process are common of both theologians and workers of other professions.

Theological training at universities is normally not very consciously related to a missionary situation. This means that the professional training of both theologians and most missionaries of other professions is not very much related to missionary work. Missionary candidates are not very contextual in their start.

7. Living standards. During the last ten years mission leaders have talked about the need for a more proper adjustment to the living standards in mission countries. Yet not very much has happened. Due to improved communications and travelling facilities Western missionaries have remained even more Western than before.

8. Human relations and the need for counselling. Missionary preparation is of such a kind that training also means counselling. Counselling has to do with both the relation to God and to other people. Here we concentrate on the latter.

Establishing a confident relation between the mission and the workers is important from the viewpoint of the missionary

task, but even more because it is a matter of fellowship between Christians. All the missionary family is involved in counselling during the period of training. Everyone needs counselling.

When missionaries have been asked to classify some of the problems in their work, relations with colleagues have been ranked among the hardest ones. There have not always been problems in this respect, but often enough. Elements of counselling have therefore been increased in missionary training.

9. Family situation. Both children and adults have to be noticed in this respect. In the past it was not easy to be a child of missionaries. But today school arrangements, for exemple, are quite on another level. Families are often able to live together.

A new kind of family problems has occurred. During the last twenty years many a missionary, usually a woman, has bravely married a spouse from the mission country. A lot of these marriages, obviously most of them, have broken. This problem cannot be solved by simply advising people not to marry cross-racially, because that would have a taste of racism. But much more knowledge has really to be spread about what such a kind of marriage means to the spouses.

10. Time perspective. Training is for life, not just for tasks immediately round the corner. Missionary training, as well as other mission education, should be integrated into a life programme. There should be more specified steps of achieving competence and responsibility. This has been pointed out at several occasions, but not much has yet been applied in practice.

Allan Franzen

LÄHETYKSEN TIEDOTUS- JA KOULUTUSONGELMAT

A. Lähetystiedotuksen ongelma-alueita

Tavallisesti lähetystiedotus ei itsessään ole mikään ensisijainen asia. Jos lähetys pystyisi toimimaan ilman tiedotusta, niin se olisi teoriassa OK. Käytännössä pitää kuitenkin välittää tietoja eri tarkoituksiin ja suuntiin. Ja lähetys joka julistaa totuuden Herraa ei voi edistyä, ellei se välitä totuudesta sen eri aspekteissa. Totuudesta pitää tiedottaa, ei ainoastaan julistuksessa. Kirkkohistoriasta tiedetään että into evankeliumin julistamisesta ei aina välttämättä ole johtanut lähetystoimintaan. On asioita jotka pitää tietää, jotta lähetys pääsisi alkuun. Lähetystiedotus on osoittautunut olevansa tarpeen lähetystoiminnan edistämiseksi. Jäljempänä mainitut lähetystiedotuksen ongelma-alueet eivät välttämättä kata koko kenttää, mutta huomattavan osan siitä.

1. Tiedotukseen liittyvä lähetysmotivaatio. Tässä on mukana eräänlainen "renki vai isäntä" -problematiikka. Tapahtuuko tiedotus oikean asian tähden? Lähetystyöntekijöiden ohjeissa on tavalla tai toisella teroitettu että työntekijän tulee lähettää informaatiota lähetyslehtiä varten. Lehtiin kirjoittaminen kuuluu lähetystyöntekijän tehtäviin. Määrätystä kulumasta katsoen lähetys on sitten sellaista toimintaa, josta pystyy kirjoittamaan ja informoimaan. Siten saattaa syntyä myös lähetystoimintaa, joka paljolti pyörii tiedotusta varten. Tiedotus määrää lähetystoiminnan. Lähetys ei voi toimia tiedotuksesta erillään. Tässä oikean tasapainon löytäminen on ongelma jota jokainen lähetystyöntekijä ja joka lähetysjärjestö joutuu käsittelemään. Lähetystiedotus on melko eri näköistä riippuen siitä välitetäänkö siinä ihmisten hätään perustuva lähetysnäky vaiko sellainen näky, joka perustuu evankeliumin lahjan aiheuttamaan kiitollisuuteen. Tiedotus saattaa joutua

todellisiin ongelmatilanteisiin, jos aina pitää löytää hätäpiiskalle pidentenystä.

2. Mitkä kohderyhmät ja silmälasit? Lähetystiedotus tavoittaa eri ihmisryhmiä: lähetystyöntekijöitä, järjestöjen päätöksentekijöitä ja hallintohenkilökuntaa, lähetyksmaiden asukkaita, seurakuntia ja kannattajia. Näillä on eri silmälasit joiden läpi he katsovat ja suodattavat tietonsa. Kaikille kuuluu sama informaatio, vain muokattuna eri muotoon. Helposti voi kuitenkin käydä niin että informaatio onkin hyvin erinäköistä eri suuntiin ja tarkoituksiin. Silloin lähetyks onkin hyvin eri asia eri ryhmillä ja yhteistyö toimii sen mukaan.

3. Taloudelliset tavoitteet. Lähetyksmaissa lähetyks on antamassa, mutta kotimaassa vastaanottamassa. Harvoin lähetyks voi toimia ilman rahaa tai niitä varoja, jotka ihmiset antavat lähetyksstyön käyttöön. Silloin ihmisten pitää saada tietää jotain toiminnan tarpeista. Usein onkin tiedotus puitteineen järjestetty antamaan maksimaalinen taloudellinen tulos. Tämä ei ole ongelmatonta. On aihetta pohtia minkä näköinen lähetykslehtien ym. sisältämä tietoaaines olisi, ellei lähetyksjärjestön olisi pakko saada rahaa sen kautta. Eräänlainen "lähetykskaupallisuus" ja -romantiikka liittyy tähän. Tiedonsaajat mielellään ottavat vastaan määrätynlaista informaatiota, tai lähetyksjärjestöjen tiedottajat myös olettavat näin olevan. Samalla on asioita, joista olisi tarpeen tiedottaa, mutta jotka eivät liity varojenhankintaan, ja siksi saattavat joutua vähemmälle huomiolle. Siis tarvittava info vastaan haluttu info. Perspektiivin pidentäminen auttaa kuitenkin tiedottajat vähän vapautumaan tässä asiassa.

4. Resurssien varaaminen. Suuret tavoitteet ja pienet mahdollisuudet - tämä ei ole kovin harvinainen tilanne. Ongelmatilanteesta on silti voitu vaputua kun on nähty, että tässä on kysymys resurssien varaamisesta. Jos asia on riittävän tärkeä, jaksetaan myös varata henkiset (ja hengelliset) energiaresurssit siihen. Kun tiedotus on nähty mahdollisuutena välittää ihmisille totuus rohkaisevassa muodossa, on resurssit myös varattu sille, ja tulokset ovat olleet sen mukaisia. Resurssit

on varattava erikseen iskuluontoiseen tiedotukseen ja säännölliseen toimintaan. Iskut eivät voi toistua liian usein. Säännöllisessä toiminnassa taas tulee olla riittävästi omaa painoa ja automatiikkaa, jotta se kulkisi eteenpäin.

5. Perspektiivien tasapaino. Lähetystiedotus käsittelee luonnollisesti lähinnä vallitsevaa nykytilannetta. Vastuunkantajien on kuitenkin pakko ajatella tiedotusta myös laajemmin, katsomalla menneisyyden historiaan sekä eteenpäin pitkällä tähtäimellä. Eri perspektiivien tasapainon löytäminen on yllättävän vaikea. Tanskan tilanne on tästä mielenkiintoinen esimerkki. Pohjoismaiden joukossa Tanska omaa laadukkaita, ellei suorastaan korkeimman tason lähetystutkimuksen perinteet, ja tanskalaiset pystyvät tekemään oivallisen tarkkoja lähetystilastoja. Samalla Tanskan aktiivilähetystyöntekijöiden joukko on kirkkaasti pienin muihin pohjoismaihin verrattuna. Perspektiivin tietopuolisen hallitsemisen ja tulkinteenmukaisen toimimisen välillä on jännitystä. Lähetystiedotuksessa on ollut ilmeisen vaikeaa muuntaa tätä jännitystä hedelmällisellä tavalla. Voidaan myös sanoa että suunnitelmallisuus ei välttämättä tee riittävän hyvää ajankohtaistiedotusta joka todella vetoaisi. Kuitenkaan tiedotus ei voi koostua vain päivänperhosta.

6. Hartaus- ja tietoaaineiston tasapaino. Perinteisesti lähetit ja lähetysten kotimaantönteekijät ovat itse oppineet, ja myös opettaneet eteenpäin, että hengellinen rakentuminen Raamatun sanasta on lähetystiedotuksen hyvä pohja. Lähetys on tiettyssä määrin hengellisen hyvinvoinnin eräs ulottuvuus. Jos kristityt ovat oikein hengellisessä puutteessa, lähetys ei toimi. Lähetystiedotuksen pitää siis olla hengellisesti rakentavaa. Lähetysten kotimaantoimintaan liittyy kuitenkin paljon myös vähemmän perinteistä toimintaa. Ja ne jotka eivät ole perinteisiin juurtuneet saattavat kummastua lähetystilaisuuksia, joissa ei juuri ollenkaan anneta tietoja itse lähetystyöstä. Tasapainon löytäminen hartaus- ja lähetystietoaaineiston välillä ei aina käy kädenkäänteessä. Tämä koskee sekä kokoontumisia että lehti- ym. materiaalia.

7. Ihmiset ja rakenteet. Lähetyslehdissä päähuomio suuntautuu yksityisiin ihmisiin heidän eri elämäntilanteissa. Huomattavassa määrin lähetystiedotus on eri ihmiskohtaloiden kertomista. Niistä tavallinen kansa jaksaa jollain tavalla kiinnostua. Ja ihmisistähän todella on kysymys. Ongelmana on, missä määrin kertomukset todella lisäävät lähetystietoutta. Tietääkö sata kertomusta lukenut henkilö yhtään enemmän kuin se joka on lukenut vain kymmenen kertomusta? Kertomukset "myyvät" toisella tavalla kuin faktat, numerot, analyysit ja selvittelyt. Kuitenkin lähetyksessä toimivat itse henkilöiden ohella myös eräät rakenteet ja lainalaisuudet, josta lähetysväen on syytä olla selvillä.

8. Arka tiedotus. Jokaisessa tiedotuksessa on arkoja kohtia. Usein ne ovat juuri ne tärkeimmät, joista tulee tiedottaa avoimesti ja oikein. Lähetystyössä on kuitenkin useimmiten kysymys toisen maan ihmisistä jotka eivät niin helposti itse pääse vaikuttamaan prosessiin. Toisen maan ihmiset myös saattavat joutua vaikeuksiin väärällä tavalla tehdyn tiedotuksen takia.

9. Rukous ja uhraaminen. Lähetysjärjestöjen taholta toivotaan, että ihmiset sekä rukoilevat että uhraavat. Elävän kristillisyyden ihmiset haluavat itse toimia tällä tavalla. Kuitenkin rukoilija helposti yleistää asiat, jotta mahdollisimman paljon tulisi mukaan rukoukseen. Varojen uhraamisessa taas on olemassa luonnollinen halu kannattaa niitä ihmisiä ja projekteja, joista tietää jotakin, ja niihin halutaan uhrata niin suoraan kuin mahdollista. Lähetysjärjestön taholta taas halutaan että kannattajat rukoilevat määrättyjen ihmisten, tilanteiden ja tarpeiden puolesta. Taloudelliset tulot järjestöt toisaalta tahtovat käyttää niin vapaasti ja viisaasti kuin mahdollista. Toisin sanoen lähetysseurat mielellään neuvovat ihmisiä rukoukseen mahdollisimman eritellysti ja uhraamaan mahdollisimman yleisesti. Rukouksessa ja uhraamisessa on täten määrätynlainen ristiveto eri taipumusten välillä. Tiedotuksessa tämä on jatkuvasti ajankohtainen.

10. Tiedotuksen liittyminen käytännön maailmankatsomukseen. Tämä on huomioitava varsinkin lasten ja nuorten kohdalla. Monet lähetykseen liittyvät asiat kiinnostavat lapsia ja nuoria. Siksi lähetystyöntekijöiden kouluvierailut ovat saaneet hyvän vastaanoton. Hiukan ongelmallista on, mihin lähetys yleensä liitetään, kun sitä esitellään nuorille. Lähetyksestä tulee helposti oma irrallinen kokonaisuutensa, joka vain jonkin verran liittyy maantietoon ja historiaan. Tai lähetys supistuu lähinnä kertomuksiin. Sillä pitäisi kuitenkin olla selvästi oma paikkansa nuoren maailmankatsomuksessa, varsinkin kun koulussa on tunnustuksellinen uskonopetus. Tämä vaikuttaa lähetysten rekrytointiin. Kertomusten kautta ei tavallisesti rekrytoida lähetystyöntekijöitä. Tiedotuksessa ei ole ollut helppoa aina pitää riittävän kirkkaana mielessä, että kun lähetys esiintyy kirkoissa, kouluissa ja tiedotusvälineissä, se on myös rekrytoinnin asialla. Vasta kun lähetys on oleellinen osa nuoren käytännön maailmankatsomuksesta, se alkaa vaikuttaa elämänuran valintaan.

B. Lähetyskoulutuksen ongelma-alueita

Jos lähetysjärjestön lähetitit tavalla tai toisella, joko järjestönsä sisällä tai sen ulkopuolella, ovat saaneet jonkinlaisen valmentavan lähetyskoulutuksen kielivalmennuksen lisäksi, se on sisältänyt seuraavat peruselementit: kristinuskon raamatulliset perusteet, lähetys ja uskonnot, sielunhoito ja käytännön asiat. Lähetystyöntekijä- ja muussa lähetyskoulutuksessa vastaantulevat ongelmat ovat järjestöille melko lailla yhteisiä. Useimmat niistä eivät niinkään nouse koulutusjärjestelyistä kuin lähetysten työtilanteesta yleensä.

1. Rekrytointi ja siihen liittyvä koulutus. Lähetystyöntekijöiden rekrytointi on rekrytointia koulutukseen. Rekrytoinnin suuri kysymys on: miten saada oikeat ihmiset? Kysymyksen takana eivät ole vain ihmisten kyvyt, vaan ennen kaikkea heidän lähetyskutsunsa. Kun kysymys asetetaan, on rekrytointi primäärinen, koulutus sekundaarinen. Näin tulee aina olemaan, eli koulutus on toissijainen asia. Kaikkea ei ratkaista koulu-

tuksella. (Eräästä jopa katastrofaalisesta yrityksestä ratkaista lähetyksen kotimaan ongelmat koulutuksella, ks. Patricia R. Hill, *The world their household*, Ann Arbor 1985, 148 ym.) Perusvalmius tulee muulla tavalla kuin koulutuksen kautta.

2. Motivaation vahvistamisen tarve. Ihmisten tulisi olla motivoituja, vaikka työnantajajärjestö on kaukana täydellisyydestä. Koulutus on tarpeen oikean motivaation vahvistamiseksi. Tässä ihanteet astuvat kuvaan. Mutta ihmiset, jotka kiirehtivät työalalleen, ovat enemmän kiinnostuneita käytännöstä. Ihanteet, kutsumus ja visiot, näitä tarvitaan käytännön ongelmien keskellä, vaikka ne eivät tunnu aina sinne mahtuvan.

3. Resurssit. Lähetystyöntekijävalmennus on kallis asia. Kielikoulutus maksaa eniten, mutta jokainen viikko tai kuukausi, jonka lähetys maksaa lähettiperheen elättämiseksi ennen tehtäviin astumista kentällä, vaikuttaa syvästi lähetyksen varoihin. Lähettivalmennus tai ihmisten koulutus yleensä on yksinkertaisesti pidettävä lähetyksen eräänä päätehtävänä, jotta koulutukselle jatkuvasti pystyttäisiin varaamaan riittävästi taloudellisia ja muita resursseja.

4. Tietopohja. Pohjoismaissa nuorten kristinuskon tuntemus on huomattavasti vähentynyt johtuen m.m. koulun uskontotuntien vähenemisestä. Seuraukset on havaittu lähetyškandidaattien tiedoissa. Nykypäivän heikko Raamatun ja kristinuskon tuntemus on näkynyt heissäkin.

Kun lähetystyöntekijä joutuu neuvomaan ja ohjaamaan kasvavan kirkon uusia kristittyjä, tarvitaan taito opettaa kristinuskoa. Tämän tarpeen tyydyttämisessä lähetyksillä on enemmän ongelmia kuin aikaisemmin. Osittain sitä on pyritty ratkaista lisäämällä raamattuopetuksen ja uskonopin osuutta lähettikoulutuksessa.

5. Ennakkoasenteet. Lähetyksestä on sanottu vallitsevan eräitä myyttejä. (Näistä ks. J. Herbert Kane, *Understanding Christian missions*, Grand Rapids 1975, 16-17, 23-24.) Kaikki nämä myytit

eivät ehkä enää ole niin vaarallisia. Emme esim. niin vahvasti usko että lähetystyöntekijät olisivat häviämässä tai että he eläisivät kovin primitiivisesti. Silti väärinkäsityksiä on jäänyt. Lähetyskandidaatitkin ovat saattaneet ylläpitää sellaisia ennakkokäsityksiä, jotka ovat pysyneet vielä ensimmäiselle lepokaudelle tultaessa. Tämä näkyy myöskin siitä, että harva lähetti on tuntenut itsensä asianomaisesti valmentuneeksi, ennenkuin on palvellut kaksi kenttäjaksoa. Tämä vaikuttaa samalla työn motivaatioon.

6. Sopeutuminen ja kontekstuaalisuus. Kontekstuaalisuus ei ole uusi ongelma. Lähettien on aina pitänyt suhtautua ja sopeutua ympäristöönsä relevantilla tavalla. Tähän liittyvät ongelmat ovat yhteisiä sekä teologikoulutuksen saaneilla että muiden ammattiryhmien läheteillä. Yliopistojen teologikoulutuksessa ei normaalisti ole juuri ollut tietoisia sovellutuksia lähetystilanteeseen. Tämä merkitsee, että sekä teologien että useimpien muiden lähetystyöntekijöiden ammattikoulutus ei oikein ole suhteessa heidän lähetystilanteensa kanssa. Ilmoitautuneet lähetyskandidaatit eivät ole lähtöpisteessään kovin kontekstuaalisia.

7. Elintaso. Viimeisten kymmenen vuoden aikana lähetysjohtajat ovat puhuneet tarpeesta paremmin sopeutua lähetysmaiden elintasaan. Mutta kovin paljon asiassa ei ole tapahtunut. Parantuneiden kulkuyhteyksien ja lisääntyvän matkustamisen myötä länsimaiden lähetystyöntekijät ovat jääneet yhä länsimaisemmiksi.

8. Sielunhoidon tarve ja ihmissuhteet. Lähettikoulutus on sen tyyppistä, että koulutukseen osallistuminen on sielunhoidossa olemista. Sielunhoito käsittää sekä jumalasuhteen että ihmissuhteet. Tässä kiinnitetään lähempi huomio jälkimmäisiin. Luottamuksellisen suhteen rakentaminen lähetyksen ja työntekijöiden välille on tärkeä lähetystehtävän kannalta, mutta vielä tärkeämpi sen takia, että kyseessä on kristittyjen välinen yhteys. Koko perhekin on sielunhoidossa lähettikoulutuksen aikana. Jokainen tarvitsee sielunhoitoa. Kun lähettejä eri kyselytutkimuksissa on pyydetty luokittelemaan työssä esiinty-

vät ongelmat, huomattavana ongelmaryhmänä on mainittu lähet-tien väliset suhteet. Näitä ongelmia ei ole aina ollut, mutta silloin kun ne tulevat, ne ovat sitä vaikeampia. Tämän takia sielunhoidon osuus lähetyskoulutuksesta on kasvanut.

9. Perhetilanne. Tässä pitää huomioida sekä lapset että aikuiset. Ennen lähetyslapsen tilanne ei ollut helppo. Mutta tänään esim. koulujärjestelyt ovan ihan toisella tasolla. Perheet voivat usein elää yhdessä. Lähetyksessä on ilmestynyt uusia perheongelmia. Viimeisten parinkymmenen vuoden aikana yhä useampi lähetti, yleensä nainen, on rohkeasti avioitunut lähetysmaan kansalaisen kanssa. Kuitenkin suuri osa näistä avioliitoista, ilmeisesti valtaosa, on päättynyt eroon.

10. Aikaperspektiivi. Koulutus on elämää varten, ei vain nurkan takana olevia tehtäviä varten. Lähetystyöntekijän koulutus ja muukin lähetyskoulutus, on integroitava koko elämänsäkaaren osaksi. Tätä on kyllä korostettu, mutta ei kovin paljon nimenomaan sovellettu käytäntöön.

Jaakko Rusama, Ph.D.

COMMON GOALS OF THE CHURCH

Ecumenical efforts in Finland

When we talk about the witness of the Church we must always ask what is the witness that the Christian Church, universal by her nature, is giving to the world. Is it a united voice which can be heard and understood?

In the following I shall briefly describe some of the ways in which the Finnish churches try to fulfill their missionary calling together. Coming together, praying together and working together is crucial for common witness. To understand the national ecclesiastical setting a short historical description is necessary. Due to lack of space Finnish participation in international discussion e.g. in various ecumenical bodies has been left out. It would need a separate study. It is, however, interesting to see how similar issues can easily be seen in domestic discussions as well.

The mission of the Church

The role the Christian Church, though visibly disunited, is to witness the salvation in Jesus Christ. This is a universal message which transcends all geographical, political, cultural and ecclesiastical boundaries. This is where we can find all the Christian churches and communities together in the Finnish setting. They try to fulfill their calling and serve God's call. How well can they or will they take seriously the expression of the Christian faith in our common confession: "We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church"? Churches are divided and yet in many ways united. One of the instruments in their efforts to express Christian unity is the ecumenical movement. Churches and their members are honestly

striving for Christian unity, to seek ways to express their unity in Christ. This unity is a gift from God.

The Churches' common witness in Finland is not a theoretical issue or wishful thinking. It is a reality which is expressed in many different ways.

The mission of St Henrik and the Eastern monks

The patron saint of Finland is Bishop St Henrik (Henry), Bishop of Uppsala, who together with the Swedish King Eric landed in the middle of 12th century on the Finnish West coast and founded some of the first Christian communities here. St Henrik was Finland's first bishop. This "Father" of the Western church in Finland faced a martyr's death in the 1150s presumably on the lake of Köyliö. He is still regarded as the national Saint and Apostle of Finland. Although there had been earlier Christian influence in Finland both from East and West, it is believed that the Christian Church came into existence in Finland only after Bishop Henrik's arrival.

In the Middle Ages there were many places which were related to St Henrik's life and death and which were venerated as holy places. Some historians also link the birth of Finnish national identity with the birth of St Henrik's cult. The first Finnish anthem in the Middle Ages was a hymn to St Henrik, *Ramus virens olivarum*.

There are also signs of earlier Christian influence in Eastern Finland, in Karelia, already in the 11th century. Several monks came from Novgorod and began their missionary work there. Special veneration is given in the Orthodox Church to the two missionary monks, Sergey (Sergius) and Herman, who founded the Valamo Monastery presumably in the 12th century on the lake Ladoga. Another island on the same lake also became the site of a monastery, the Konevitsa Monastery, through the missionary work of St Arseni. Both these monasteries were built on the sites of ancient pagan worship.

Since these times the Christian church in and through the life of local congregations has continued her witness among the Finns. This means that Christian communities have been visibly alive in the country for many centuries.

Finland, being part of the Swedish Kingdom, became a Protestant country during the 16th century. The Reformation was carried through without much violence in Finland.

Churches today

Today almost 90 % of all Finns are baptized members of Christian churches. In Finland we have more than ten different churches and Christian communities. 87 % of the whole population are baptized members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (4.6 Million members). 1 % of the population belong to the Orthodox Church in Finland which is an autonomous church, an archbishopric, in the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Orthodox Church has almost 56.000 members. For the Finnish ecumenical reality it is important, as seen earlier, to note that Western and Eastern Christianity have lived side by side in Finland nearly 900 years.

As in other Nordic countries the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is today a typical folk church. Officially the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church are State churches or national (folk) Churches having the right to levy taxes from their members. These taxes are collected by the state authorities together with the income tax. Each parish can set its own rate of tax. The national average is about one per cent of taxable income.

The juridical basis on which religious life is founded in Finland is the Ecclesiastical Act of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, enacted in 1889. The right of other Protestant or other denominations to constitute themselves was guaranteed in the legislation.

Finland became a sovereign and independent state in 1917. The constitution defines the State as neutral in denominational questions, but in practice the Lutheran majority church retains its special status. The same status was later also accorded to the Finnish Orthodox Church. For all the other denominations in this country the Freedom of Religion Act of 1923 is important. It guarantees absolute freedom of religion to all citizens, who are equally free to profess no religion if they so wish.

With regard to the state both national churches decide independently on their own doctrines, finances and activities. The churches have their own governing bodies, the highest being the General Synod. Bills relating to the churches are submitted by the Synods to Parliament which can enact or reject them, but may not alter their contents. Unlike in other Nordic countries, in Finland there are no authorities like "church ministry" or "church minister" in the Government or elsewhere.

Other Finnish Churches

Other major churches are: the Evangelical Free Church (congregational-type but not Reformed, 12.000 members), the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (5.000 members), the (Roman) Catholic Church (5.000 members), Finnish- and Swedish-speaking Baptist churches (2.800 members), Finnish- and Swedish-speaking Methodist churches (1.700 members) and the English-speaking Anglican Church (200 members). It is estimated that 45.000 to 50.000 people attend pentecostal meetings regularly. The pentecostal movement is not organised in Finland as a united religious community but a group of independent local congregations. A great number of people who are active in the pentecostal movement, however, are officially members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In the light of the witness of the church in the society some structural factors are important. It is possible to see the Church and its influence almost everywhere in Finnish society, starting for example, from the Lutheran or Orthodox confessional religious instruction at schools, which is compulsory almost at all levels. 94 % of all 15 year old boys and girls in this country attend the Lutheran confirmation schools which involve 80 lessons, either at a summer camp or during the school-year in the evenings. More than a half of all children in this country under the age of seven attend regularly various church clubs and Sunday schools. Every day there are religious devotional programs on the radio. Every Sunday you can listen to a worship service on the radio. Almost similar services are also on television. As a sign of mutual respect and cooperation all religious broadcasting plans are made on an ecumenical basis.

The Finnish Ecumenical Council

There are at least five different national ecumenical bodies in Finland. Apart from the National Council of Churches (NCC) which is called the Finnish Ecumenical Council, there are the Finnish and Swedish-speaking Councils of (Protestant) Free Churches, Ecumenical Board for religious programs on TV and Radio, Ecumenical Board for Education and the Finnish Missionary Council. This last mentioned body is a coordinating body for a number of Protestant organisations.

The most important ecumenical body, with its own office and full-time staff, is the Finnish Ecumenical Council. It has been the National Council of Churches in Finland since 1917, being one of the oldest NCCs in the world. It consists of 10 member churches and 12 observer organisations, of which two are churches. The Roman Catholic Church has been a member since 1967. Also in Denmark and Sweden the Catholic Church is a full member of the National Council of Churches. Only the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking Pentecostal movement and the Finnish-speaking Baptists still prefer to stay outside the

membership of the Finnish Ecumenical Council. However, all major churches are normally involved in several ecumenical events and projects.

A significant part of the activities in the Council takes place in ten committees. In all of them there are at least seven to eight different churches represented. The committees are:

Education, Faith and Order, Health care ethics, International issues, Local unity, Mission and Evangelism, Scholarships, Swedish-speaking committee, Women and Youth.

These committees work on a very wide range of issues. Apart from discussions and mutual sharing of information the committees organise one-day ecumenical conferences on their special subjects and publish material for ecumenical use by the churches. With this decades-long experience it has been felt that it is important that the churches have this opportunity for regular meetings on a multilateral basis.

At the same time the Council itself strongly emphasizes that it is the churches' duty to work for Christian unity and not a duty of an ecumenical body. Churches cannot delegate the work for Christian unity to a body outside the churches. It is the churches that are praying, working and growing together, not the ecumenical bodies. A national council of churches is always a facilitator between the churches, hopefully an active facilitator.

Some of the recent issues that have been dealt with at the meetings of the Council, the widest working body, include:

- Ecumenical problems related to funeral practices. There have been serious conflicts when a person has nominally been a member of the Lutheran Church but has had his/her spiritual home in one of the other Protestant churches. He/she has hoped that the burial rite would be performed by a minister of

his/her spiritual community. This has not been possible according to the present Lutheran church law. As a person can belong to only one religious community or church in Finland these so called double members have inevitably caused problems. The Lutheran Church has now got a new Church law (in the beginning of November 1991) which permits ministers from other denominations to officiate at the funeral. It is a hopeful ecumenical step, yet not without theological problems.

- There has been wide-spread discussion of the role of the World Council of Churches in the ecumenical movement, especially after Canberra the Assembly and the Central Committee meeting in September 1991. Among other things the Orthodox critique and the statement from some evangelical groups, both of which reminded the WCC of its original mandate, have in their own way enabled wider discussion on the role of the WCC.

- The Decade 1988-1998, Churches in Solidarity with women, has been a truly ecumenical process in Finland. It is strongly promoted by the Women's committee of the Ecumenical Council. In 1994 the Ecumenical Council will organise a big national ecumenical women's conference.

- The question of mixed marriages is an issue which is one of the widely discussed problems. There are a number of problems related to the education of children and church participation. Churches in general have neglected the challenges raised and also resources which are brought by these people. It is a big pastoral question for all the churches. Educational programs and study material are being planned.

Relations to ecumenical organizations

The Finnish Ecumenical Council is an associated Council of the World Council of Churches (WCC). From Finland we have two member churches in the WCC: the Evangelical Lutheran Church (since 1948) and the Orthodox Church (since 1982). The Finnish Methodist Churches, Finnish- and Swedish-speaking, are members of the WCC through the United Methodist Church (since 1969). The committee on mission and evangelism of the Finnish Ecumenical Council is also an associate member of the Commission on

World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) which until the end of 1991 was one of the sub-Units in the WCC structure.

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) has three Finnish member churches: the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Orthodox Church and the Swedish-speaking Methodist Church. The sub-regional ecumenical body in Northern Europe is the Nordic Ecumenical Council with headquarters in Uppsala, Sweden.

Ecumenical challenges

A separate survey would be needed for ecumenical and missiological studies done in the Theological Faculties at Universities. One of the most recent ecumenical efforts may in the near future bear positive results. The Ecumenical Council has paid serious attention to the absence of chairs of Missiology in the Theological Faculties. With the creation of the third Theological Faculty in the University in Joensuu there are great hopes that this problem could somehow be solved. For missiological studies together with other churches-related institutes a chair in missiology would be of great value.

On the other hand, a constant challenge for ecumenical work is the tension between the leaderships of the churches and some groups which are mostly within the churches. In all the Finnish churches there are conservative groupings and individual voices which are either hesitant or openly against ecumenical encounters and activities. The main streams of criticism are normally based on either Biblical fundamentalism or, looking from a simple ecumenical angle, on selfish confessionalism. These anti-ecumenical groups are especially very eager to attack the WCC and other ecumenical organizations. All this is naturally a challenge not only for the organised ecumenical movement but also for the ministers and, especially, for the teaching of the church. In particular, in many evangelical circles the concept of "Christian unity" is widely accepted but "ecumenism" tends to represent something alien to people with a living faith! Greater emphasis is therefore laid on

Christian unity between individual believers who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Doctrinal talks which form a central part of the ecumenical movement are easily undermined.

Dialogues

In addition to the above described multilateral contacts and activities bilateral talks are very important for the wider ecumenical movement in Finland. Apart from national encounters the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church has had international bilateral talks with the Russian Orthodox Church since 1970. These meetings are now held every three years.

On the national level the whole decade of the 1980s was a very active period. In 1983-1984 the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Free Church had official talks, and a joint working group was set up. Encouraged by this dialogue, in 1987 the Pentecostal movement and the Evangelical Lutheran Church started their official talks. These talks ended in April 1989.

In these Protestant talks some important issues were dealt with which are of interest also from a missiological and missionary point of view. In the Lutheran - Evangelical Free Church talks the greatest differences appeared to be connected with sacramental doctrine. As the secretary of the Lutheran delegation, Dr. Risto Ahonen, summarises, more precise study would be needed of the relation between the Word and the sacraments, the presence of Christ in the eucharist, the nature of baptism as a gift, and the relation between baptism and faith. Particular problems were caused by church membership, church order, the constitutive factors of the Church and the Church's relation to society.

In the Lutheran - Pentecostal talks one of the difficult problems was that of differing traditions of biblical interpretation. Another difference was how to interpret God's activity in the world. The question was how God intervenes in

the course of history, how He reveals or conceals Himself, how He saves man and maintains His law throughout the world. It was, however, encouraging to note a theologically significant achievement in the common statement of views concerning the meaning of the Apostles's Creed and justification and new life.

In September 1989, official talks began, for the first time, between the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church.

Their last meeting in September 1991 dealt with two main themes: "Church as a worshipping community" and "The concept of man in our churches in relation to the present time". Both churches emphasized that the church is above all a praying and God-serving community. The Triune God is present in the worship service in word and holy sacraments or mysteries. The churches stated that man has been created for participation in God and his love (God's image and likeness). However, there were clear differences in the understanding of image and likeness and law and Gospel in the respective traditions. Both churches were also concerned about the growth of the new religious movements. The churches must pay more attention to their teaching and the pastoral care of their members. Ecological issues were also dealt with: Christian understanding of the creation and man may serve as the basis on which the teaching of the churches about the environment can be built. The churches will meet next in autumn 1993 with the themes "Incarnation in the liturgical tradition of the churches" and "Church and State". In May 1992 the Finnish Lutheran Church and the Russian Orthodox Church continued their bilateral talks, this time in Finland.

Ecumenically it has also been of great importance that some other dialogues have taken place in Finland. During the 1980s the sessions of international Lutheran - Orthodox dialogue, international Orthodox - Catholic dialogue and European Lutheran - Anglican dialogue took place in Finland. Also the

international Orthodox-Anglican dialogue continued in June 1989 at New Valamo Monastery.

Churches on evangelism

With the help of e.g. the Ecumenical Council there have been several ecumenical discussions on the understanding of evangelism in a modern society. A special feature has been the active Finnish participation in various Missions, i.e. evangelistic campaigns, not only in many cities in Finland but also in Estonia and Russia.

Since the 1980s the churches views on evangelism have been carefully listened to through various ecumenical seminars and conferences. From these encounters some common thoughts can be found. There are several points on which the churches can agree. It is widely stressed that evangelism does not only mean separate campaigns, prayer meetings or big shows. More than anything else it is a question of the churches' efforts to fulfill the mission of the church and to reach out people. Therefore, evangelism is not an alternative for the word and the sacraments. Through evangelism people are invited to the local church, local congregation. In the view of many church representatives it is claimed that very often the oldest of Christian confessions is enough: Jesus Christ is the Lord. Beginning from this basis churches are convinced that we ought to preach about Jesus to everybody. There is a deep common concern about secularisation and about an individual person.

There are, however, also several questions which need more elaboration, prayer and theological discussion. A common definition for evangelistic work is missing. It concerns not only the methods of the work but also the contents. One of the crucial problems is the understanding of baptism and its meaning as a constitutive element in the life of the churches. It has also been noted that there is a great variety of different views even in the same church with regard to evangelism. This variety is in practice a diversity which causes

tension. Especially in the Lutheran church with its powerful and significant revival movements the approaches to evangelistic campaigns differ dramatically.

On the other hand some churches find it difficult to continue active participation in evangelism if and when doctrinal emphases are put aside. For some churches clear confessional definitions are vitally important in everything that is done together. It has also been noted that despite a generally friendly atmosphere and keen adherence to the apostolic confession there are many churches and their related organisations which refuse to cooperate with organisations representing another denomination. Therefore, evangelism in practice is still selective where partners are concerned.

One of the constant dilemmas has been the discussion about whether or how evangelism and Christian education or formation could be separated. For some it is quite impossible, for others Christian education begins only after campaigns in local congregations. Should the doctrinal questions and confessional issues be put aside? For some this is a generally accepted principle, for others missionary activities without clear doctrinal basis is impossible. This raises also the question of whether a person is forced to make a decision without giving all power to God to work and act as he will. With evangelistic zeal there is all the time a danger that evangelism becomes a field for experts and is no longer the task of the whole church. As the domestic front is always more difficult than a foreign one, in some of the churches' responses there is a claim that it is easier to be active in mission abroad than at home.

A practical problem has for many years been the lack of mutual information. Evangelistic campaigns are planned and conducted in the same cities without any coordination with regard to the time-tables. From the ecumenical point of view there is still the question of there being two ecumenical prayer weeks every January. In the beginning of the month in the capital area, in and around Helsinki, a Christian unity week is celebrated,

supported by the Evangelical Alliance. From January 18 to 25 there is the ecumenical prayer week for Christian Unity which is celebrated all over the country. The former is purely a Protestant affair whereas in the latter all the churches and denominations are involved.

A hopeful sign in the discussions on evangelism has been the will to clarify how evangelical organisations could benefit the ecumenical movement. They are not necessarily outside the more structural ecumenical work but are supporting in their own way the whole movement which aims at the expression of the apostolic faith. All kinds of practical cooperation can be strengthened and help could be given jointly to local congregations. This requires also internal work within the churches.

Several local evangelistic campaigns, missions, are organised throughout the country. Local congregations from different denominations have reacted variably to these events. In a modest and a low-profile way also some Orthodox and Roman Catholic congregations have been part of these campaigns. In the years to come the questions of common understanding of evangelism and mission and also the question of common training of missionaries will be on the ecumenical agenda. Ecumenically, the whole issue of ecumenical sharing of resources is still a largely ecumenically untouched area.

International participation

Some of the Finnish churches have been active especially in the ecumenical organisations, like the Nordic Ecumenical Council, Conference of European Churches (and especially its study committee), World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. Across the churches there has been keen interest and participation in the Lausanne movement. More than the movement itself 'the Lausanne Spirit' is widely studied and promoted. The discussion on the outcomes of the two missionary conferences in 1989, San Antonio, Texas (CWME) and

Manila (Lausanne), still continue ecumenically. There is a sincere wish to pass the stage of a polarisation between the two missionary lines between the World Council of Churches and the Lausanne Movement.

With the help of the Finnish Ecumenical Council the significance of evangelical missionary thinking has been introduced also to those churches which are not familiar with evangelical approach to the mission of the church. Partly this interest is seen in the challenges which secularisation and other religions and ideologies bring to an otherwise homogenous Christian land. New religious movements and Islam are already realities in the Finnish religious life.

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KIRKON YHTEINEN TODISTUS - SUOMALAISIA EKUMEENISIA PYRKIMYKSIÄ

Lyhennelmä

Kristillisen kirkon todistus on aina todistusta, joka on yhteinen maailmalaaajalle Kristuksen kirkolle. Näkyvällä tavalla jakaantuneenakin kirkko todistaa Jeesuksesta Kristuksesta. Tällainen todistus ylittää kaikki maantieteelliset, poliittiset, kulttuuriin liittyvät ja kirkolliset rajat. Miten yhteinen todistus ilmenee Suomessa? Jo yli 900 vuoden ajan itäinen ja läntinen kristikunta ovat eläneet rinnakkain Suomessa. Sekä ortodoksisen kirkon että lännen kirkkojen, katolisen kirkon ja protestanttisten kirkkojen, merkitys näkyy monin eri tavoin suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa. Ainakin teoriassa kaikille kirkkoille on pyritty takaamaan tasavertaiset mahdollisuudet toimia vuoden 1923 Uskonnonvapauslain myötä. Erityisesti se koskee yksityisiä kansalaisia, joille on taattu täysin uskonnon harjoittamisen vapaus. Muista pohjoismaista poiketen Suomen ns. kansankirkkoilla, luterilaisella ja ortodoksisella kirkolla, ei ole hallinnollisesti kiinteää yhteyttä valtiovaltaan. Kirkollinen itsenäisyys on siten suurta.

Suomessa toimii muutamia ekumeenisia toimielimiä, joista tärkein on Suomen ekumeeninen neuvosto. Se on perustettu jo vuonna 1917, ja sen jäseninä on 10 kirkkoa, mukaan lukien roomalais-katolinen kirkko. Neuvosto palvelee kirkkoja niiden pyrkiessä ilmentämään kristittyjen ykseyttä. Neuvoston toiminnasta suuri osa tapahtuu pysyväisluonteisissa jaostoissa, joista yksi keskittyy lähetyksen ja evankelioimisen kysymyksiin. Neuvosto on käsitellyt viime aikoina kysymyksiä, kuten hautauskäytännön ekumeeniset ongelmat, Kirkkojen maailmanneuvoston rooli ekumeenisessa liikkeessä, ekumeeninen vuosikymmen 1988-1998 (Kirkot naisten tueksi) ja seka-avioliitot.

Ekumeenisina haasteina on koettu mm. missiologian yliopistopetuksen vähäisyys. Pyrkimyksenä on saada missiologian oppi-

tuoliin johonkin teologisista tiedekunnista. Toisaalta keskustelua käydään laajalla rintamalla niiden ryhmien kanssa, joiden on vaikea hyväksyä ekumeenista liikettä nykyisessä muodossaan. Opillisten kysymysten käsittely on monien kristillisten ryhmien mielestä turhaa silloin, kun halutaan ilmentää kristittyjen yhteyttä. Henkilökohtainen uskonyhteys tuntuu riittävän.

Näiden keskustelujen rinnalla käydään vakavia kirkkojenvälisiä opillisia keskusteluja. 1980-luvulla ev.lut. kirkko kävi teologiset neuvottelut Vapaakirkon (1983-1984), helluntaikerätyksen (1987-1989) ja ortodoksisen kirkon (1989-) kanssa. Kirkkojen yhteisen todistuksen kannalta nämä neuvottelut ovat olleet erittäin merkittäviä. Runsaasti lisää keskusteluja silti tarvitaan monien käytännön kysymysten lisäksi mm. sakramenteista, ihmiskäsityksistä ja kirkon tuntomerkeistä.

Ekumeeninen neuvosto on eri yhteyksissä selvittänyt evankelioimiseen liittyviä kysymyksiä yhteisen todistuksen näkökulmasta. Suurena sysäyksenä ovat olleet monet paikalliset ja valtakunnallisetkin missio-tapahtumat. Evankelioiminen koetaan koko kirkon, kaikkien sen jäsenten tehtäväksi. Käytännön toteutus kotimaisella kentällä on joskus vaikeaa yhdessä, esimerkiksi kysymyksessä evankelioimisen ja opetuksen välisestä suhteesta. Rohkaisevaa on ollut kuitenkin nähdä evankelioimisen käsitteen yhteinen pohdinta ja sen havaitseminen, että evankelioimisjärjestöilläkin voi olla oma merkittävä roolinsa kirkkojen yhteisessä todistustehtävässä. Siksi kirkkojen kansainvälinen ekumeeninen suuntautuminen ei voi tapahtua vain tunnettuihin ekumeenisiiin järjestöihin vaan myös herätyskristillisiin virtauksiin, joista esimerkiksi Lausannen liikkeen "henkeä" parhaillaan kysellään Suomessakin. Kirkkojen sisäisten kysymysten lisäksi entistä vakavamman haasteen esittävät nyt muut uskonnot, erityisesti islam, ja erilaiset ideologiat.