

March 22, 1972 Draft

Dear fellow missiologist:

You may be one who would like to be present at the first meeting of those who are concerned to form a proposed ASM: Nashville (Scarritt College for Christian Workers) 19th Avenue South at Grand, Friday, 5:30 p.m. dinner, June 9, through lunch Saturday, June 10. Cost \$8.00 lodging and meals, plus \$2.00 registration.

I. The Call

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MISSIOLOGY will be a vital fellowship of all those seriously involved in the urgent, on-going scholarly discussion taking place across this world at this very moment among all those of any Christian tradition who are dedicated to the fulfillment of the Great Commission--quite specifically that task of reaching out cross-culturally to those who have never accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- A. This is to be more than a group of professors of missions--the phrase "all those seriously involved in the...discussion" goes beyond the Professors of Missions groups already existing. Like other scholarly societies, membership will not be based on certain academic credentials but upon some recognized competence or relevant experience plus a readiness to uphold the society's aims. This usually means, at a minimum, paying the annual membership fee, subscribing to the journal of the society, reading, writing, attending meetings when possible.
- B. Those receiving this letter may do well immediately to try to spread the word of the June meeting to all those university professors, mission executives, church officials, pastors, etc. who are thought to belong among "those who now or now choose to be involved..." Write for more copies of this letter or send me names and addresses, etc.
- C. Some may ask, does missiology include home missions, back fence evangelism, or just the task traditionally conceived of as "foreign missions"? This will have to be on the agenda in June. My personal feeling is that while the word itself, in its root meaning, includes (by metaphorical extension) any kind of "sent" activity--e.g. "my mission today is to clean up this kitchen"--nevertheless mission (a Latin word) has for at least 16 centuries been applied chiefly by Christians to the propagation of the Gospel at a distance, usually meaning both geographical and cultural distance. And, since the -ology suffix gains its greatest significance from the bristling complexities introduced by the cross-cultural dimension, I would therefore imagine that the bulk of the discussion defining our society would fall into the traditional sphere. Since we are now more than ever aware of the many sub-cultures within the U.S. (African, Spanish, Indian, etc.) the word would--even in its narrowest definition--include a great deal of "home missions," (but it would cover this type of home missions from a serious, cross-cultural perspective). Note: See Beaver's comment below.
- C. Those whose names accompany this first general letter have no claim on the control of the society (which like other scholarly societies, will be democratically run) but are merely people who have in one way or another discussed this proposal. If this word is the first you have heard, please don't feel slighted; we are well aware of many sectors in which no one has had a chance to pass the word unofficially.

- D. Other letters will go out, April 20, and May 20, indicating the accumulating names (and positions) of those who have by those dates signified their (1) interest and support but inability to attend, and (2) those who will definitely attend. Please get your name to me in time to be included in the letter.

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II. First Addendum, March 22, 1972

- A. The text of section I is, for all its defects, to be blamed on the one whose name appears at its foot. However, the persons below have seen this letter and in one way or another have indicated their general approval. A number of their suggestions have been incorporated into the text.

Dr. Gerald H. Anderson	Louis J. Luzbetak, S.V.D.	Donald M. Wodarz
Dr. R. Pierce Beaver	Dr. H. Wilbert Norton	Dr. Per Hassing
Dr. Arthur F. Glasser	Dr. George W. Peters	Dr. William Nigel Kerr
Dr. J. Herbert Kane	Dr. James A. Scherer	

- B. Three general responses from this group are as follows:

James Scherer - I share in the conviction that Christian forces in America badly need a broadly based, confessionally inclusive society not only for the study of contemporary missionary challenges and opportunities, but also as a rallying point for those who remain committed to the ongoing tasks of world mission in all six continents. I would like to express the fervent hope that the new American Society of Missiology might, by the grace of God, fulfill that noble goal.

Donald Wodarz and Per Hassing - The proposal of the foundation of a society for mission studies meets a much felt need among many who, for various reasons, devote themselves to the study of the missionary effort of the Christian Church. There is no doubt that there is a need for a wide base of potential support for such a society. We believe that its membership should be open to all who are seriously interested in the scholarly study of missions, whether they be missions professors, students, missionary institutes, cultural anthropologists, secular as well as church historians, missionaries, retired missionaries, etc. The proposed society should have a base wide enough to accommodate persons of diverse scholarly interests and backgrounds.

R. Pierce Beaver - The communication of the gospel, the planting of new churches, and assistance to young growing Christian communities (i.e., assistance which is brotherly, not paternalistic; stimulating, not stifling) require the pooling of the knowledge, understanding, skills, and techniques provided by the many fields of the social sciences, linguistics, communications, and by a wide range of practical professions, such as agriculture, education, medicine and public health as well as devoted witness in all its forms. Missiology, or the study of mission, must today embrace all these various elements and bring them into united service to the church in its central task of discipling the nations. A professional society of missiologists should be broadly inclusive of persons representing all the sciences, technical fields, and arts which can illuminate and empower the

mission today. Personal commitment to mission is as important as specialized knowledge and skill. Mission administrators should be involved in such a society. A limited number of serious nonprofessionals--missionaries, pastors, laymen--who recognize the urgency and value of professional action and wish to make their contribution to it should be welcomed into membership.

R. Pierce Beaver - Do not open the door to just anybody who interprets "mission" to mean Christian vocation or the everyday witness which any Christian should make in his own place. Let us stick primarily to "discipling the nations" and cross-cultural communication of our faith, but say that our concern includes such situations within our national borders. This present statement opens the way, I fear, to the prevailing contemporary definition of mission as witness and service to the world on one's own doorstep.

- C. The names listed in II. A. are those who have actually reviewed the text of Section I. Many, many others of you have participated in the discussions leading up to this letter. All of you and others besides are now invited to respond in any way, and your response will be recorded in Section III in the April letter.
- D. The very name, American Society of Missiology, while it has been the handle by which the discussion during the past year and a half has been conducted, is not necessarily final.
- E. It must be clarified, as a result of preliminary inquiries, that this society is not to be considered the continuation of any other society past or present. It is quite possible that the June meeting will definitely propose the formation of a society as well as appoint committees to undertake some of the essential tasks of organization. Some of these committees may meet Saturday afternoon. Then, it is possible that a later "ratifying" meeting will be necessary. If so, I am wondering if it would not be possible to do this in a meeting at the time of the International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, in Los Angeles, September 1-5, 1972. This will then make possible a first issue of a society Journal during the first quarter of 1973.
- F. In regard to the establishment of a scholarly society the American Council of Learned Societies has some very helpful materials. Also, the American Association of University Presses has an excellent Handbook of Scholarly Journal Publications. We do well to note that there now exists a whole flurry of engaging new approaches to the essential flow of scholarly conversation within a society such as this one. Hopefully we can stand upon the latest, best advice in all these areas.
- G. Please send comments; please tell us (1) if you will attend, (2) if not, if you want to get the next (April 20) letter to see how interest is developing.

Cordially,

Ralph D. Winter