In a charming book about African pygmies, called Madami, the author tells of the adventures she and her husband had during the eight years they lived with these primitive people of the Congo. One of these had to do with an okapi or forest giraffe.

The okapi is the rarest inhabitant of the Ituri Forest, and as such, the author's husband wanted to have one. Accordingly, he offered a high reward to the pygmies, who finally succeeded in capturing one of these young animals.

The afternoon of the capture, the African boys gathered a huge load of leaves and dumped them in one corner of the specially built stockade. The okapi sniffed at them but would not eat.

Both the animal keeper and the author's husband were helpless and while they were racking their brains, Sale, one of the pygmy elders walked up. Sale listened politely and a bit bashfully, as though it were the height of nonsense for all these people to be puzzled by something so simple.

"You do not put your bowl on the ground to eat, do you?" he asked the animal keeper.

"No," muttered the animal man.

Sale thereupon walked into the forest and a minute later returned with a length of vine, which he tied across the top of the enclosure. Then he went inside and strung up the leaves as if he were putting out the washing.

The okapi stepped gingerly out of the far corner, smelled the leaves overhead, wrapped his long tongue around one and ate it. He moved along the vine, neatly collecting his food, as pleased as if he were browsing in the jungle (Reader's Digest, Oct. '54).

This, in parabolic form, is the method of evangelism. The bread of life must be placed before the world in such a way that they will eat it. This means that the gospel must be couched in the cultural pattern and thought-forms of those who are to receive it, and not in the terminology of those who believe.

It means further that the message can never be stereotyped but that each evangelist must adapt to the particular situation in which he is placed. There is an American Digger Indian proverb which says,

In the beginning, God gave to every people a cup of clay,
And from this cup they drink their lives.
The nectar of God's Word must appeal to each man in his own way before he is tempted to drink.

Actually, the word "method" is not the best word. It carries overtones of "technique" and "automation," words which are alien to the New Testament. My only justification in using it is to enable you to remember: The Message, the Men, and the Method.

Be that as it may, the method of evangelism described above is the method of Jesus. Jesus begins where people are, and from that point, he leads them to where they should be. In fact, he describes himself to Thomas by saying,

"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

I. I AM THE WAY.

When Jesus says that he is the Way he uses the Greek word for a road or a travelled path. A road begins where an individual finds himself and leads, if he will follow, to an end. He may not know the exact description of that end, but none-the-less, by faith he places his feet upon the path and makes his way in a given direction.

Before a person is willing to take to the Christian road, he must find the way appealing, particularly at the point where he joins it. If he is in the darkness of ignorance, he must see, however faintly, that Jesus the Way leads to fuller and more adequate knowledge. If he is in the valley of sin, he must see that the Way leads to the higher ground of moral living. If like the rich young ruler, a person finds himself in the luxury of self-corrupting wealth, Jesus the Way begins with self-surrender and the command, "Sell what you have, give to the poor, and come, follow me" (Mark 10:21).

To Andrew and John, Jesus was a teacher superior to the Baptist. To the wedding party at Cana, he was the perfect guest. To Nicodemus, he was a person available for consultation at night. And to the Samaritan woman he was a Jewish pilgrim thirsty enough to ask for water from a despised woman desperately in need of unadulterated friendship.

To the invalid at Bethesda, Jesus was the way to health. To the hungry on the shore of Galilee, he was bread. To the man born blind, light. To Lazarus, the resurrection and the life. To the Passover pilgrims, the pantomime of a king riding on a donkey. To the celebrants in the Upper Room, a slave with a towel. And to all men, he is a nail-pierced, bleeding body upon a Cross.

The fact is, Jesus the Way begins in Bethlehem where God became flesh and dwelt among us.

After all, this is what incarnation (en-kar-nos) means: God coming down to the level of man in order that man might be led up to God.
The necessity of the incarnation was brought home to me one day in an Indian village. An officer of the World Christian Endeavor Union was invited to this congregation of illiterates to speak to them. He could not talk Tamil; so the village pastor had to translate for him.

His level of thought was far above the audience; so that when the effects of "due respect" wore off, the people became restless. This was aggravated by a downpour of rain which seeped through the thatched roof.

The children were more restive than the adults, because they did not have clothes on whereas the older ones did. Cold rain on bare bodies made them shiver and want to escape to that part of the church which offered more protection.

In order to quiet the congregation, the speaker mentioned their restlessness and wove the same into an illustration of man's reaction to God. His reprimand was couched in language which the pastor found impossible to translate. Accordingly, he ignored what was said, carried on from the thought previous to the illustration, and elaborated on that.

Is this not a picture of what God faced prior to the coming of Christ. God made repeated attempts to mediate his message through historical events, through miracles, and the prophets. Some of it was transmitted, but there was always the translator between God and his people. And so God, in the person of Jesus, decided to speak man's language in a way so intelligible that anyone who had ears and would listen could understand.

The way of God is the way of the evangelist. It is likewise the way of the church, which is the consignee of the message.

In other words, both the evangelist and the church whom the evangelist represents must be willing to follow the method of the Master who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7).

This implies that the message must be brought down to the level of men. It likewise means that the best is none too good in this effort; since God in Christ "spared not his own Son but delivered himself up for us all."

If evangelism has failed, it is because the church has not been willing to do this. Here we enter a vicious circle. Because the church is unwilling to give of her best, she is thereby unable to talk to man in his rebellion as she should.

Let me illustrate. One of the first reactions of converted people in non-Christian countries is to withdraw from the world in which they live. This is sometimes forced on them by their relatives and friends who will have nothing to do with them after they become Christians. It is sometimes the response of the individual himself as he reacts against his non-Christian environment. The danger in both cases is that the worshipping congre-
tion moves farther and farther away from the world, oftentimes to the point where it does not know how the world acts or how it thinks.

This, on the mission field, is known as the compound mentality, because the convert is protected, sheltered, and completely withdrawn from his original environment and placed behind the walls of the mission.

Two things happen if this is allowed to go on. The first is that the church turns in upon itself. What makes matters more complicated is that this is encouraged by such admirable motives as better buildings for worship, a higher trained leadership, and a more efficient church program—all of which are good in themselves but highly dangerous.

In this state of affairs, the church is tempted to keep the best for itself.

The emphasis upon the internal activities of the church reached such a point in my own mission several years ago, that an individual who passed the Seminary course and who was given a Licentiate of Theology degree was entitled to become a pastor. The person who failed joined the mission pay-roll as an evangelist!

Would to God that that day were dead! Recently, however, one of our Indian pastors was relieved of his responsibilities for good and sufficient reasons, only to be transferred to another mission area—you have guessed it—as an evangelist!

I am quite sure that this is not what Jesus meant when he said, "I am the way." John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. If that is God's way for the redemption of the world, can the way of the church be anything less?

At this point, let us strike a balance. The internal life of the church is important. The external outreach of the church is likewise important. Neither takes precedence over the other.

Let us define the internal activity of the church as worship and the outreach as work. Both of these drive shafts must work in harmony if the wheels of the Kingdom are to keep moving.

Worship and work are like the two parts of the Sanskirt word “faith” which literally means “to breathe.” The two component parts of the one word are “inhalation” and “exhalation” which taken together spell life. Stop either process and life ceases. So too with the church. The church worships in order to gain strength for work, and after it works, it feels the need for worship.

Several years ago, there was a conference on evangelism in Nagpur, India. For two days, a Quaker pressed the point that the church in India was not ready for evangelism. It needed to be revived first.

At the end of the second day, I put a question to this Quaker, saying, "Would you please tell us when the church is ready for evangelism? Before you answer question number one, however, I would like to have you
answer question number two: If any church says it is ready for evangelism by virtue of having said so, has it not disqualified itself by falling into the sin of spiritual pride?”

This is more than clever dialectic. It is basic to the life and witness of the Body of Christ. Begin where you will, the church can only find renewal in evangelism and outreach, and through evangelism and outreach it will soon seek renewal.

When God appointed Ezekiel to speak to the people, the prophet says, “The Spirit lifted me up, and took me away . . . Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.”

He then goes on to say, “And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came to me . . . .” (3:12ff).

The word of God came because Ezekiel was on the way.

II. I AM THE TRUTH.

Jesus the Way leads to Jesus the Truth—the progression is natural, along the way to the truth.

Truth in the Bible does not come to us as a logical deduction. It comes to us as a Person.

When Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth” (17:7) John intends us to read this in the light of what he has written before: “The word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. . . . For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (1:14, 17).

Pilate looked for truth as an explanation within himself. Meanwhile, Truth stood before him in the Person of his Prisoner.

Several years ago, a condemned murderer in Sing Sing lay beside a little girl who was dying of leukemia. The only possible cure for her was healthy blood; but it could not pass through a tube. It had to be given vein to vein (God’s Good News, Kennedy, p. 90).

This is the Truth to which Jesus the Way leads:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

III. I AM THE LIFE.

Jesus, the Way, leads to Jesus the Truth, and the Truth, if accepted, leads into Jesus the Life.

The progression is complete: from—to—and into.

Life for John was never something which came to a man naturally. It always came supernaturally as a gift from God.
As such, it is eternal, and so for John, it makes little difference whether
he speaks of life or life eternal. For him, they are one and the same. He
says, "He that has the Son has life. He who has not the Son has not life"
(I John 5:12).

IV. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT BY ME.

It is at this point that the non-Christian becomes restive, particularly
the Hindu. He even tells us that we are narrow-mindedly exclusive. After
all, he as a Hindu is so generous that he allows each man the "god-of-his-
choice." His favorite analogy is that even as all rivers eventually end in the
ocean, so every religious path will ultimately lead to God.

Early in my missionary experience, I was teaching a class of Hindu
lads in Voorhees College. We came to John 14:6 and a bright young
Brahmin boy raised his hand and said,

"Teacher, we Hindus can accept the claims of Jesus if you will only
change one word. All you have to say is, "I am a Way, a Truth, and a
Life," and then omit the last phrase which says, "No one comes to the
Father but by me," and we will all be Christians."

What this Brahmin lad failed to see is that he as a Hindu made the
same claim on the basis of rebirth or transmigration. Rebirth or reincarna-
tion according to the Hindu is the passage of the soul from one body to
another until final release for the soul in the All-Soul or God is realized.

This particular student was a devotee of Siva. Accordingly, we turned
to his sacred scripture, namely, the Siva-jnana-Siddhiah where it says,

"It is a great blessing to be born in a land where savages do not inhabit
but the study of the four vedas reigns supreme. Escaping birth (or transmi-
gration) among the lower classes of the human race, rare is it that one
should be fortunate to be born among the people privileged to perform
religious austerities, and to profess the Saiva Siddhanta religion without
falling into the ways of other creeds" (90).

The Siddhiah goes on,

"Was it not the purpose, when souls were endowed with human birth,
that they should, with their mind, speech and body, serve Hara who is
anointed with the five-fold products of the cow? The celestials themselves
descend on the earth and worship Hara. Dumb men, alas! who roam hither
and thither, in the fleshly frame, understanding not anything of this higher
life" (92, J. M. Nallaswmi Pillai, 1913, p. 191).

Or take a comparable claim made by the other major Hindu religious
group, the worshippers of Vishnu. In the 17th chapter of the Bhagavad-
gita, Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu says,

"Know me, O Arjuna, to be the eternal seed of all existences. I am the intelli-
gence of the intelligent; I am the splendour of the splendid" (10).

"But temporary is the fruit gained by these men of small minds. The worship-
pers of the gods go to the gods, but My devotees come to Me—I who am the intelligence of the intelligent, the splendor of the splendid" (23).

"At the end of many lives, the man of wisdom resorts to Me, knowing that Vasudeva, (the Supreme) is all that is. Such a great soul is very difficult to find" (19).

In other words, Kirshna claims to be ultimately all that is. One may worship other gods like Brahma, Siva, or Jesus.

Some Hindu scriptures estimate that it takes as many as 84,000,000 different transmigrations for one soul to realize its ultimate destiny, but the path to progress and fulfillment is ultimately one and one alone.

The point I am trying to make is that Christianity is not alone in its claim to exclusiveness. Would it appear arrogant, then, if at this juncture I took umbrage with as gifted a scholar as Arnold Toynbee, who in the January 1956 issue of the Union Seminary Quarterly says,

"I would say that we should try also to purge our Christianity of the traditional Christian belief that Christianity is unique . . . .

"The vein of exclusiveness and intolerance in Christianity . . . is a congenital feature which is part of Christianity and also of Islam's heritage from Judaism . . . .

"However hard it may be to purge of its exclusive-mindedness, it seems imperative for Christians to achieve this spiritual feat" (p. 7).

Toynbee at this point sounds very much like a henotheist who is able to believe in a god for himself, but not to the exclusion of other gods for other people.

When Benhadad said, "Jehovah is a god of the hills, but he is not a god of the valleys" (I Kings 20:26-30) he soon discovered that God is God—both of the hills and the valleys.

I wonder if Toynbee ever stood in the Mosque of Omaiyyid in Damascus which is still the capital of Benhadad's Syria? This mosque is the most important tourist attraction in Damascus today, and it ranks in magnificence with the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and in sanctity with the mosques of Mecca and Medina.

As one stands in the Mosque of Omaiyyid, his mind goes back to the temple of Rimmon where Naaman deposited his "two mules' burden of earth" (2 Kings 5:18), because the mosque stands on the same site. When the Greeks came to power, the temple of Rimmon gave way to that of Jupiter. Later during the time of Constantine, the temple of Jupiter became sacred to Christ and was dedicated to John the Baptist, whose head it was said to contain in a casket.

There are two inscriptions in the Mosque of Omaiyyid placed there by Arcadius who ascended the throne in 395. One of them reads, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." The other says, "Thy Kingdom, O
Christ, is an everlasting Kingdom." No sooner has one read these inscriptions in the guide book than the call of the muezzin from the minaret sounds clear reminding the faithful that the hour of prayer has come.

It is not that we are arrogantly exclusive. It is simply that Jesus told us,—"No one comes to the Father but by me."

V. THE METHOD RELATIVE TO RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CHURCHES.

There is one other problem that we should discuss relative to method and that is the relation of the Reformed church to the indigenous churches on our foreign mission fields.

In Arabia and in Africa, the Reformed Church still functions very largely as a mission. In Japan, India, and among overseas Chinese, however, it is in alliance with autonomous and independent churches. As such, what is their position and what is ours?

In the first place, we must be thankful to God that these churches on the field have come into being. Perhaps they may not be the kind of churches we would idealistically want; but they are churches, none-the-less. As such, we must believe that the Holy Spirit has been at work in them just as we believe He has been at work among us.

In the second place, we must remind ourselves that these churches, or parts of them at least, came into being by virtue of our missionary endeavour. As such, we have a continuing responsibility towards them as long as they remain in need.

Thirdly, we must be aware of the fact that as a sending church we are wealthy in comparison, and that by means of money it is so easy to do the wrong thing.

Although the church functions as a unit, it is well to remember the dual function we mentioned earlier, namely, worship and work. Only this time let us change the terminology to Christian nurture and evangelism.

Christian nurture, in short, consists of that teaching and training the church gives her people for useful service, social and spiritual uplift in order to "equip the saints" for their calling in the world. The task of evangelists is, as Dr. John Mackay says, "... to be preachers of the Gospel, 'the Good News' regarding the Crucified and Risen One. It is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost that men shall come to put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their Saviour, and follow him as their King, in the fellowship of his Church" (Theology Today, January 1953).

If this distinction is valid, it seems but right to say that no church has a continuing responsibility for the program of Christian nurture of another church.

By the same token, no church is responsible for the evangelistic mission of another church. However, whereas nurture and government are the
prerogative of each individual church, evangelism is a common task to all churches. Hence, it is in this realm that the efforts of the churches should and can combine for the self-respect, good, and fulfillment of all.

This means that the receiving churches should not lean too heavily upon the sending church for funds which are used primarily for Christian nurture. It also means that both churches should contribute their share for the common task of evangelism.

It may be that one church has more money than it has men. It may be that another church has more men than it has money. What difference does it make when churches work together for the conversion of the world if they work as man to man making whatever contributions they can. In Christ there is no Jew or Gentile, bond or free, but all are one in him.

After all, the problems of the Japanese are our problems even as the problems of the United States are those of the Christian Indian. There is no room for paternalism in the church. We do not treat each other as Africans, Arabians, or Chinese. We are brothers striving side by side for the hope of the gospel.

The question of method is basic, if for no other reason than that of urgency.

The human family consists of two billion, two hundred million people. The awful reality is that twenty million people are born into the world every year, but only one and one-half million non-Christian people are being evangelized each year. It is a cold and sobering fact that not two percent of the world’s population are evangelical believers. More than half of our fellowmen have never once heard the Gospel of our holy Redeemer; and he has said, “no one comes to the Father but by me.” What right have we to hear the name of Jesus Christ every day of the week while so many others have never heard that name even once?

It was Dr. Simpson who wrote the following lines,

A hundred thousand souls a day
Are passing one by one away
In Christless guilt and gloom;
O Church of Christ what wilt thou say
When in the awful judgment day
They charge thee with their doom?

Since Dr. Simpson wrote those lines, the figure has become a hundred and twenty thousand people a day, more than half the communicant membership of the Reformed Church in America!1

The way some people act, one would think the day of missions is done. The mission of the church is not done. Jesus still says to his disciples, as he has always said, “Come, follow me.”