

way of life and comprised of obedient people who, both as church and as individuals, live with integrity before the face of Scripture and their surrounding culture, a faithfully indigenous church?

Protestant missions of a century ago found the term "indigenous" a very meaningful one to express the kind of church they wished to establish in foreign cultures. To them, however, it referred basically to a self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating church. In the past ten years it has increasingly been recognized that the "indigenous church" so formed often lacked identity with its own cultural context in such matters as the form of government and the form of worship, as well as personal life style, concern for the needy, and for the contemporary social struggle. In a word, it failed to live up to its responsibility of being the church in the world.

In place of such efforts to cultivate an indigenous church, the need for contextualization began to be discussed in 1970. One writer in speaking of this term wrote, "contextualization involves adapting the message to the particular concerns and understandings of a culture."<sup>1</sup> Another has written that the gospel is contextualized when it is "presented in forms which are characteristic of the culture to which the gospel is taken."<sup>2</sup> Harvey Conn has stated that "covenant contextualization cannot take place without . . . a back and forth movement between God's word and God's world, a conversation between text and interpreter and context, where the interpreter functions not as a spectator on the balcony but as actor on the hermeneutical stage."<sup>3</sup> In this description the central role of the interpreter who explains the text to the context of the surrounding culture is clearly recognized.

To J. H. Bavinck, "culture is religion made visible," while T. S. Eliot shortens the definition to "lived religion." The Willowbank Report presents culture as the integrated system of beliefs, values, customs and institutions which express these and which binds a society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity.<sup>4</sup> In speaking of religion they are not necessarily including deity, but are definitely referring to those basic beliefs, values, and practices to which one is committed and which guide and influence his thoughts, words, and deeds though often unconsciously. Religion may be defined as the beliefs and practices which bind one to his most basic principles of interpretation. The new mind brings a new appraisal of the old culture and religious views, and the problem of conflict or accommodation begins. Scripture speaks of the necessity of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind," (Rom 12:2) of "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ," (2 Cor 10:5) the goal being to "serve God with a whole heart and a willing mind" (1 Chr 28:9).

### **Covenant Perspective As the Interpretive Principle**

As Scripture confronts the new man with its covenantal perspective, the ramifications of the radical nature of its demands for total obedience to God's Word in his world are begun to be perceived. The word "covenant"